



the soul & let your spirit fly

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

AVERTING SPIRITUAL STAGNANCY:

LIFE-LONG LEARNING — *Faith Formation* — STIRS LIVING WATERS

Spiritual stagnation is real. It can happen when an unsuspecting Christian slips into complacency or lukewarmness, neither growing in faith nor in relationship with Jesus and others; perhaps just “going through the motions” and accepting dry spells as “just the way things are.” Like a stagnant pool of water, he or she stops flowing or progressing, becoming dark, murky, and inactive.

Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: ‘Rivers of living water will flow from within him.’” (John 7:38)

Jesus appears to suggest that belief is not a one-time event but a lifelong, everyday commitment. He seems to describe *believing* as an *ongoing* state of trust in which we ask the Holy Spirit to ignite the Living Waters within us.

Faith formation can be that spark igniting within us, like bubbles rising in water. Often, our Catholic perspective sees faith formation as solely a classroom activity for youth preparing for the sacraments. *It is that, but also much more.*

Faith formation for all ages has long been a commitment of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. An important pastoral plan document, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, emphasizes the vital role of faith formation as a power within us. It also highlights the wide scope of faith formation as multi-faceted catecheses that aim to 1) *invite and enable ongoing conversion to Jesus in Holiness of Life*, 2) *promote and support active membership in the Christian community*, and 3) *call and prepare adults to act as disciples in mission to the world.*

Good Shepherd's five-year pastoral plan shines a bright light on faith formation as a primary goal and central focus. As intentional disciples, lifelong faith

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Practice the faith...

Awaken THE SOUL

With devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Blanca Maravilla and Ruben Arreguin celebrate enlightened LOVE for the Lord!

Blanca and Ruben noticed an undeniable pull in their hearts; they were drawn to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It all began in June, 2025, with two unrelated events: a call from *Radio Santísimo Sacramento* and a simultaneous retreat offered in collaboration with the religious order, Pro Ecclesia Sancta (PES).

"We were invited to participate in *Conversando le Fé*," Blanca begins, explaining the radio talk program's interest in married couples to share about their vocation and faith. This led to a subsequent and providential invitation to engage in a discussion of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Delixit Nos* (He Loves Us) with Father Rodolfo Llamas and Sister Yolanda. Pope Francis' last encyclical addresses the human and divine love of the heart of Jesus Christ.

"We had been working – collaborating with God – with and through them," Blanca says of their experience with the Spanish-language Catholic radio station.

At the same time, Blanca and Ruben signed up to attend a preparation retreat for consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, offered at Holy Family Parish by the Catholic Advance Movement, an affiliate of the PES order. Both Blanca and Ruben sensed a powerful feeling that, perhaps, the Sacred Heart of Jesus "really wants to do something in us," Ruben posits.

"Little pieces kept coming together," he explains of a profound interior realization, "this is happening, this is happening. God is asking me to know this," Ruben shares of the turning point moments that led to his devotion.

"Just listen," he told himself. He remembers intrigue with his mother's Sacred Heart devotion, but admits a heart-head disconnect. That is, before he read *Delixit Nos*.

Blanca agrees, indicating that her "before vs. after" spiritual state changed greatly as she discussed

Delixit Nos on-air under the tutelage of Father Llamas and Sister Yolanda. And the retreat? It brought meaning and clarity to a devotion that "I didn't really know about," she acknowledges.

Unaware of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque's apparitions and Jesus' 12 promises, Blanca knew this consecration was different.

"I'm doing it for my family," she remembers saying out loud, repeating Jesus' second promise: "*I will establish peace in their homes.*"

"It changed everything for me," Blanca reveals. "I struggled with letting go of control and worrying too much," she discloses, sharing that now her morning prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus "centers my heart."

"It has changed my spirituality to be able to truly trust and surrender," Blanca says, confident that she sees and experiences daily transformation.

"I can feel freer, I feel more at peace," she adds, confidently referring to a collaboration "with God, and with Jesus to extend the Kingdom of our Father."

