

ANNUNCIATION CATHOLIC CHURCH & ASCENSION MISSION



MEET OUR NEW INTERIM ADMINISTRATOR FR. RICO BERNADEZ

This past December, we welcomed Fr. Rico Bernadez as our Interim Administrator. Born and raised in the Philippines, Fr. Rico has been serving parishes in Hawaii since 2014, and stepped in at Annunciation on the bishop's request. During his time here, he hopes to "bloom where he is planted" and help the parish with whatever needs we may have.

The second of three children, Fr. Rico is originally from the Diocese of Tagum in the southern part of the Philippines. He attended his primary and secondary schooling in his hometown of Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte. After high school, he entered the seminary at Queen of Apostles College Seminary in Tagum.

"My school principal and my pastor at my home parish influenced me to enter the seminary,"



This past December, we welcomed Fr. Rico Bernadez as our Interim Administrator.

Fr. Rico says. "I attended my theological studies at Regional Major Seminary of Mindanao in Davao City, and I was ordained to the priesthood in September of 1999."

After his ordination, Fr. Rico served as associate pastor at several different parishes in the Philippines until 2004. In June 2004, he was asked to serve as a seminary formator at his own college seminary. For two years, he served as a dean of seminarians, and the following two years as a spiritual director. In 2008, he went to Santo Niño Parish to serve as the pastor for the next six years. He then moved on to another parish, Assumption, and just over a year later, he was asked by his bishop in the Philippines to go serve in Hawaii.

"I arrived in Hawaii in August 2014 and was

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Stewardship of the Cross

The liturgical year is such a gift to us. As we turn the pages of the calendar, reflecting on the life of Christ, we have the opportunity to consider the most sublime events in the history of mankind. Of these events, perhaps none is more beautiful and worthy of contemplation than the one we are about to commemorate — Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself for us on the Cross.

It is fitting and, at the same time, paradoxical. It is fitting that God should do it, because only an infinite God could rid us of the infinite debt we owed by our sin. It is paradoxical that He not only did it, but wanted to do it out of pure love for us, His lowly creatures. What is Jesus trying to show us? Even more staggering, what is He really asking when He exhorts us, in turn, to take up our cross and follow Him?

Jesus freely gave His life for the Church, and He calls us to do the same. Some of us may, in fact, give our entire lives for the Church. But for most of us, this giving takes place by a series of daily actions, both large and small, of Christ-like, sacrificial love — specifically, by giving our time, talent and treasure for the good of the Church. Yet, by joining these actions with His, we have the chance to participate in that very same sacrifice. This month, let us take the time to examine our hearts and actions in light of Jesus’ as we journey with Him toward the Cross.

Jesus gave Himself unselfishly and excessively.

Consider the manner of His sacrifice — one drop of Christ’s blood would have been more than

sufficient to save the entire human race, and yet Our Lord Jesus chose to shed every last bit. From start to finish, Jesus showed us by His passion that He wanted to do more than what was merely sufficient. If there was more He could give, He gave it. He never stopped to count the cost or to look for what He could get in return.

Jesus made His sacrifice a supreme act of love for the Church.

Counter-cultural even to this day, Jesus actually upheld sacrifice as desirable — the most perfect way to show our love: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn. 15:13). In His infinite wisdom, Jesus now offers this path to us as the way to holiness: “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk. 9:23).

Jesus gave Himself willingly and even joyfully.

“No one takes [My life] from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again” (Jn. 10:18). At the first Eucharist, Jesus even went so far as to say, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you” (Lk. 22:15). Needless to say, the Passover sacrifice to which Jesus referred was not a symbolic one, but was in fact His very Body and Blood He would give for us through the sacrifice of the Cross.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts more like Yours.

A LENTEN STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

“O my God, teach me to be generous: to serve You as You deserve to be served; to give without counting the cost; to fight without fear of being wounded; to work without seeking rest; and to spend myself without expecting any reward, but the knowledge that I am doing Your Holy will.”

— ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

A Letter from Our Interim Administrator

ANSWERING THE CALL FOR LENT

Dear Parishioners,

This month, as we proceed on our Lenten journey to Easter, every one of us should ask ourselves, “What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ and how well am I living that out each day?”

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops addressed what it means to be a disciple when they wrote their pastoral letter *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*. “Who is a Christian disciple?” the USCCB asked and, in turn, they also provided the answer, “One who responds to Christ’s call, follows Jesus, and shapes his or her life in imitation of Christ’s” (9). So, as disciples of Jesus Christ, it is essential that we consider the true meaning of that answer.

The first step in the Christian life is responding to Jesus’ call. Jesus invites every person to develop a relationship with Him. But obviously, not every person is a Christian disciple. Some people are too busy to even hear that invitation or don’t make the effort to recognize it. Others make a conscious decision to reject the call because it demands that they can no longer place themselves at the center of their lives.

