



St. Michael the Archangel Parish

Spiritual Book Club Looks Forward to Growth as an Active Parish Ministry

The St. Michael Spiritual Book Club is in its infant stages, but organizer Dennis Boyd, a parish lector, hopes that it can grow to become a thriving ministry for our parish. "I've been reading the work of Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, and it made such a change in my life that I want to talk about it with other people," Dennis says. "I got this idea, so I want to see what happens."

The new ministry was announced in the Ministry Catalog, and a number of parishioners have expressed interest as of this past December. At that time, Dennis was working to set up a meeting time and place. He is considering holding evening sessions at the Grace Parish Center, although there are suggestions to hold meetings in the afternoon.

continued on back cover

"I've been reading the work of Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, and it made such a change in my life that I want to talk about it with other people. I got this idea, so I want to see what happens."

— Dennis Boyd



In this Issue

- 2 Lā Hāpala Lehu: A Catholic Tradition of Reflection and Renewal
- 3 Embracing Stewardship During Lent
- 4 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: Bringing Our Prayers and Holy Communion to the Hospitalized
- 6 Strengthening Your Catholic Faith: A Guide to Spiritual Growth and Faith Formation
- 7 Celebrating Our 2023 Living Stewards

75-5769 Ali'i Drive,
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
(808) 326-7771
saintmichaelparishkona.org

PEPELUALI/FEBRUARY
MALAKI/MARCH
2024

A Catholic Tradition of Reflection and Renewal

Lā Hāpala Lehu

A solemn day that marks the beginning of Lent, Lā Hāpala Lehu, or Ash Wednesday, holds a special place in the hearts of Catholics worldwide. Rooted in centuries-old traditions, this observance is laden with symbolism and significance, providing a profound opportunity for spiritual reflection and renewal.

Ash Wednesday falls 40 days before Easter Sunday, excluding Sundays, and serves as a period of penance, fasting, and prayer, mirroring the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert. The name itself is derived from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful in the sign of the cross. This year, it falls on February 14.

The history of Ash Wednesday can be traced back to the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting, symbolized in Judaism by the sprinkling of ashes on the head. This practice was later adopted by early Christians as a public expression of repentance. The ashes used on this day are typically derived from the burned palms blessed on the previous year's Palm Sunday, symbolizing the connection between death, repentance, and the promise of resurrection.

The liturgy of Ash Wednesday is profound and poignant, emphasizing humility and mortality. The priest applies ashes in the shape of a cross to the foreheads of the faithful, uttering the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust, you shall return" or "Repent and believe in the Gospel". This ritual serves as a stark

reminder of the brevity of human life and the need for repentance and conversion.

The significance of Ash Wednesday extends beyond the symbolic act of ash imposition. It heralds the beginning of Lent, a period of self-examination, prayer, fasting, and charity. Catholics are called to reflect on their lives, identify areas of sin, and strive for spiritual growth. Fasting and abstinence from certain pleasures during Lent are seen as a way to detach from worldly distractions and draw closer to God. We are called to do works of charity with the resources we save from our fasting.

The 40 days of Lent are symbolic of the time Jesus spent fasting in the desert, facing temptations from the devil. Through prayer, fasting, and acts of charity, we seek to emulate Christ's journey, fostering a deeper connection with our faith.

Ash Wednesday serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative journey toward Easter, where the faithful celebrate the resurrection of Christ. It invites Catholics to embark on a period of introspection, penance, and spiritual growth, fostering a renewed commitment to their faith. As the ashes are traced on foreheads, the faithful are reminded not only of our mortality but also of the eternal hope found in Christ's sacrifice. In this season of Lent, we are encouraged to embrace the call to repentance, turning away from sin and towards a life of holiness and grace.

Some Resources to Make the Most of the Lenten Season

We are happy to share with you some resources that can help you make the most of this Lenten Season, as we proceed on the solemn and prayerful journey toward Easter.

Aquinas's Lenten Meditations: 40 Days with the Angelic Doctor — Sophia Institute Press.

Best Lent Ever Journal, 2024 edition.

Dynamic Catholic *Best Lent Ever* free daily videos — free signup, dynamiccatholic.com.

The Chosen — watch on Amazon Prime, or download app on App Store or Google Play.

