

# Awaken

the soul & let your spirit fly

A bimonthly publication of Good Shepherd Catholic Church ~ steadfast in awakening our true being in God.

## PERSEVERING IN FAITH

*Neophytes are filled with the Spirit, enlivened by their journeys*

Imagine the biggest possible “yes moment” of life ...an unconditional “I will” ...a powerful commitment of the heart. Then, picture obstacles at every turn, hurdles to overcome, changes, disappointments, and the heavy weight of time.

For 14 new members of the Church, their first yes, their *fiat* to Christ, came over a year ago when they committed to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and began

their journeys of faith. Months of perseverance ensued. Five catechumens sought full initiation – baptism, Eucharist and confirmation. Nine candidates desired Eucharist and/or confirmation. Together, their souls yearned for full communion with the Church. They longed to be made new in Christ.

“They were hungry for faith, community and fellowship,” says Valerie Ramos who with her husband Carlos, ushers

*(Story continues on page 4)*



For what else are the servants of God than His singers, whose duty it is to lift up the hearts of men and move them to spiritual joy?  
- St. Francis of Assisi

# THE BODY OF CHRIST

# The People of God



7<sup>th</sup> Pastor of  
Good Shepherd  
Catholic Church

## GET TO KNOW Rev. Michael Vaughan

Father Michael arrived at Good Shepherd parish as the new pastor in February 2021 following several years as Vicar General in the Bishop's Office. He looks forward to the journey of opening, returning, and growing as a faith community.

Readers may know that Father Michael is a veteran and served in the U.S. Army prior to his conversion and ultimate vocation of the priesthood.

*"When I was deployed to the Persian Gulf, God was already at work preparing me for the experience. I started praying about a year before and brought some Catholic books with me. I would say the experience of Christ happened when I read the Gospels nightly while on guard duty. They were usually 3 hour shifts at night in the desert. It was the realization that Christ was speaking to me personally and inviting me to conversion.*

*"The book **The Imitation of Christ** by Thomas a Kempis also had a profound impact on me. The fourth part of the book treats of Christ's true presence in the Eucharist which finally led me to the Catholic Church.*

*Christ can be found in faith by prayer, scripture and the sacraments according to one's desire to find him."*

Father Michael conveys messages of charity, joy and the hope of heaven.

*"I draw inspiration from the example of Christ who even in the midst of personal suffering thought of others. The eighth station of the Via Crucis depicts this. The Church has martyrs of charity which also inspire me (St. Maximillian Kolbe, St. Damian of Molokai, Venerable Vincent Capodanno). Actually, Venerable Vincent Capodanno is a great testimony people should know.*

*"I also find inspiration in a man named Nick Vujicic who has a website entitled 'Life without Limbs.' His message is one of finding joy within God's plan for us. He was born without limbs and has lived an extraordinary life. His example helps us not to fall into a mode of self-pity but rather offer ourselves to God and others as Christ did."*



7<sup>th</sup> Parochial Vicar of  
Good Shepherd  
Catholic Church

## GET TO KNOW Rev. Julius Kiogora Kaburu

Father Julius came to Good Shepherd in September 2020 and many sensed a certain joyfulness about him. A native of Kenya, he fondly remembers his journey to the priesthood and shares warmly of the many inspirations that led to his calling.

*"...the holiness I saw from the missionary priests ...holy Mass celebration ...the unique objects used in Mass like chalice and ciborium.*

*"What opened my eyes to the possibility of becoming a priest is when I attended an ordination of a black African priest born in our village. Initially, I thought priests come from heaven. I had never known that priests are born like us. When I saw one being ordained I started feeling something inside me of becoming a priest.*

*"I realized I am being called to serve the Lord when I found myself involved in Church activities at a young stage. I*

*liked serving as an altar server and many Christians could say maybe I will be a priest. That motivated me a lot."*

When Father Julius celebrates Mass, parishioners anticipate his greeting to include a very special affirmation of faith.

*"God is good. All the time? It expresses our unworthiness before God...asking him to have mercy on us. Man is sometimes good but God is good all the time. This phrase is commonly used by Christians but I heard it being used a lot by one of the Kenyan bishops. The phrase always resonates in me all the time when addressing the Christians and when celebrating Mass."*

New to America, Father Julius continues to adjust to time and weather, but always with joy.