"I'm learning to trust," Ruben adds, aware of a "little by little" softened heart...I'm listening more. Not that I have to, but I want to," he assures.

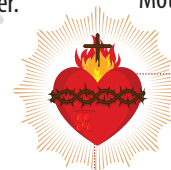
Blanca reflects on a piercing revelation. "*When Jesus appeared to St. Margaret Mary and told her that the indifference and ingratitude that he still sees... that this hurts Him more than what he suffered in His passion,*" Blanca repeats emotionally, and states, "this was truly quite something for me."

Ruben refers to the 11th of 12 promises of Jesus: "*Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in my Heart.*"



"In my heart, I just think of my name, *Ruben*, written on God's heart," Ruben expresses, quietly adding, "wow."

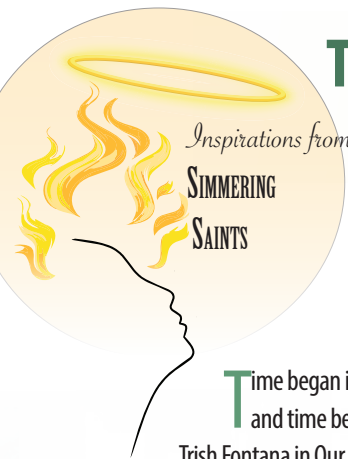
"We just feel blessed and thankful to God," Blanca submits. "We couldn't have done this without our Mother, Mary," she assures, adding "Our Lady brings us to His Sacred Heart."❤️



The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will consecrate the United

States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 12, 2026. Dioceses and parishes around the country will participate, commemorating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Take time to consider the impact of the Catholic community and faith on the history of our country. For more information, visit: usccb.org/weholdthesetruths

Check the parish website for information on the local celebration of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.



TRISH FONTANA experiences GOD'S GRACE IN Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd GARDEN

Time began in a garden, and time began *again* for Trish Fontana in Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd Garden. Located just

outside the west end of the narthex, Trish found herself there in the garden often as she searched for healing, meaning, and peace after her life-threatening stroke in 2019.

"I was having a crisis of faith," Trish says, seeing more clearly today the series of health events in her life that took her spirit. But over time, by the grace of God, she experienced re-creation and growth.

"I realized that God had never left me; it was I who had lost my faith," she reflects. A longtime parishioner with her husband, Terry Snook, Trish regrets getting emotional but concedes to an overwhelming sense of blessing — *seeds of love planted in her heart*. "This parish means so much to us," she adds.

Trish's harrowing journey began with heart surgery on August 16, 2018. The day before, on the Feast of the Assumption, she attended Mass and remembers the promise of prayers offered by Deacon Rommel Declines.

"The surgery went well...fantastic," Trish remembers with gratitude, feeling like the ordeal was behind her. But just over one year later, on September 4, 2019, she woke at 4 a.m. knowing something was wrong. She could not move her legs or one arm. She sensed her face drooping.

Trish and Terry's quick action to call for an ambulance was life-saving and providential, as Terry's original plans for an out-of-town meeting fell through. Every minute counts when a stroke is suspected, Trish notes, and had Terry been gone, she knew her post-stroke life might have been quite different. At the time, an avid runner, barely over 50 and balancing a career in State offices, Trish recounts her feelings of utter disbelief.

"I took time off my work to recover," Trish mentions, sharing how her afternoon walks naturally "pulled" her to the church and the garden. "For three months, I was talking and praying," she explained. "I would just sit on



the bench, listen to the running water and ask God why this had happened. I had no idea how to function and live in this broken body," Trish worried, catching

glimpses of the resin garden lambs positioned at the foot of "Our Lady." She noticed one "sweet little lamb" with a broken ear. Trish thought, "he was broken, just like me."

