



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

## ON THE HORIZON

### New parish Vision and Mission statements inform the present, prepare us for tomorrow

People often look out “on the horizon” metaphorically, catching a glimpse in their mind’s eye of what appears to be imminent, soon, or just around the corner. It leads to proper preparation as we stand in the *present* but also anticipate the promises of Christ with hope.

Good Shepherd Parish also keeps the horizon at the forefront of its work to serve the People of God in our Elk Grove community. Our clergy and lay leadership consider our Catholic “faithscape” – the

*intersection of heaven and earth* – and focus on *who we are*, and *all that we are called to be* as baptized Catholics.

“When Father Michael came to our parish, he visualized Good Shepherd as a missionary discipleship parish,” says Juanita Baier, immediate past chair of the parish council. She describes how the council collaborated with Father Michael for several years on com-

prehensive parish planning. Most recently, their work led them to “develop new vision and mission statements,” she reports, indicating that these new statements sharpen the focus of all parish plans and programs.

“As a missionary discipleship parish, launching these new statements now marks the first step in sharing the fruits of our extensive planning efforts,”

Juanita adds, signaling that parishioners will see a formal **spiritual plan** and a **campus master plan** early in 2025. Both plans comprise a long-term **parish plan** designed to guide parishioners as missionary disciples.

Incoming parish council chair Gary Watson explains how “under Father Michael’s direction, the parish council has been energized to spread the message about the future direction of our parish community.”

*(Story continues on page 4)*

#### *Vision:*

**To be a beacon of light radiating Christ’s love throughout Elk Grove.**

#### *Mission:*

**We are a vibrant Catholic community that *invites* people to Jesus, *forms* disciples, and *sends* the faithful to transform the world.**





## CYNTHIA HOBSON ON CHARITY

### "The highest form of love"



"I think charity is the highest form of love," observes Cynthia Hobson after reviewing the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). Her statement echoes the familiar phrase from 1 Corinthians 13:13 – *the greatest of these is love/charity*. These words might be etched deeply within the Christian mind ensuring a constant reminder of this supernatural, God-designed, God-given gift to be

given away, charitably, lovingly, and generously *because* of God.

"It is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God," she says citing CCC 1822.

Cynthia coaxes meaning and brings clarity to charity. While it is often used interchangeably with the word love, Cynthia sets charity apart as quite another thing than what we know as affection, friendship or eros types of love.

"Charity is *synonymous* with Jesus' two greatest commandments," she says, referring to loving *God* with heart, soul and mind and loving *neighbor* as yourself.

Cynthia turns to the love of her mother and grandmother to provide examples. She describes the unconditional love of these women who always gave "what was needed." That meant love, respect, and sometimes "food or clothing or a place to stay" for extended family or friends, "and it wasn't always easy."

"My mother used to say the purpose of life *is* love," she recalls. "She always opened her home," Cynthia says.

"I'm drawn to charity because of how I was raised, my Catholic upbringing and my lifelong activities in human rights activities," Cynthia shares, describing a trifecta of reasons why charity stands out for her. She has given a lot of thought to charitable living and easily sees links between growing up in a household that

modeled charity, fusing that experience with Catholic teachings, and living her whole life with a commitment to love in action, that is, justice.

"Virtuous living has always been challenging for people," she explains stretching back to the beginning of time and suggesting a "tug of war between doing what is right versus taking the easy way out, doing what feels good, or worse, harming others because of greed, or the desire for power and control."

Cynthia beckons back to charity and the greatest commandments of loving God and neighbor. More than a philosophy, charity is God's perfect order that "will ultimately reward us" when we support the common good.

"There are always opportunities to be more charitable," Cynthia promises pointing to a world that often lacks charity in daily living. "We could be less judgmental and more respectful of one another," she insists adding "we could also be more willing to help others by active involvement in church ministries," by helping those in need and donating to charitable causes.

Cynthia conveys that witnessing charitable activity encourages others to do the same. Confident in the power and potential of charity, Cynthia submits that charitable living can bring about "major changes that would benefit us all." The elimination of political, social and religious divisions notwithstanding, "we could kiss goodbye poverty, starvation, ignorance, and war," she says.

Further, Cynthia asserts that a charitable mindset would foster a world where "racial and social justice would just be common... it would just be done, and we could all work together to protect our planet by choosing what is best for humanity." On a human level, too, "related to life," Cynthia says charity factors into every stage of living "from the womb until death," requiring care, love and generosity to guide humanity in loving one another.

"It's really important that we are listening," Cynthia says appealing to a greater understanding "because you don't walk in their shoes, you don't know what they're dealing with. If we love our neighbors, let's help them through whatever they're going through. Let's not make them feel ashamed, or bad."