*"Yes, parishioners see me with joy because I see them, also, in joy and I feel happy. I am a product of missionaries so I love America so much."*

Visit the Good Shepherd parish website to read Father Michael's bio and view a welcoming video. Read more on Father Julius' boyhood and timeline.

## What's all this about?

After more than a year of distancing restrictions due to pandemic, our Good Shepherd parish family longs to reconnect and re-establish bonds within, *and beyond*, the faith community in a safe and gradual effort to return the “flock to the fold.”

*Let's gather and awaken the joy!*

Yes! Joy! In the smiles and greetings of brothers and sisters in Christ, we gather with joy, in faith, hope and love, ready for fellowship, fun and hospitality! Come and see what awaits!

Mark your calendars with gratitude and praise God as we gather, and awaken the joy!

## Come Holy Spirit! Pentecost Picnic fills the hearts of the faithful!

On Sunday, May 23, 2021 several hundred people attended the *Let's Gather Pentecost Picnic* to celebrate the Church's birthday. The casual lawn gathering provided time for friends to linger, lunch and visit throughout the afternoon, restoring a sense of community among parishioners. Children enjoyed crafts and games, and everyone's inner kid loved the birthday cupcakes. Delivering swift breaths to extinguish birthday candles atop each treat, every silent wish surely joined the enduring communal prayer beckoning the Holy Spirit:

*Come Holy Spirit,  
fill the hearts of  
your faithful and  
kindle in them the  
fire of your love.  
Send forth your  
Spirit and they  
shall be created.  
And You shall  
renew the face of  
the earth.*



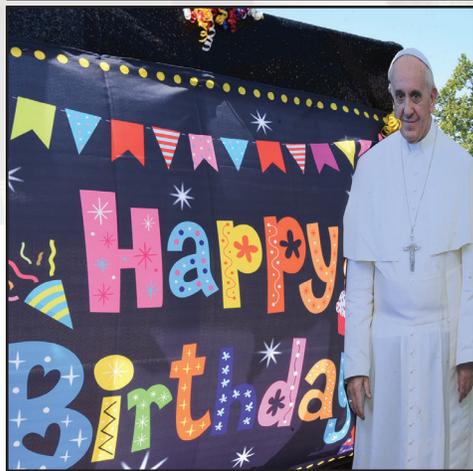
# Let's Gather

AND AWAKEN THE JOY!

## Next up!

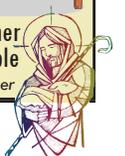
Sunday, July 25 – Let's Make a Splash! There's nothing better in the heat of the summer than a splash in the pool! Join us on this Sunday afternoon from 2 to 4 p.m. at Laguna Creek Sports Club, adjacent to the church at the end of Racquet Court. Games and snacks will add to the fun. A lifeguard will be on duty. (Signed waivers will be required on the premises.)

Saturday, August 28 – Hot August Nights with Food Trucks! Our own local version of the famed Reno/Sparks car event, Good Shepherd's Hot August Nights invites all to gather and view some amazing cars with “wow” factor! Take a leisurely stroll amid the showcase and then grab some fun bites from the food trucks.



## CALENDAR of upcoming events

Friday, June <b>25</b> 2021  Family Movie Night & Dinner	Sunday, July <b>25</b> 2021  Let's Make a Splash	Saturday, August <b>28</b> 2021  Hot August Nights/ Food Trucks
Sunday, September <b>26</b> 2021  Ministries in Motion	Saturday, October <b>30</b> 2021  Trunk or Treat	Friday, November <b>12</b> 2021  "Make & Take" Craft Event
December A FULL month of Christmas <b>Joy</b> 2021  Adopt-A-Family	Friday, January <b>14</b> 2022  Game Night/ Bingo	Friday, February <b>11</b> 2022  Date Night
Saturday, March <b>26</b> 2022  March Madness	Sunday, April <b>10</b> 2022  Easter Egg Hunt	Saturday, May <b>21</b> 2022  Let's Gather at the Table Family Dinner





"I feel complete, finally, I'm here! I feel so blessed and I feel I can really talk to God. It has made my marriage stronger and we practice together and support each other... it's just amazing."

**Karen Alarcio**



"...this leap of faith and trust are my big takeaways. ...It's what you can do for God; a simple hello, giving blessings in daily prayer, Church ...[these] have become my holy, spiritual guides."