"I slowly began to let go of my anger against God and the world," Trish realized, hinting at the healing underway, restoring her body and soul. Weeks later, another visit to the garden revealed the little lamb with a repaired ear, gently glued without a trace of injury. "I thought maybe this was God's way of saying that I, too, could be made whole again," Trish trusts.

When Terry started volunteering to care for and water plants inside the church, Trish felt called to help with the garden. Gifting new lambs made perfect sense knowing the original lambs had served well in their brokenness.

"They were my buddies for months," Trish says, powerfully moved by the little garden lambs who ushered healing, friendships, and restored faith.



OUR LADY OF THE DIVINE SHEPHERD OVERSEES, PROTECTS NEW LAMBS BLESSED

On a sunny March 16, 2026, Trish and Terry met Deacon Rommel in the garden for a "full circle" moment of blessing. A meditation song, Psalm 23, *The Lord is my Shepherd* played before Deacon Rommel offered prayers and thanksgiving.

"See how Jesus restores everything," he begins. The poignant words pointed to the new lambs but also Trish's journey.

"He pulls us toward him, and Mary leads us to her son," the deacon continues, gently underscoring the intercession of Mary, *Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd*. Framing this story from the beginning, on the Feast of the Assumption in 2018 and *eternally*, now, from her perpetual vantage point, Mary encourages, consoles and shows the way.

Deacon Rommel reflected on the garden as a whole, as a place gifted by parishioners, maintained by parishioners, and experienced by parishioners — *a peaceful sanctuary abounding with God's grace*.

"Glory to you, O Lord, for all your gifts to us," the deacon prays. In tears and gratitude, Trish and Terry shared, "Today's our 30th wedding anniversary." Surprised, but not, by the beautiful God-moment, Deacon Rommel also blessed the couple as they commemorated their marriage. God is so good. ✚

Living PIRITUAL Lights

It is God who is at work within YOU...shine like stars in the world. *Philippians 2:13, 15*



For this and the remaining issues of *Awaken for the 2026 calendar year*, we will take a closer look at each of the five primary goals of Good Shepherd's parish plan.

PURSuing A LIFE-LONG JOURNEY #2 OF FAITH FORMATION

The Ideal State

- * Opportunities exist for all parishioners to deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith and grow in their relationship with Christ
- * Every parishioner is encouraged to pursue a life long journey of faith formation
- * All parishioners are equipped and motivated to evangelize others

Five-year Goals

- * Develop faith formation programs for all ages
- * Inform and connect parishioners with diocesan and national resources for individual and communal faith formation
- * Use small groups to accompany individuals on their faith journey
- * Evaluate the implementation of "The Rescue Project" (Father John Ricardo)
- * Evaluate the implementation of an "Alpha" program

EnVISION YOUR "Playlist"

Content & Experiences to EnCOUNTER the Lord



Developing a playlist of "favorites" captures the time and attention of most people these days, whether on Spotify or in our memory banks. We stack up music, YouTube videos, websites, other film content, podcasts, articles and books with intention, gathering from various genres, satisfying a personal mental continuum of likes and interests.

Faith formation can be *as* intentional. The General Directory for Catechesis says: "The maturation of the Christian life requires that it be cultivated in all its dimensions:

- Knowledge of the faith
- Liturgical life
- Moral formation
- Prayer
- Belonging to community
- Missionary spirit

When catechesis omits one of these elements, the Christian faith does not attain full development." (89)

Growing as a lifelong learner in our Catholic faith means curating national and diocesan offerings as well as those afforded by the parish — both digital and physical resources — independently and communally.

What does your faith formation "playlist" look like?

As we dissect the pillars of missionary discipleship, **ENCOUNTERING** the Lord represents the vital first step of a personal relationship with Jesus, and it never stops. It *continues* to walk with Him throughout life.

Specific faith journeys may be **Inquiring, Getting Started, Making Progress** or **Going Deeper**.

Opportunities may entail gatherings that include online content with expanded opportunities for hospitality,

dialogue and application. Programs like **The Rescue Project** and the **Alpha** tool fit in this category with flexibility for small or larger groups.

