



# Awaken

the soul & let your spirit fly

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

## HOSPITALITY & HOLINESS GO HAND IN HAND

### Reflections on “a profound law of reality”

People often have an innate sense of what hospitality is. An understanding of it develops after experiencing hospitality at the hands of generous, loving individuals who are focused on delivering a special “brand of welcome.” Or they know it because it is instilled in them from their earliest days as part and parcel of faith and family life.

Is it a skill? A quality? An attitude? A gesture? A Christian duty? All of these?

Authentic hospitality fosters a feeling of family and belonging. It is a sacred attentiveness to others but also, a “virtue at risk of being lost,” according to Pope Francis.

A “**virtue.**” Without a doubt.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, “Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions and guide our conduct according to reason and faith.” (CCC 1804). Hospitality fits this description.

“**At risk of being lost.**” Is the habit of hospitality falling by the wayside?

It deserves a closer look. Bishop Jaime Soto’s 2021 pastoral letter, [Call to Holiness](#) examines the interrelatedness of hospitality and holiness, teaching that they go hand in hand. It offers examples of all the facets of hospitality that must be lived in our Christian life today if we are to **draw** closer to Christ, **experience** an ever-increasing holiness that is found only in Him, and **become**

“the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.” In short, Bishop Soto visits the habits of hospitality that must be present in our parish and importantly, in our hearts as we strive for holiness.

Bishop Soto writes “true holiness makes us disciples of Jesus and missionaries of his Gospel.” We become “the living sacrament of his presence in the world.”

As missionary discipleship continues as the preeminent topic of focus in Good Shepherd’s parish community, holding a magnifying glass to the virtue of hospitality invites us to “a profound law of reality” – a notion referenced by Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel).

*“Life grows by being given away... those who enjoy life the most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others.”*

Pope Francis echoes these words from the forerunner Aparecida Document of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops in 2007 and repeats its assertion that this selfless giving and its resulting joy convey “a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others.” (EG #10)

Hospitality IS love of neighbor — charitable action toward one another — and a

**We become  
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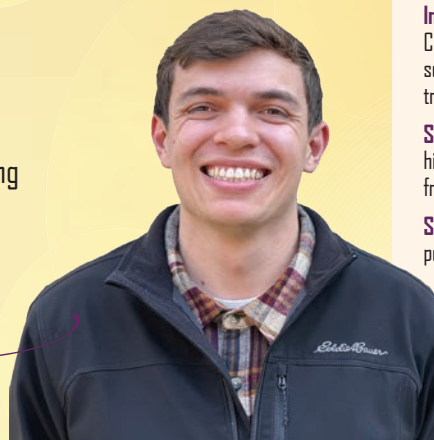
(Story continues on page 4)



To Hear Jesus  
To Love Jesus

Towards an ever-deepening  
relationship with Christ

## THRESHOLDS of Conversion



**Initial Trust** - A positive association with Jesus Christ, the Church, a Christian believer, or something identifiably Christian. The bridge of trust moves people closer to God.

**Spiritual Curiosity** - A sure intrigue with Jesus, his life and his teachings, with varying intensities from simple awareness to powerful desire.

**Spiritual Openness** - An openness to the possibility of personal and spiritual change.

**Spiritual Seeking** - A pronounced movement from passively seeking God to actively seeking to know God.

**Intentional Discipleship** - A decision to "drop one's nets," committing to follow Jesus in his Church, reordering life accordingly.

## JACOB FLOREZ: SEEKING GOD

“I definitely have *not* always had a strong faith,” says Jacob Florez, a young man of 22, open and happy to share his journey of spiritual seeking. Despite his Catholic upbringing, he recalls his teen years as a time when he was “Catholic in name only,” not sincerely practicing his religion and not committed to growing in faith.

“My parents would still make me go to Mass every Sunday,” he says divulging how “I did not want to go.” Growing up in Elk Grove and attending local schools, Jacob – the middle child with an older brother and a younger sister – had other interests.

He admits, “I’m very thankful,” referring to his parent’s wisdom and persistence. “I wasn’t thankful at that time,” but he looks back with clarity and appreciation for the seeds of faith planted in his heart.