The Ignatian Workout for Lent; 40 Days of Prayer, Reflection, and Action — Tim Muldoon, 1989, Loyola Press.

Lenten Gospel Reflections 2024 — Word on Fire, www.wordonfire.org.

Praying Lent; Renewing Our Lives on the Lenten Journey — Andy Alexander, SJ and Maureen McCann Waldron, 2009, Loyola Press.

Embracing Stewardship During *Lent*

Lent, the 40-day season of reflection and preparation leading up to Easter, is a time of spiritual growth, self-examination, and deepening one's relationship with God. Central to the Lenten experience is the connection to stewardship and recommitting to our commitments of time, talent, and treasure during Lent, so that we can truly embody the spirit of this season of sacrifice and renewal.

Time is one of God's most precious gifts to us. During Lent, consider how you can commit more of your time to prayer and service. This could involve setting aside a specific time each day for prayer and reflection, attending daily Mass, or participating in additional religious activities such as Stations of the Cross or adoration. By dedicating more of your time to God during Lent, you deepen your connection with Him and grow in your understanding of what it means to be a steward of the gift of time.

When it comes to talent, each of us possesses unique skills, and these gifts are to be used for the greater good. Lent is an excellent time to reflect on how you can commit your talents to serve others and glorify God. Consider volunteering at our parish or a local charitable organization, sharing your skills with those in need, or using your talents to enhance our church community. This act of giving not only benefits those you serve, but also strengthens your own sense of purpose and connection to your faith.

Stewardship of treasure is also an integral part of living a faithful life. Lent provides an opportunity to evaluate how you use your financial resources and make commitments to give generously. You might choose to increase your contributions to our parish or donate to a charitable cause that aligns with your values. Also, consider making financial sacrifices during Lent, such as giving up a luxury or non-essential expense, and redirecting those funds towards acts of charity and kindness. These financial commitments reflect your understanding that all your material wealth is a gift from God, and you are called to use it responsibly and generously.

As you make these Lenten commitments of time, talent, and treasure during Lent, it's crucial to incorporate prayer and reflection into your journey. Spend time in prayer, asking God for guidance and strength to fulfill your commitments. Reflect on your progress, celebrate your successes, and acknowledge areas where you can improve. This self-examination is a fundamental aspect of Catholic stewardship and is an integral part of the Lenten experience.

Lent is traditionally a season of sacrifice, symbolizing the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness. By committing your time, talent, and treasure, you are making a conscious choice to embrace sacrifice as a path to renewal. The sacrifices you make during this season help you grow closer to God, and in the process, you experience a spiritual rebirth that prepares you for the celebration of Easter.

Acts of mercy and kindness are a tangible expression of your commitments during Lent. By giving your time in prayer, sharing your talents with others, and sharing your treasure with the parish and those in need, you embody the love and compassion of Christ. Your actions become a testament to the principles of stewardship, and they have a positive impact on your community and the world at large.

By focusing on stewardship with your commitments of time, talent, and treasure, you can fully embrace the spirit of Lent and grow in your faith. This approach transforms the season into a time of deeper self-examination, spiritual growth, and a genuine connection to God's gifts. It is a reminder that living as a faithful steward is not a one-time commitment, but a way of life — one that extends far beyond the Lenten season.

Extraordinary Ministers Chaplains Joyfully Bring Our Prayers and



These are the items that chaplains use when visiting and taking Communion to hospital patients.

“It is a way for Catholics to live out their faith using their time and talents to minister to the sick. Some patients may feel alone and forgotten. For many people, their ‘church family’ is as important to them as their biological family.”

— Frances Vasquez

As a community, we always pray for the sick and homebound. Here at St. Michael the Archangel, a special group of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) called Chaplains take the extra step to bring the Eucharist to individuals at Kona Community Hospital who are unable to attend Mass in person. By bringing our hospitalized brothers and sisters Holy Communion, visiting with them, and praying with them, this ministry connects us all by also bringing our prayers and hopes for their healing in a real tangible way.

“The Chaplains visit the sick at the hospital, offer prayers and spiritual support to the patients, and most importantly, our Catholic Chaplains offer the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ through the Eucharist,” says ministry leader Frances Vasquez. “Receiving the Eucharist is a healing balm for the soul that brings the Real Presence of Christ to them through Holy Communion.