"I know this may sound like pie in the sky to some," Cynthia admits but not without evidence to the contrary. "But for God, all things are possible," she says, quoting Matthew 19:26. †



# Let's Go

GROW IN FAITH  
& DISCIPLESHIP!

Visit [GSCCEG.org](http://GSCCEG.org) to learn more about upcoming events.

## LAZARUS MASS

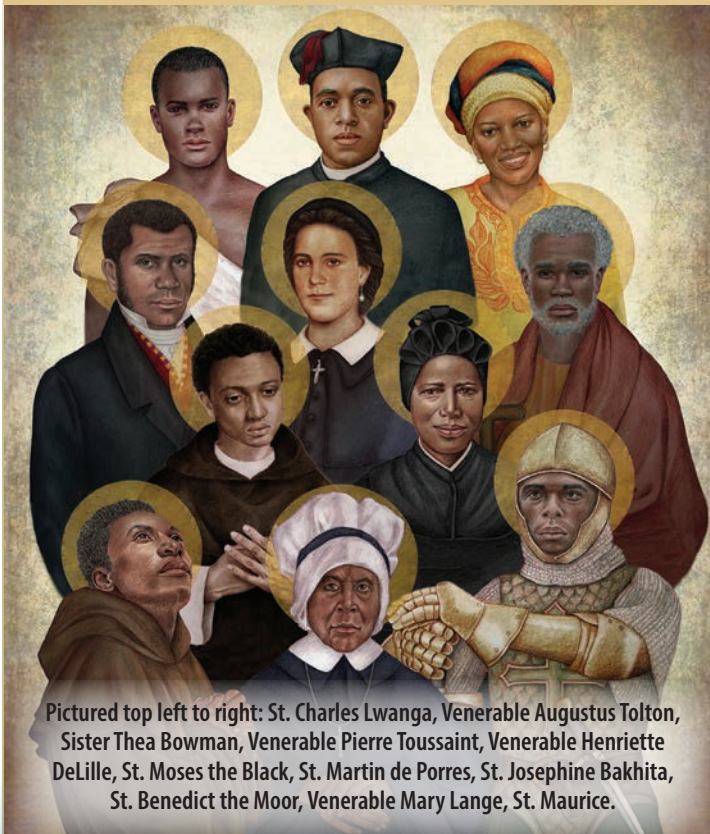
**Saturday**  
**Nov. 2, 2024**  
**5:00 p.m.**

*Offering a Symphony of Prayers*  
...wafting heavenward  
like sweet music  
for our faithful departed

November marks the time set aside especially for remembrance and prayer for the faithful departed. Good Shepherd commemorates this time with the annual Lazarus Mass so that our parish family can come together to remember those among us, our relatives and friends who have passed away since last November. As we also engage in this Year of Prayer, preparing for the coming Jubilee 2025, we turn our attention to the importance of praying for the dead. Our beloved deceased count on us to offer our "symphony of prayers" on their behalf. Please join us for this special Vigil Mass

## November is Black Catholic History Month

### WHY NOT GET TO KNOW THESE HOLY ONES THIS MONTH!?



Pictured top left to right: St. Charles Lwanga, Venerable Augustus Tolton, Sister Thea Bowman, Venerable Pierre Toussaint, Venerable Henriette DeLille, St. Moses the Black, St. Martin de Porres, St. Josephine Bakhita, St. Benedict the Moor, Venerable Mary Lange, St. Maurice.

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## Advent by Candlelight

*A beautiful, spirit-filled evening just for women*

**Saturday, December 7**  
Good Shepherd Catholic Church

**Laura Phelps guest speaker for**

## Advent by Candlelight

*Sign ups after all Masses*  
**Nov. 3, 9 and 10!**



The Evangelization and Outreach Ministry welcomes Catholic author and national speaker, **Laura Phelps**, as this year's speaker for the much anticipated "ABC," *a.k.a.* Advent by Candlelight!

Many may already know Laura for her role with the Lisa Brennink-

meyer ministry, *Walking with Purpose*. As the manager over content creation, Laura lives and breathes the messages of this beloved womens ministry. Further, as co-host for the *Hope for Right Now* podcast, she is carving an inspirational path for Catholic women everywhere.