“I had a conversion experience,” Jacob shares unfolding the story of his turning back to God. He cites a long, “pretty terrible” relationship during his junior and senior years of high school. On and off again, emotional and untrue, Jacob knew “something was up.”

“I prayed for the first time in I don’t know how long,” he shares, asking God whether to stay with his girlfriend. He asked God to send him a sign. He got an answer the very next day, although it was not immediately apparent, or acted upon. But soon enough, Jacob realized it.

“I knew that God had answered my prayer,” he insists describing his mental revelation. “I had to sit with the reality, and ask where do I go from here?”

“I can’t just leave this... I can’t just say ‘OK you answered me,’ and then go on with my life as if nothing had ever happened,” Jacob says recognizing that he was at a turning point that sparked a spiritual conversion and set his spiritual seeking in motion.

What followed was a four-year period of intensive seeking. Jacob sought friends and community and happily connected with the youth group. He joined them for Mass at Good Shepherd and attended events volunteering and serving. Others recognized his natural abilities and how “alive” he was in faith, encouraging him to “think about the priesthood.”

While working a job, and studying at Cosumnes River College, he served as a lector at St. Charles Borromeo Parish. He connected with a priest confessor there who would become his spiritual director, and he entered a year-long discernment of priesthood.

“I just had this yearning to give God my absolute everything,” Jacob explains confiding his thoughts out loud. “I’m so in love with God, and I want to do whatever he wants me to do!”

Jacob’s discernment led him to the Cathedral for daily Mass and to literature and discussions, and always to prayer. In time, he recognized God was not calling him to the priesthood, but he *was* calling him to seek him further.

“When I first learned about God, it was in a very intellectual way,” he recalls keenly aware of an influence on his heart and how he grew in his personal relationship with God. “It got me hungry for the larger picture... for eternity.”

Jacob accepted a teacher’s aid job at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School over a year ago and became the technology teacher for the 2022-2023 academic year. He knew the environment would be ideal for him to continue seeking God.

He also joined the Knights of Columbus and the Soldiers of St. Michael, and he is participating in the Exodus 90 program for the second year. He “fell in love” with the tradition of the Church and sought out the Latin Mass celebrated at St. Stephen the First Martyr Parish in Sacramento.

Outside of teaching, Jacob attends Franciscan University at Steubenville’s online platform in pursuit of a degree in clinical psychology. Confident in God’s generosity he believes, *“the pilgrim’s journey on earth is continual seeking. I pray for God’s grace that I may continue seeking so I may continue finding him.”*



Jacob serves as the technology teacher at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School

# LENT, TRIDUUM & EASTER SEASONS

## BECKON THE FAITHFUL TO

# Grow in Holiness



### SOUP FOR THE SOUL AIMS TO HELP SET SIGHTS ON ETERNITY

The Evangelization Outreach Ministry's **Soup for the Soul** invites parishioners, once again, to join together every Friday evening in Lent. This beloved gathering offers a simple meal of delicious soup with bread, shared in fellowship, as the community watches a series of video presentations certain to deepen one's faith and Catholic understanding.

This year, *Eternal Rest - The Art of Dying Well*, explores the mystery of death and dying. Presented by the Augustine Institute on the FORMED media platform, these programs walk the viewer through "very real questions about death."

According to the FORMED website, "*Eternal Rest examines the origin of death, the afterlife, and the powerful reality around the sacrament that ushers us into eternal life. Eternal Rest presents the Catholic Church's teaching about death and God's response to it with wisdom and truth, gentleness and compassion, so we can think about and prepare for death in the light of Jesus Christ, the Author of life.*"

Especially as we journey through Lent, Soup for the Soul and these video presentations nourish in body and spirit.



**Held in the Father Philip Wells Hall, doors open at 5:45 p.m. with soup service beginning at 6:00 p.m. and the video thereafter.**

### STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Good Shepherd's clergy-led Stations of the Cross occur every Friday (Feb. 24 through March 31) in the Church at 7:00 p.m. following Soup for the Soul. For anyone preferring daytime hours, Stations of the Cross are offered on Wednesdays (March 1 through April 5) during Lent at 1:15 p.m. in conjunction with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School.