Above all, formational content invites participants to face-to-face experiences that allow further exploration independently and prayerfully. Often, such content can be found in every single parish ministry, from traditional religious education and youth ministry to any one of Good Shepherd's 50-plus specialized ministries. For all the seasons of adulthood, your "playlist" becomes a crafted gift to unwrap.

Good Shepherd's parish plan seeks to support parishioners in cultivating and curating faith formation across all six dimensions, illuminating faith as you encounter the love of Jesus. ✝



Alpha "pilot" group participants (clockwise): Steve Stenoski, Pete Ingravallo, Sheryl Ingravallo, Ben Medel, Steve Herndon, Julie Herndon, Elaine Stenoski, Julie Bickford, Kristen Brush, Steve Slakey

Go MAKE DISCIPLES

Newly founded KNIGHTS OF THE ALTAR recognizes altar servers' quest to grow and serve in the liturgy



John Huggard and Julie Dominguez-Jones, ministry co-leads for Good Shepherd's Altar Server Ministry, find great joy in training and guiding parish youth to serve in this important liturgical ministry. Both medical doctors, John and Julie's commitment to young parishioners represents a special type of formation – a growing love for the liturgy.

"One of the biggest things that I found when I first started working with the kids was that there wasn't any unity," John explained. The children and teens struggled to work together and even talk to one another.

"Unless they go to the same school, they don't know each other, so I came up with a way to try to get them to work together as a team," John says, stressing the importance of teamwork as they learn about and understand the liturgy.

John developed the Knights of the Altar and mod-

eled it after programs of the same name, found mostly in Europe. He scaled it and customized it to provide a thorough formation for altar servers, fostering awareness and appreciation for their role.

"They progress at each age level, and we try to introduce all the symbolism of the liturgy," John assures, indicating "there is meaning in everything we do."

In mid-February, the first recognition ceremony took place in the Saint John Paul II room, transformed into a setting akin to one of great regal honor. Seven altar servers were recognized. At this writing, those who have moved to full knighthood number about 15, and another ceremony will be planned.

John mentions that 62 children and teens participate in the altar server ministry. The vision holds that going forward, every altar server will move through the "ranks" to knighthood as a means of formation.

"I've noticed a big change," John shares, pointing to how altar servers "even move a little differently." Attentive with hands folded in a prayer position, more discipline, and increasing teamwork, the fruits of the Knights of the Altar are visible.

"They are interested and they want to learn more," John says, citing their desire for more responsibility. John and Julie try to involve and engage parents, too, recognizing that they provide necessary

support and transportation, serve as role models themselves, and must be committed to attending Mass.

At the ceremony, Father Michael "knighted" the youth, tapping a sword on their shoulders. They received certificates and further instruction that "we're now trading the sword for a more powerful weapon, which is a rosary," John says, encouraging them to pray it every day.

"We tell them to always carry their rosary with them and pray the rosary, as a family, every day," John mentions, adding that each altar server also received a token "challenge coin," to remind them – *challenge* them—to grow in their ministry.

John's passion for the ministry originated in his own altar service for 12 years, attending Jesuit schools. He later served in the Air Force. Collaborating with Julie, they created the insignia for the Knights incorporating the values and imagery of the program.

Mission:

The Knights of the Altar is a structured altar server program that fosters spiritual growth, leadership and service among youth through participation in the Sacred Catholic Liturgy. A Knight of the Altar serves Christ and His Church with reverence, discipline and dedication.



Pledge

Lord, here I am—
yours completely,
ready to serve.
I will be faithful in
my duties at the altar
and in serving Your
Church. I will strive to
set a good example and
inspire reverence in others.

May I be your loyal Knight, with
the help of Mary, my Mother and
model. Amen.