**Erwin Briones**



"Now, through RCIA, what I've learned – it blew my mind! It's [faith] now a part of my life."

**Jessie Correia**



"This RCIA process was a great introduction to the Church and Catholic faith. This experience has really opened my eyes and I am very grateful to join such a welcoming community."

**Kevin Ha**



"My faith skyrocketed as I learned about God and our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. To be fully initiated in the Catholic Church is...like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders."

**Kevin Largo**



"I give thanks to the Lord for bringing me into the light. For a very long time I wandered in the dark but now the Lord has guided me back... and into his love. My heart is now at peace. Amen."

**Lucy LaRiosa**



"Like a Fire Phoenix rising up from the ashes, my faith, love and devotion to God have been restored... my heart and soul burning with the grace of our Lord's love, never to be extinguished again. Amen."

**Robert LaRiosa**

# They wanted God ... THROUGH THE CA

(Continued from page 1)

"the elect" through a meaningful year of instruction and preparation as RCIA coordinators.

"They wanted God through the Catholic Church," she adds commenting on the groups' enthusiasm and engagement in the parish. Many are *already* involved in various ministries, not at all hesitant to dip their toes in the water.

Committing to RCIA is a significant act of faith in itself – a year of Sundays, study, dialogue, rites and emotions. But amid pandemic, "the elect" also faced the same problems that plagued the world. Would they meet in person? Would there be Mass? Inside. Outside. Lawn chairs in the breezeway. Mass in the tent. In the rain. A Zoom meeting this week?

"They were going to persevere," Valerie recalls.

## Stirring within

Often, that "on fire" quality stirring within the elect beams obvious through their

eyes, in their smiles, in their words and actions. Faithful observers recognize it as the awesomeness of the spirit at work, translating, transforming, transfiguring.

During their initial inquiry phase, after hearing personal testimonies of faith from the RCIA team, the elect also engage in mutual sharing.

Carlos recounts how many offered "trying testimonies," having been through faith, life or family struggles. Some had considered other churches.

"They had been on a spiritual search," Carlos explains of the personal stories that led each to the Catholic Church.

"It positioned them to receive the grace," he shares referring to Christ's saving grace while also extolling the bonds among them.

Valerie and Carlos reflect on how the growing faith of the elect "makes our faith grow."

"The more they talk and share, the more we see God working in their souls," Valerie says.

But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God...

John 1:12

# CATHOLIC CHURCH

“This is something they choose for themselves,” Carlos interjects commenting on the diverse group which included 20-somethings to older adults “from all walks of life.” He contrasts their experience to those raised in the faith. The lens of adult understanding equips them in a profoundly different way to receive the gift of faith, and Jesus as a friend in their hearts and minds.

“Now, when something happens in their lives, they see God’s work along the way,” Carlos says “and they see it happening for each other.”

## *We are an Easter people*

Pure joy permeates the Easter Vigil Mass as light appears and incense wafts. The elect feel the glory of this night like no other – it’s as if St. Augustine himself whispered his poignant words in the nave, “*We are an Easter people and ‘Alleluia’ is our song!*”

Augustine’s message of perseverance seems particularly fitting for the elect. In receiving their Sacraments of Initiation, they offer their

ultimate “yes” and signal to their brothers and sisters in the pews, *persevere!*

Obstacles at every turn, hurdles to overcome, changes, disappointments, and the heavy weight of time.

The spiritual journeys of the neophytes beckon all to perpetually renew and savor God’s grace – to experience *metanoia* and welcome spiritual conversion every moment of every day. ✚

## *Called to witness the Lord*

Neophytes, “cradle Catholics,” and clergy all share something in common – all are qualified to witness Him! By virtue of encounters in prayer, Mass, relationship, service and study, the faithful are called to share their stories, and all possess a role in the Kingdom of God.

For example, “there is an indispensable role of the clergy,” Carlos explains of the participation and time offered by Good Shepherd’s priests and deacons. He notes a special point of connection for this year’s RCIA class who journeyed with both former pastor, Rev. Chris Frazer and current pastor, Rev. Michael Vaughan, both of whom converted to Catholicism.

Valerie commends the entire RCIA team which was “so dedicated and had so much initiative.” She describes how they “see each other as family” and notes that every aspect of the program flows with the gifts and talents of each as catechists, retreat leads, or hospitality coordinators.