### EUCCHARISTIC PROCESSION ON HOLY THURSDAY

Holy Thursday, also known as Maundy Thursday, begins the three-day season of Triduum and commemorates the Lord's

institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood. The Mass of the Last Supper occurs April 6 at 7:00 p.m. and marks the first of the poignant and meaningful liturgies preceding Easter. At the conclusion of this Mass, at 8:00 p.m., the priest will process out with the Eucharist, without a final blessing and without sending the faithful.

A Eucharistic Procession then will commence with all walking out of the Narthex and throughout the Good Shepherd campus arriving at the Altar of Repose – *a temporary altar and tabernacle for the consecrated hosts to be reposed* – in the parish hall. Here the consecrated hosts will remain until the Mass of the Presanctified on Good Friday afternoon when only the celebrant consumes the reserved Eucharist at this liturgy.

The Eucharistic Procession calls the faithful to be ever-mindful of the Eucharistic Revival underway. It allows us to prepare worthily for the ongoing catechesis and events unfolding and to turn and return hearts to the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

**Save these dates and share in the generosity of these ministries.**

#### Fellowship Breakfasts

March 5 and April 2

Hosted by:

Knights of Columbus

#### Mini Ministry Fair

Outreach/Parish Life

Ministry Alliance -

March 11/12 after all

Masses

#### Easter Egg Hunt

April 2, Palm Sunday

Hosted by:

Kinderchurch

(Continues from page 1)

necessary virtue as we grow in holiness.

“The disposition of hospitality opens us up to the amazing mercy to be found in Christ and the unexpected graces discovered when welcoming others on the pilgrimage of faith,” Bishop Soto writes.

*Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World promulgated by the Second Vatican Council in 1965 taught that “man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself” to others. This is holiness.

# Using the gifts you have received in service to others

Good Shepherd Parish’s 30-year history has made a virtuous habit of hospitality watching it take hold in every facet of parish life and grow symbiotically throughout its ministries and people. In an organic way, hospitality – love, service, and outreach – is how parishioners give of themselves, touch lives and mature in holiness.



CATHY LORDA

**Cathy Lorda** witnesses this personally as she has participated in parish ministries and events for more than two decades. Her gifts of planning, purchasing and organizational skills allow her to extend the grace of God both within the parish and beyond to the larger community, orchestrating a generosity that manifests in the form of meaningful



MARK CASALE

fellowship, food, drink, fun, friendship and belonging.

“The more you give, the more you receive,” Cathy says hinting that her involvement and leadership within the Parish Life Activities Ministry, Works of Mercy Ministry and Columbiettes brings her to a place of joy. “Whether a funeral



VICKY MOORE

reception or the joy of a crab feed,” Cathy explains how she finds service in these forms to be “very holy, reaching to God.”

Thinking back on her professional work with Children’s Youth Services, she relates the same joy that she experienced there to her Good Shepherd ministry work.

“When you see people leaving who are happy, uplifted, informed, educated,” she pauses knowing the list could go on, but instead she expresses “you would do the whole thing just for one person.”

Describing these holy moments, Cathy punctuates the fact that just one holy moment created and given for even one person stirs up an exchange of holiness between giver and receiver.

Be hospitable to one another without complaint.  
As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.

1 Peter 4:10

# Sacramental Dimensions of Hospitality

In [Call to Holiness](#), Bishop Soto imparts two sacramental dimensions of hospitality which “bring us into a greater harmony with the one, holy sacrifice of Christ. He stresses that hospitality is “more than a gracious gesture” but also an “opportunity to grow in holiness of Christ and communicate his holiness to others.”

The pastoral principles of **CO-RESPONSIBILITY** and **ACCOUNTABILITY** are described

as “ascetic disciplines” which allow us to grow in holiness together while teaching us to be more hospitable to the gifts, the wisdom, as well as the needs of one another.

- By our baptism we share in Christ's new creation as part of Christ's body — no longer strangers to one another. “We are **RESPONSIBLE** to Christ and one another to share our respective God-given gifts for the good of the

Body of Christ. This is the baptismal responsibility of every disciple.”