On the other hand, for those of us who make an affirmative response to Christ’s call, the most meaningful life possible awaits us, both now and into eternity. However, saying “yes” to Jesus has consequences that affect the rest of our lives.

The first consequence of becoming a disciple is that we now follow Jesus. The Gospel accounts record that when He called His disciples, they left what they were doing and followed Him. The same is true for us today. Becoming a Christian disciple does not necessarily mean that all of us will leave our present job, or enter into the consecrated life, or serve as a missionary in another country — although that might be where the journey leads you. But it does mean that we offer our work — whether as a doctor, homemaker, mechanic, farmer or teacher — to build up the Kingdom of God.

In following Jesus as His disciples, we should

strive to more fully absorb His teaching and then apply it to our daily lives. As we do, we find that we attempt to imitate Him, treating others with the same welcoming and generous spirit. St. Peter was direct when he described how Jesus acted: “He went about doing good... for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). That’s the model for how we must live.

Discipleship leads naturally to stewardship as a way of life. The time we offer in prayer and worship will give us the strength and guidance for serving Christ. Using the skills and gifts we have to build the Kingdom will direct our offering of talent. The support of all these endeavors with our treasure will ensure that our lives as disciples and stewards are genuine.

As a Christian steward this Lent, I encourage you to reflect on the changes you can make in growing as a disciple of Jesus.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Rico Bernadez
Interim Administrator



RECEIVING THE GRACE TO JOURNEY TOGETHER:

It's a story with which we are familiar — the wedding feast at Cana, the site of Jesus' first miracle. The couple, whose wedding was being celebrated, ran out of wine — at the request of the Blessed Mother, Jesus turned water into wine, saving their celebration.

And while we may know the story, we can often forget the significance of His action, not just for the newlyweds — whose reception could continue — but also for the Church, and for all married couples. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that, "The Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence" (1613).

This means that, as a sacrament, marriage gives both members of the couple the grace and help that they need from God to love each other and to live in

the world as an example of God's love.

Here at Annunciation, we hope to help couples prepare to receive this grace — whether they are celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage, or as they have their marriage convalidated or "blessed" within the Church. In order to facilitate this, there are a number of requirements, including paperwork, meeting with the priest for formation, and attending an Engaged Encounter retreat, or something similar.

"Marriage is a sacrament, and as a sacrament, it is a gift from God," says parish secretary Mary Erickson, who helps people with the paperwork and beginning the process. "I firmly believe that marriages work better if God is in your marriage."

Parishioners Martin and Blanca Evangelista have been married for nearly 18 years, and after a process of preparation, had their marriage convalidated by the bishop last summer.

"We were trying to get married since day one,



Last summer, parishioners Martin and Blanca Evangelista celebrated the convalidation of their marriage in the Church.

The Sacrament of Marriage

but we kept postponing due to family or money — there was always something,” Blanca says.

Despite the obstacles that they had to overcome in making it to the point of getting married in the Church, both Martin and Blanca agree that it was worth it.

“I joked with [our priest], ‘I don’t know if I should do this, I’ve been married to Blanca for almost 18 years and everything is great — what if we get married in the Church and everything just goes haywire?’” Martin says. “But he laughed and said, ‘No, this marriage is going to be very blessed and everything is going to be better than it was.’ I wasn’t sure at first. There were a lot of obstacles, but yes, it was worth it.”

Martin and Blanca both encourage other

couples who are not married in the Church to consider going through the process and receiving all the grace and blessings that God has in store for them and their relationship.

“Faith strengthens our relationship,” Blanca says. “It gives a closeness and a different meaning to our lives, as a couple and raising our children.”

“Why not be married in the Church?” Martin adds. “It increased our faith even more in God, and in our family, and everything we do.”

Martin and Blanca will always remember their special day, surrounded by family and close friends, and their two children.

“It was magical,” Blanca says.

“It was beautiful,” Martin says.

If you are interested in getting married, or having your marriage convalidated at Annunciation, please contact parish secretary Mary Erickson at 808-887-1220 or annchhi@hawaiiintel.net.

Fr. Rico Bernadez *continued from front cover*

assigned as associate pastor at St. Anthony Church in Kailua [on Oahu] for 10 months,” Fr. Rico says. “After that, I served as administrator at St. Philomena Parish from July 2015 until June 2019. In July 2019, I was assigned to the St. Francis hospice care system in Honolulu as a chaplain priest. After a month, I moved to St. Pius X parish in Manoa since their pastor became sick, and I was asked to step in for the sacramental needs of the parish.”

This past December, after Fr. Stephen Macedo stepped down, Bishop Silva asked Fr. Rico to come

to Annunciation Parish. For the last few months, he has worked to meet the spiritual needs of the parish, and continues to foster stewardship among our parishioners.