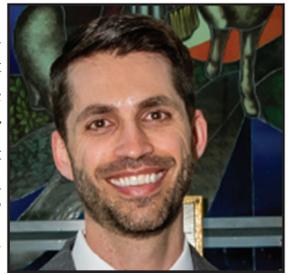
With immense gratitude they highlight the team who witnessed to the Lord: Ladell Cress, Sharon Doricott, John Hanson, Scott and Colleen Morrison, Liz Ponce, Alicia Ramirez, Maria Serpa, and Mike and Monica Small.

*Those who  
love me  
I also love,  
and those who  
seek me  
find me.*

Proverbs 8:17

“The team helped build a strong community that made us all feel welcome and safe ... it was easy to see the Holy Spirit working through each member.”

**Brian Nelson**



“I started my journey hesitant, skeptical, and honestly, a little scared. But on my very first day, I already felt the Holy Spirit... I am a true believer of the power of prayer and what having faith in our Lord can do.”

**Elizabeth Oberes**

“When I began this faith journey, I knew very little about Catholicism. The RCIA program was exactly what I needed to guide me... I am closer to Jesus Christ now than I have ever been.”

**Michael Patrick**



“God always calls his faithful back home.”

**Luke Sullivan**



“I feel refreshed – blessed – like a free spirit.”

**Michael Silvestre**



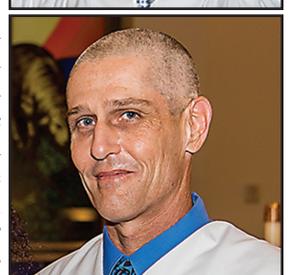
“The RCIA program was a highly emotional experience, that has given me a relationship with God and a sense of peace in my life.”

**Michael Veprin**



“...my eyes are now open ...I am a new creation through the saving work of Jesus! God loves me enough to save me from myself. I can’t express how thankful I really am. Glory be to God!”

**Jason Wagster**



# By their Fruits

Highlighting the good work and “fruits” of our parish ministries and parishioners.

YOU WILL KNOW THEM

...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

- Galatians 5:22-23

## ADOPT-A-FAMILY: Working together to restore hope

Local homeless families start fresh with a little help from a lot of friends

At the conclusion of Mass, parishioners hear, “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life,” or some variation. These familiar words of dismissal remind the faithful of the greater Christian “mission” – to announce and live the Gospel in daily life.

“It’s all about ‘whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me,’” explains Betty May, ministry lead for the Works of Mercy Homeless Outreach (WOM). The newly formalized ministry secured a permit to operate in Sacramento County last November and quickly got to work coordinating the “logistics and distribution” of food and basic survival goods (blankets, clothing, toiletries, etc.) for the homeless population. They also offer a generous supply of encouragement, hope and guidance.

When the Elk Grove Homeless Assistance Resource Team (HART) contacted WOM last spring to ask for help with its “Adopt-a-Family” program, the ministry jumped at the opportunity to serve. It meant helping homeless families transition into permanent housing made available to the city through a grant. Several area churches stepped up, collecting goods and furnishings to outfit modest apartments.

As the point of contact for Good Shepherd, WOM took the lead in bringing the Gospel to life, coordinating with

the St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP) and the Knights of Columbus (K of C). SVdP provided excess food product donated by long-time area businesses (Raley’s, Walmart and Panera Bread) and other miscellaneous goods while K of C offered volunteers to assist with the physical moves into the apartments.

Parishioners were invited to go online, review a list of needed items and drop off a donation on the designated collection day. Many parishioners came, unloading wares and pouring out generous alms. Many offered to do more in the future expressing how the opportunity had blessed *them*.

Good Shepherd helped jumpstart three households. Shantae, Brittany and Darlene all moved in during May, gratefully accepting the comforts of their new homes. SVdP plans to talk with all “Adopt-a-Family” recipients to explore ongoing services.

HART believes Adopt-a-Family will occur as housing becomes available.

Until then, WOM works diligently meeting the homeless where they are delivering meals and beverages. About a dozen ministry members prepare food on Monday mornings. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton school leadership joins in making additional lunches. Other ministries and individuals are helping, too, as they can. They learn. They sort. They give. They pray, glorifying the Lord by their lives.