- “**ACCOUNTABILITY** is the practice of reverence for one another.” It is recognizing the presence of Christ in individuals and seeing the unity of the whole Body. “If one part suffers, all parts suffer with it. If one part is honored, all the parts share in the joy.” (1 Cor. 12:26-27)

**M**ark Casale serves as the Executive Chef for Good Shepherd (and Dos Coyotes restaurants) offering his gifts and expertise in food preparation and service from gourmet dinners and receptions to simpler food fare for festivals and events. Mark senses the same experience but describes it as finding “an inner peace within myself,” interpreting both his professional and charitable work “as a call.”

From his earliest recollections, Mark indicates his hospitality roots “come from a family background” of providing food and welcoming others. It is who he is and almost apologetically he says, “I feel selfish” extending hospitality, charitable service and donation “because it brings so much more to me.”

But Mark continues, relentlessly, tirelessly, recognizing that perhaps that uncomfortable selfish feeling is really “God's reward.” To be sure, answering God's call to render hospitality in all its forms seems to be reciprocated with God's blessings and a persistent desire to give more. And he does.

Mark also has served on the board of JDRF for more than 20 years giving his time and talent to the foundation which is devoted to funding research for Type 1 diabetes.

**V**icky Moore, likewise no stranger to the finest points of hospitality, exudes a spirit of welcome and often can be seen at parish events and before Mass greeting parishioners and neighbors with her brimming smile and words of kindness. A self-described “hole-filler,” she shares how she steps into holes, or voids, learning new things while delivering hospitality via service, friendship, assistance and “whatever God asks you to do.”

Vicky shares in the Parish Life Activities Ministry's joys with Cathy and serves as a Mass Coordinator and a greeter. She also was an instrumental leader of the Welcome Back Committee in 2021 charged with ensuring a safe and enjoyable return to parish life. Outside of the parish, Vicky has long been a board member with Elk Grove's Strauss Festival and involved with the Elk Grove Historical Society.

Vicky agrees with Mark. She feels a bit embarrassed that she gets to enjoy serving others so much. That feeling is fleeting though because she knows offering hospitality is “doing His work.”

During post-event meetings Vicky asks a routine question to her partners in ministry, “*where did you see God working?*” She tells how the ensuing dialogue always “points to God,” encourages a thoughtful realization of the impact of service and hospitality, and illuminates *their* roles as instruments of God's love and blessing.

## *At risk of being lost?*

Pope Francis wants us to ponder that question. Is the Christian virtue of hospitality at risk of being lost?

Bishop Soto, too, in his pastoral letter, encourages us to consider how we exercise our co-responsibility and accountability as sacramental dimensions of hospitality. By virtue of baptism, missionary disciples are called to hospitality.

For Cathy, Mark and Vicky, any opportunity to connect, share and experience the joy of giving selflessly is an opportunity to bring others closer to God. And, an opportunity to grow in holiness.

Let brotherly love  
continue.  
Do not neglect  
hospitality,  
for through it  
some have unknowingly  
entertained angels.

**Hebrews 13: 1-2**



## FRUITFUL DISCIPLESHIP

... blooms year-round  
in Good Shepherd's  
ministries.

Learn more as we feature one of our  
ministry alliances in each issue.

# CALLED TO BE . . .



Betty May - Chair, Outreach/Parish  
Life Ministry Alliance

Outreach/Parish Life  
Alliance



Ministry leads: **Back** - Gary Hickman, Respect Life Ministry; **Middle** - Vicky Moore and Cathy Lorda, Parish Life Activities Ministry; **Front** - Julie Danielson, Vocation Ministry; Suzanne Dodd, Hearts of Compassion; Betty May, Works of Mercy/Homeless Ministry; Christa Archie, Elizabeth Ministry. (Not pictured: Celeste Hickman, Elizabeth Ministry; Donna Gutierrez, Evangelization Outreach Ministry; Helen Bayha, Sharing & Caring Seniors; Norma Fernandez, St. John Caregiver Support Group; Liz Ponce, Lazarus Ministry; Ninfa Campomanes, Vocations Ministry; and Irma Michel, Jail Ministry.)