“Visiting the sick is also a corporal and spiritual work of mercy,” Frances adds. “It is a way for Catholics to live out their faith using their time and talents to minister to the sick. Some patients may feel alone and forgotten. For many people, their ‘church family’ is as important to them as their biological family.”

The parish first screens volunteers as EMHCs, and after Fr. Lio approves them, they are commissioned to serve the parish, and trained and instructed on how to properly and respectfully bring Holy Communion to the sick and homebound. If they volunteer to visit the sick at the hospital, Frances will arrange for them to go through volunteer training and screening at Kona Community Hospital to become Hospital Chaplains. This requires an online orientation and training, filling out the required paperwork, a background check, and fingerprinting. For a hospital patient to request a visit, a family member or friend can call the parish office. Most often, however, Chaplains use the list of Catholic patients provided by the hospital.



rs of Holy Communion d Holy Communion to the Hospitalized

“Any Catholic who is in good standing with the church can volunteer,” Frances says. “One of the things that I like about the hospital ministry is the convenience of choosing when I can visit, and I can go any time of day that is convenient for me.”

Chaplains are provided with three basic items from St. Michael — a special container called a pyx and a case called a burse, in which they carry the Holy Eucharist. They also receive a booklet called *Communion of the Sick*.

“When an EMHC is new to the hospital, I arrange to have them shadow me during a hospital visit,” Frances says. “I also show them all the locations in the hospital that they may need to eventually visit. I show them where the chapel is located and where I keep extra handouts or prayers for healing. Also, if they request it, I accompany them on their first solo visit. I want the volunteers to know that I am always available to answer questions or discuss any concerns they may have.”

When Frances visits a patient, she likes to prepare beforehand through prayer.

“I strive to see Christ in the face of every person that I serve, so I always spend a few minutes in prayer prior to going into the hospital,” she says. “I ask the Holy Spirit to be with me so I can best serve the people I visit and touch their hearts or comfort them through prayer. Sometimes I stay at church and pray after being given the Eucharist, or I’ll pray in my car before going in to see patients.”

She begins the visit by introducing herself as a Chaplain from St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church and explains that they are on the list of Catholic patients provided by the hospital.

“I generally visit with them for a few minutes,” Frances says. “I might ask where they live, or what parish they belong to, or where are they from to start a conversation. During my visit, I may tell people about something that spoke to me in the liturgy, or perhaps just remind people about the liturgical season or tell them about a saint who is special to me. If they are



Chaplains Ed and Bonnie Smialek minister to St. Michael parishioner Aunty Fanny Gouveia.

fallen-away Catholics, I invite them back to the Church and tell them that God is very merciful and He is waiting for them to return with open arms.”

Frances also came up with a beautiful prayer for healing, which she has made available to all of the Chaplains.

“I ask the patient if I can pray for them,” she says. “After the prayer, I offer Communion and follow the format provided in the *Communion for the Sick* booklet. This can be a time when people are vulnerable or are worried about their health. By bringing the Eucharist to them, I remind them that they are never alone, that God is always with them. Having someone from the Church visit is reassuring and comforting. Sometimes I see people’s faces light up with a big smile when I tell them I’m the Chaplain from St. Michael! They are so grateful for a visit.”

For more information about the ministry, or to get involved as a Chaplain, contact Frances Vasquez at 505-328-1727.



Strengthening Your Catholic Faith: A Guide to Spiritual Growth and Faith Formation

The journey of faith is a lifelong commitment, a continuous process of deepening our relationship with Christ and understanding the teachings of the Church. To improve your faith life and foster a closer connection with Christ, it's essential to engage in meaningful practices and explore Catholic literature that can provide spiritual nourishment. Here are some ideas to help you enhance your faith and some insightful Catholic-based books to read.

DAILY PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Building a strong connection with God starts with prayer and reflection. Setting aside time each day for prayer, whether it's the Rosary, the *Liturgy of the Hours*, or simply speaking from the heart, allows you to commune with the Divine. To complement your daily prayer, consider reading *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, a classic work that guides Catholics in developing a deeper prayer life and drawing closer to Christ.