“I enjoy it here, especially the parishioners who are always ready to help,” he says. “I always hear, ‘Father, just tell me what help I can offer.’ My plans for my stay here are to always be available for the parishioners’ spiritual needs, and continue what Fr. Steve started by further promoting the stewardship way of life, as a proper response to God’s call to holiness.”

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My plans for my stay here are to always be available for the parishioners’ spiritual needs, and continue what Fr. Steve started by further promoting the stewardship way of life, as a proper response to God’s call to holiness.” — Fr. Rico Bernadez

From the *Catechism*

WHAT IS ALMSGIVING?

“Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2462).

During the seasons of Advent and Lent, it is not uncommon to hear about fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Most of us are familiar with at least two of the three penitential practices — prayer and fasting. We engage in prayer each day, while fasting becomes a regular part of our Lenten routines.

But what is almsgiving?

It is simply giving to those less fortunate than ourselves. This can be through donations of canned goods to the local food pantry, spare change to the Salvation Army during the Christmas season, or even through person-to-person contact with the poor.

This Lent, if your family has not regularly engaged in almsgiving, consider making a change. Search for opportunities to serve the poor and vulnerable, making their lives easier — even if in a small way.

Things to do with your family:

- Place a coffee can in a prominent place in your home, and commit to filling it with loose change throughout the week. Then, donate the money to a local charity.
- The next time you shop for groceries, buy a few extra canned goods and donate them to a food pantry or food bank.
- Research a charity that works with the poor, and make a commitment to regularly give to that organization.
- Resolve to never judge those who are less fortunate, and teach your children the same.



CONGRATULATIONS TO ANDREI QUINES, 2019 YOUTH ISLAND TREASURE AWARD RECIPIENT!



Andrei Quines (second from right) enjoys the parish youth retreat last summer.

During a World Youth Day 2013 address, Pope Francis spoke the following words to millions of young Catholics who had gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: “You too, dear young people, can be joyful witnesses of His love, courageous witnesses of His Gospel, carrying to this world a ray of His light.” The pope’s message reminds us of the importance of encouraging young people to participate fully in our faith, and reassures us that we can expect great things from the future of our Church. Here at Annunciation, Island Treasure Award recipient Andrei Quines is proving just how true these words can be!

Our Director of Religious Education, Jane Aganus, could not have been more thrilled when Andrei was chosen to receive this diocese-wide service award.

“Andrei was selected as one of the youth recipients for the Island Treasure award because of his outstanding service and commitment to the Religious Education program from grades one to

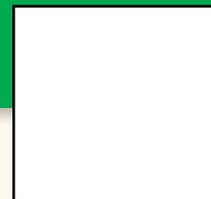
12,” Jane says. “He is a very quiet but effective individual who never refuses when asked to help, and he is very humble and respectful.”

Indeed, Andrei is continuously selfless in his giving. In January 2019, our parish youth group traveled to Panama to attend the World Youth Day celebration with Pope Francis. Even though Andrei could not participate in the trip due to his high school sports commitments, he still chose to help with the group’s fundraising efforts. By working with the youth group at almost every fundraising event they held, he was able to help them reach their goal.

Andrei’s devotion to faith and service began early in life, with the example of his parents. Baltazar and Florencia Quines taught Andrei and his two older brothers the importance of their faith through their own example, bringing them to Mass each week and staying active in parish life.

“Andrei is very blessed to have parental

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Congratulations to Andrei Quines *continued from page 7*

support, and is very respectful of his parents,” Jane says.

Currently a junior at Honoka’a High School, Andrei is busy with schoolwork and sports, participating on the cross country and basketball teams. Still, he continues to make time for the Annunciation youth group.

“I’ve been a part of the youth group since elementary school,” Andrei says. “I get to learn more about my faith and I get to know the people there — I have friends in the group. I feel like it keeps me from getting dragged into doing bad things, and I enjoy the community service. Right now we are working on a house, doing the landscaping for someone who needs help.”

“I’ve been a part of the youth group since elementary school. I get to learn more about my faith and I get to know the people there — I have friends in the group. I feel like it keeps me from getting dragged into doing bad things, and I enjoy the community service.” — Andrei Quines

Thankful for his faith community at Annunciation, Andrei would encourage any young person to become more engaged in parish life.

“Everyone is nice at Annunciation,” Andrei says. “You see them all the time, and they are familiar. Don’t be scared to go to church — everyone there is nice and trustworthy.”

Our parish is blessed to count Andrei among the many kind and caring members who make our church a wonderful place to call home. Many thanks to Andrei Quines for the ways in which he gives of his time and talent to serve our parish — he is truly the witness of Christ’s love and light that Pope Francis exhorts all of our youth to be!

MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday Vigil: 5 p.m. (Waimea) | **Sunday:** 8 a.m. (Waimea) & 10 a.m. (Puako) | **Confession:** Saturday 4 p.m. (Waimea)