The [Alliance of Outreach/Parish Life Ministries](#) is the action-based social justice arm of the parish. Led by Betty May, the ministries within this alliance possess an outward focus and a zeal for bringing the Gospel to life in our modern world.

“We must be communities of ‘salt and light’ to fulfill His mission,” Betty says unequivocally defining these ministries as “absolutely missionary discipleship.” She also excerpts a 2006

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops document, *Communities of Salt and Light*, to punctuate the point.

*“We as a ‘parish cannot really proclaim the gospel if its message is not reflected in its own community life... We cannot call ourselves followers of Jesus unless we take up his mission of bringing the good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, and new sight to the blind.”*

Betty acknowledges how when the terminology of

missionary discipleship became more widespread, she struggled to see how it applied to every baptized Christian. Then, with further study and contemplation, it hit her.

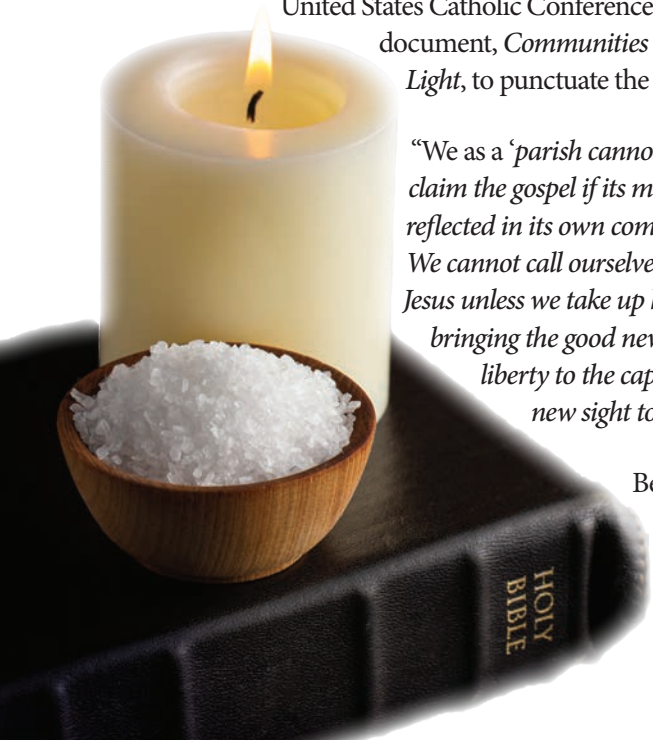
“It’s absolutely true,” she says of her revelation and understanding of how we ARE all called to be missionary disciples and to put the Gospel into action.

“There’s got to be an awareness of this for every person in the pew,” Betty says emphasizing a genuine recognition of “the expectation” to answer Jesus’ call which will be different for every person. She also stresses, “I don’t believe we receive only one calling.” Betty senses that through the stages of life, Christians are called in many ways within their families and communities, and always called to be salt and light. This takes the form of charity, justice and peace “not just within our four walls, but everywhere,” she says.

The Outreach/Parish Life ministries give parishioners opportunities to be salt and light, to give of themselves while doing works of mercy.

“Not everyone (or every ministry) will do it in the same way,” Betty acknowledges offering Jesus’ example as the premiere giver of hospitality, mercy and love.

\*USCCB - [Communities of Salt and Light - Reflection on The Social Mission of the Parish, July 2006.](#)



# Salt & Light TO OTHERS

Every parish ministry, one's own life work, community involvement and family dynamics all bear the deep-seated essence and opportunity for extending one or more of the works of mercy. Reflecting the selfless giving of Christ's perfect sacrifice, members of the mystical body of Christ are called to a radical Christ-like holiness.