Formation Ranks and Responsibilities

1. Page

- Entry-level rank upon completion of initial training
- Begin shadowing experienced servers
- Learn the role of Candle Bearer, including setup and use of liturgical items (e.g., ambo, candles, credence table, gifts)
- Must know the following prayers: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be
- Pages do not wear a cross or medal
- Remain at this stage for the first year unless approved for advancement

2. Herald

- Promotion after successful completion of Page stage and completion of a short quiz.
- Begin serving at Mass
- Identified by wearing a cross or medal
- Proficient in Candle Bearer duties and begin learning the Cross Bearer role
- Understand names and placement of altar items and liturgical vessels
- Comprehend the meaning of the Epiclesis
- Must know previous prayers plus the Nicene Creed
- Expected to exhibit proper liturgical etiquette and behavior

3. Squire

- Must have served at least two years, including one year as a Herald (or with coordinator approval)
- Pass a written test
- Assist in training and mentoring Heralds
- Comfortable carrying the processional crucifix
- May begin training as Thurifer (incense bearer) upon approval
- Know how to properly set up and clear the altar
- Must know all prayers from previous stages, including the Parish Prayer
- Identified by crucifix or medal

4. Knight

- Must have served a minimum of three years and pass an advanced written examination
- Must be recommended by Altar Server Ministry Coordinators
- Lead and supervise Pages, Heralds, and Squires during Mass
- Certified in all responsibilities, including duties as a Thurifer
- Oversee training of all lower ranks
- Exhibit exemplary conduct, reverence, and leadership
- Recognized with the awarding of the official Knights of the Altar Cross

Eligibility Requirements

To become a member of the Knights of the Altar, candidates must meet the following criteria:

1. Have received the Sacrament of First Holy Communion
2. Be at least 8 years old
3. Be a registered member of Good Shepherd Catholic Church
4. Be enrolled in a Catholic Faith Formation (CFF) program or a Catholic-affiliated school
5. Successfully complete all required training sessions





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It is God who is at work within
 YOU...shine like stars
 in the world. *Philippians 2:13, 15*

Visit GSCCEG.org to learn more about upcoming events.

In Community, we flourish

Saturday, May 16, 2026 —

Bingo Night

Come one, come all for a fun-filled evening of Bingo in the Father Philip Wells Parish Hall, following the 5:00 p.m. Saturday Vigil Mass. The first card is free with subsequent cards for \$1 each. If you're a lucky winner, a gift card prize will have your name on it! Candy and pizza are also available for \$1 each. Enjoy a night out and get to know fellow parishioners. Sponsored by Parish Life Activities (PLA) ministry.



Friday, June 12, 2026 —

Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Come for this Friday morning 8:30 a.m. Mass and experience the beautiful Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This year, join with the US Catholic Bishops in consecrating the United States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Visit the parish website for full details and information, including options for a preparation retreat for personal consecration (offered in Sacramento on May 30 for a fee), a local paint night and meditation guiding participants in painting an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (participants must supply their own materials), and special links and prayers.



Thursday, May 21, 2026 —

Sacred Heart of Jesus "paint night" reflection evening

Creating art can be a method of formation, especially on this special evening when parishioner/artist Valerie Ramos leads participants in a "paint night" in the Father Philip Wells Parish Hall. The subject of the art and Valerie's reflections will be the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Bring your completed work of art to the Solemnity Mass on June 12 for a blessing, and enthrone the image in your home thereafter as a holy art object enhancing your devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Check the parish website for a list of materials. The evening is free, but participants must bring their own supplies. Estimated supply cost is \$50 to \$60.



Saturday, June 13, 2026 —

Knights of Columbus Luau.

Aloha! Save the date for a festive catered Luau meal hosted by the St. John Paul II Assembly #3504 of the Knights of Columbus! Join in the fun on Saturday, June 13, 2026 beginning at 6:00 p.m. at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Father Philip Wells Hall. Tickets are \$45 each and go on sale after Masses mid- May. Luau proceeds help the Knights in their ongoing service and support of the parishioners of Good Shepherd community.

LUAU 



SAINT JOHN PAUL II ASSEMBLY #3504