**MADE ANEW**  
GOD MAKES ALL THINGS NEW  
REV 22:1

## Living a Sacramental Life *Confession nourishes our souls*

*Parishioner Alicia Ramirez takes time to reflect on the sacrament of reconciliation.*

“It’s what we need as we open up after COVID-19,” Alicia affirms with confidence. “It nourishes our souls.”

Grateful for the new offering of additional hours for confession, Alicia remembers the hurry and stress she experienced as a busy, working parent racing to make the window of time on Saturdays. Now, parishioners have the option for another hour on Wednesday evenings.

“I also feel it’s wonderful that we have adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at the same time,” she suggests describing how reconciliation and adoration go “hand-in-hand.” Her voice transitions to an easy, appropriate comfort in sharing what she knows and that is “to acknowledge Him and spend time with Him.” It makes brilliant sense as a frequent and sublime immersion in sacramental living.

“God is so merciful,” Alicia says with clear illumination of the grace poured out in reconciliation and further experienced in devotion and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

“We can have a converting heart as opposed to a hardening heart,” she continues advocating that frequent reconciliation “keeps our hearts open, keeps the dialogue going with God.”

Yet, with all humility, Alicia acknowledges it’s not always easy to make it happen – to foster a rich and full sacramental life. “It’s a day-to-day thing,” she concedes recognizing the daily commitment necessary to grow in faith.

*“The whole power of the sacrament of penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship.” CCC1468*

### **Confession Times:**

**Saturday:** 3–4:30 p.m. in the entry to the Father Philip Wells Hall

**Wednesday:** 5:45–7 p.m. in the church Sacristy with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Church

*Read more on the sacrament of penance and reconciliation in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1420-1498)*

“What we nourish our hearts and souls with,” she pauses and continues “...what we *allow* in our hearts and souls, is how we grow” and how we are made new.

“We can be angry or resentful, or hold on to things,” Alicia explains before stating a far more beautiful alternative – surrender and acknowledge our sins to God so that we may receive His forgiveness and feel His healing and graces.

“God is so merciful,” she repeats with unwavering faith and quite sure God is not looking for our perfection. Indeed, he forgives our failed attempts but the “attempts” are our “yes” to be obedient to Him and that is what makes the difference.

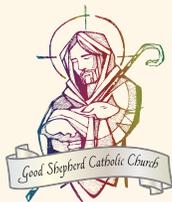
“We need only remind ourselves that we are returning to our loving Father,” Alicia whispers and softly, rhetorically asks, “but if we don’t try?” Then what?

For Alicia, the journey becomes enriched when we are “trying to walk with our Lord.” Sacramental living restores us and reconciles us to God.

Alicia senses that parishioners appreciate the additional hours for confession on Wednesdays. She reports a steady stream of penitents every time she goes – preparing their hearts, examining their consciences.

“We are called to praise, love and honor Him,” she says with gratitude for the occasions to practice our faith and celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation as a pathway to a deeper relationship with the Lord.

Alicia devotes time to RCIA and the parish garden.



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*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

*And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age. Matthew 28:19*

# *Awaken* TO MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

## **What is Missionary Discipleship?**

*"In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt. 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization..."* writes Pope Francis in his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel).

Expounding upon the Holy Father's term – *missionary disciple* – the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis explains, "*We become missionary disciples when we take our encounter with Jesus Christ out into the world.*"

Through prayer and sacrament, missionary disciples develop and grow their relationship with Jesus and accept God's mission to "make disciples of all nations."

"I think the Missionary Disciple prayer I added after communion summarizes where I believe the Holy Spirit wants us to go. After experiencing the love of Christ, we are to go and share this love with others," says Father Michael.

***Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.***

**1 Peter 3:15**

## **Missionary Disciple Prayer for Our Parish**

*Father, You invite each of us to share in the life and ministry of your Son, Jesus. Send your Holy Spirit to form our parish as a community of missionary disciples. Teach us how to hear Jesus, to love Jesus, and to share your gift of salvation with everyone we meet.*

*Through the witness and intercession of Mary, guide me to deepen my commitment as a disciple of Jesus. Lead our parish to grow as an intentional community, committed to go and announce the Gospel of the Lord. We ask these blessings in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.*

*Amen.*