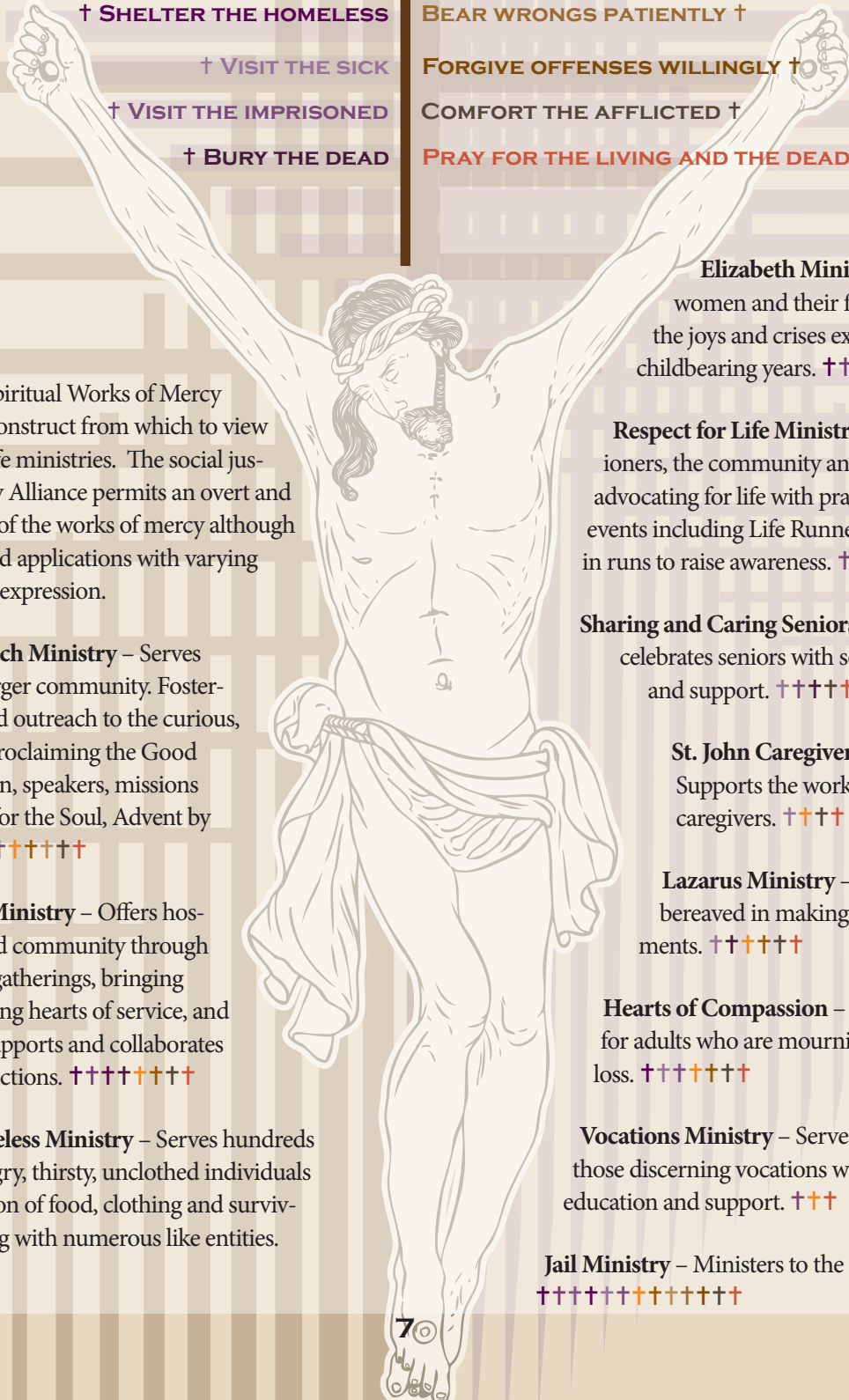
"The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church...The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth." *Lumen Gentium*

## Corporal Works of Mercy

- † FEED THE HUNGRY
- † GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY
- † CLOTHE THE NAKED
- † SHELTER THE HOMELESS
- † VISIT THE SICK
- † VISIT THE IMPRISONED
- † BURY THE DEAD

## Spiritual Works of Mercy

- INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT †
- COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL †
- ADMONISH THE SINNER †
- BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY †
- FORGIVE OFFENSES WILLINGLY †
- COMFORT THE AFFLICTED †
- PRAY FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD †



The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy provide a natural construct from which to view the Outreach/Parish Life ministries. The social justice lens of this ministry Alliance permits an overt and often literal translation of the works of mercy although it also can have nuanced applications with varying shades of meaning and expression.