ATTEND MASS REGULARLY

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Catholic faith. Regular attendance at Mass is crucial to growing closer to Christ. It's not just about fulfilling an obligation — it's an opportunity to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior. For a deeper understanding of the Mass, *The Lamb's Supper* by Scott Hahn offers insights into the biblical roots of the Eucharist and its significance.

STUDY THE BIBLE

The Word of God is a rich source of spiritual growth. Dive into the Scriptures, attend Bible studies, or join a Catholic reading group (check out our Spiritual Book Club on the cover) to dedicate some time for spiritual growth. *The Catholic Study Bible* with commentary is an excellent resource for gaining a deeper understanding of the Bible's teachings and how

they relate to your faith. Utilize the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' New American Bible online at www.bible.usccb.org/bible.

ENGAGE IN FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS

Your local parish may offer faith formation programs, which can provide a structured way to learn about the teachings of the Church. These programs can include courses on Catholic theology, morality, and the history of the Church. Ask your parish for information about available opportunities to deepen your faith and understanding.

READ CATHOLIC LITERATURE

Immersing yourself in Catholic literature is a powerful way to improve your faith formation. *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales is a classic that offers practical guidance for leading a life of holiness. *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis is a thought-provoking established work that explores the Christian faith from a broader perspective.

SEEK SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Having a spiritual director or mentor can be immensely beneficial in your faith journey. They can offer guidance, support, and insights that help you grow spiritually. Consider reading *Spiritual Direction: A Guide for Sharing the Father's Love* by Fr. Thomas Acklin and Fr. Boniface Hicks to understand the role of a spiritual director in your life.

Improving your faith life and growing closer to Christ is an ongoing process. By incorporating these practices and exploring Catholic literature, you can deepen your understanding of Church teachings and develop a more profound relationship with our Lord.

Remember that faith formation is a personal journey, and it is never too late to start or continue on the path to spiritual growth.



Celebrating Our 2023 LIVING STEWARDS

Ho'omaika'i 'ana to our 2023 Living Stewards. The way you live out stewardship inspires our entire parish 'ohana to be better disciples of Jesus. Mahalo for all that you do!



Sebastián Afaga
Cesar Oswaldo Botello
Richard Cassar
José Cisneros
Christofer Cruz
Jose Wilman Cruz
Mark Daniel
Alexander Erazo
Angeline Flores
Abel Guzman
Dennis Isola

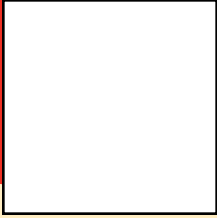


Maria Rosa Ledesma
Peter and Anne Noble
Nelena Oco (Youth)



Lori Onaka
Kathy Punsalan
Pete and Suzy Redburn
Conception Romero
Joseph Rouse
Pam Schuur
Beth Smith
Margaret Todd
Gorge Villegas
Hugo Cancino
Emanuel Cancino





St. Michael the Archangel Parish

75-5769 Alii Drive
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740



Spiritual Book Club *continued from front cover*

Once the book club gets underway, Dennis would like to begin with Fr. Rohr's *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*.

"Fr. Rohr is a Franciscan priest and I thought we'd work through this book, and take it in sections," Dennis says. "I have ideas for each section. There is a companion guide for groups, and I thought I'd use that."

"Fr. Rohr's theme in the book is that the first half of life is when you are getting your personal identity and

determining things that matter," he adds. "The second half is moving past that first half to something else. This resonated with me, certainly."

Fr. Lio has given Dennis the go-ahead to use Fr. Rohr's material, which Dennis describes as encouraging critical thinking about the Church.

"He's written lots of books," Dennis says of Fr. Rohr. "I'm really into his work. So, we need to start somewhere."

*If you are interested in joining the St. Michael Spiritual Book Club,
or for more information, contact Dennis Boyd at 808-854-4495.*

Mass Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 4 p.m. • Sunday: 7 a.m., 9 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 4 p.m. (English), 11:30 a.m. (Spanish) • Confessions: Saturday 9 a.m.
Daily: Mon-Sat 7 a.m. (St. Michael) • Mon-Tues-Thurs-Fri 5 p.m. (Immaculate Conception) • Wed 6 p.m. (Immaculate Conception in Spanish)
Adoration: Wednesdays 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.