**Evangelization Outreach Ministry** – Serves parishioners and the larger community. Fostering a bridge of trust, and outreach to the curious, the open, the seekers, proclaiming the Good News through education, speakers, missions and events. (e.g., Soup for the Soul, Advent by Candlelight, etc.) ††††††††††

**Parish Life Activities Ministry** – Offers hospitality to the parish and community through events, receptions and gatherings, bringing families together, building hearts of service, and welcoming all. Often supports and collaborates with other ministry functions. ††††††††††

**Works of Mercy/Homeless Ministry** – Serves hundreds of homeless, tired, hungry, thirsty, unclothed individuals weekly in the distribution of food, clothing and survival supplies, collaborating with numerous like entities. ††††††††††††††††

**Elizabeth Ministry** – Outreach to women and their families throughout the joys and crises experienced in the childbearing years. ††††††††††

**Respect for Life Ministry** – Serves parishioners, the community and the voiceless, advocating for life with prayer, education and events including Life Runners who participate in runs to raise awareness. ††††††††††

**Sharing and Caring Seniors** – Gathers and celebrates seniors with social connection and support. †††††

**St. John Caregiver Support Group** – Supports the work and challenges of caregivers. ††††

**Lazarus Ministry** – Ministers to the bereaved in making funeral arrangements. ††††††

**Hearts of Compassion** – Support ministry for adults who are mourning and suffering loss. ††††††††

**Vocations Ministry** – Serves parishioners and those discerning vocations with encouragement, education and support. †††

**Jail Ministry** – Ministers to the imprisoned. ††††††††††††††††



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Practice the faith ...

## Awaken THE SOUL

Steve and Libby Cortez talk about their faith easily, “living” in their faith comfortably as a deep part of who they are as individuals and as a family. “I’m not sure how anyone lives in today’s world without faith,” Libby says signaling a certain strength gained by practices and habits, but also from a spiritual existence rooted in self-giving and gratitude — hospitality.

Libby, a hospice nurse, and Steve, a psychiatric social worker who recently retired from Rio Consumnes Correctional Center, describe their respective professions as “chosen careers” knowing they wanted to be there for others. Faith in action. Mercy and love at work.

“I start and end my days with prayer,” Libby says but really her whole day is a beautiful prayer of trust. “I trust that others are doing the best they can,” she mentions while suggesting that trust “makes life better.” Her faith is woven into her hospice work, too, as she recounts common dialogues and conversations with those who are nearing the end of life.

“Many are scared to die,” she says describing how people “lean in” to faith, seeking reconciliation and a spiritual connection. She tells how atheists have even shared how they “talk to God” and “know” him. Libby’s faith assures them as it reassures Libby, too.

Recovering from cancer, Steve also turns to prayer at the beginning of his day as the foundation of all encounters. “I enjoy helping others help themselves,” he says emphasizing his practices of empathy, listening, and patience, always delivered with a smile. Living virtuously translates to engaging people and being friendly. Being holy.

Steve, a cradle Catholic and Libby, a convert, married in Santa Cruz and moved to Elk Grove in 2002. Their son Joshua, 19, grew up in the parish, attending St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School and Jesuit High School. Now living in Daytona, Florida attending Embry Riddle Aeronautical

University to become a pilot, Steve and Libby beam when they speak of him.

“He called us and said, ‘well my first week went good. . . I found the church I’m going to go to, I met the priest, and I’m going to altar serve and play the trumpet,’” Steve reports so proud that “Josh is becoming his own person” and continuing with the ministries and gifts he offered to Good Shepherd Parish as a youth.

Steve and Libby talk candidly about Joshua’s chosen high-risk profession and relate their son’s wish. “If something were to happen to me I would not want you to worry because you know, I’m with God,” Steve says repeating the words of his son who is clearly at peace with his decisions, and at home with his faith.

The Cortezes take time to reflect on

**THE CORTEZ FAMILY:**  
“God is alive in us”



weekly homilies often talking later about how the priest’s words speak to them personally. They marvel at how “they were meant to hear that” each and every week.

“I think these are signs that God is alive. . . that God is alive in us every day and we just need to take the time to listen and pay attention,” Steve surmises, but his is not a theory at all. They practice their faith as a lived reality.