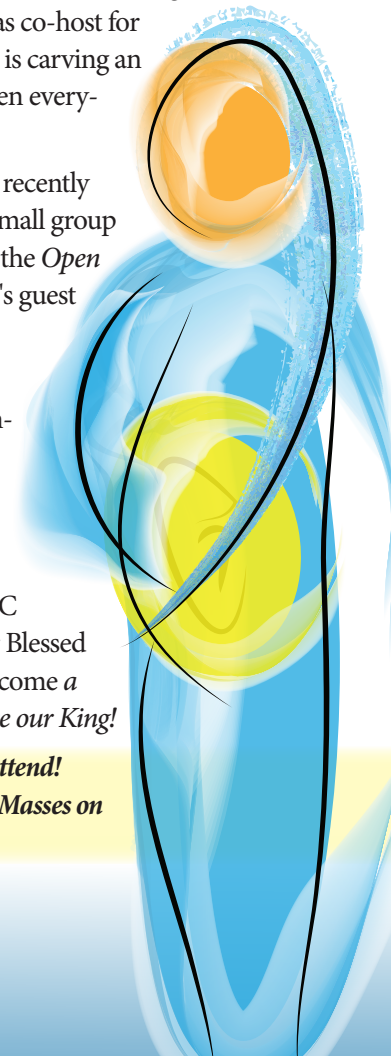
The fact that Good Shepherd Parish recently launched its *Walking with Purpose* small group program and is engaging women in the *Open Your Heart* Bible study makes Laura's guest appearance especially meaningful.

Laura's talk, *House of Gold: Advent with Our Lady*, beckons women to consider Mary as God's house and palace – *a Living Tabernacle*, *a Eucharistic procession* – bringing Christ into every work, breath, and encounter. Laura will encourage ABC attendees to seek guidance from our Blessed Mother, inviting every woman to become *a little house of gold, prepared to receive our King!*

**Don't miss this opportunity to attend!**

**Sign up in the narthex following all Masses on**  
**Nov. 3, 9 and 10!!**

**Learn more about Laura at:**  
**[www.lauramaryphelps.com](http://www.lauramaryphelps.com)**





# ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS: HOLINESS AND STEWARDSHIP

Visioning, missioning, and spiritual and pastoral planning represent some of the high level tools for the important work of growing the church and transforming lives.

"We can't be in a status quo mode," Father Michael says inferring that the commitment to missionary discipleship moves us "to look at ourselves differently."

"We're called to be holy, to be saints," he says emphasizing how

modern-day saints hold the key to renewing the Church. "Evangelizing ourselves on Sunday and going out to evangelize others" takes courage, he acknowledges "but it is our duty out of charity and love to enlighten people."

"We are not indifferent when someone hurts themselves," Father Michael says, wondering why, then, would we keep our faith to ourselves? A severe and penetrating question that he answers wryly

with another question, "do we hate them that much?" Everyone knows a disaffiliated Catholic or someone who is yet to discover the fullness of faith. A true disciple gives *Jesus* with a missionary heart. That is, a heart that encounters Jesus, stirs faith to new heights and lets Christ challenge the core of being.

"God is always preparing you for the next thing," Father Michael assures, implying various promptings calling us daily to be "imitators of Christ's light."

(Continues here from page 1)



Juanita Baier

## MISSION FORWARD

This retooled parish mission statement and the *addition* of a vision statement offer concise "word pictures." The new vision statement points to *what the parish is striving to be*. The new mission statement defines the purpose of the parish, or rather, *its reason for being*.

Gary refers to *turning* or *fine-tuning* the spirituality of missionary discipleship as parishioners begin to internalize these statements.

"To be more active followers of Christ carries different meanings for each of us," Gary suggests offering a series of questions to ponder: "What is Christ asking you to do? Pray more? Be more active in parish ministries? Acting in the example of Christ to those around us, regardless of faith?"

"Each of us has to reach into our relationship with Christ," Gary encourages, alluding to how the new vision and mission statements can be a starting point. "Listen for how Christ is speaking to your heart," he recommends, confident the effort will inspire habits of missionary discipleship and ready the community for the parish plan on the horizon.



Gary Watson

## Becoming Beacons of Light

Good Shepherd's parish vision "to be a beacon of light" will occur most brilliantly when every parishioner shines brightly as light of the world.

Taking a second look at the succession of offerings over the past three years can reintroduce the faithful to important content for the disciple's journey.

From the Vatican, the **Synod on Synodality** fosters a spirituality of listening and an understanding of the Holy Spirit as the protagonist in our lives.

The US Bishops-inspired **Eucharistic Revival** roots our missionary nature in *Jesus in the Eucharist*. The Eucharist is the source and summit of encountering Him, so that we may bring Him out into the world.

**Radiate Love**, a California Bishops initiative, reminds us of the power and beauty of sacramental marriage and family in nurturing faith.

Pope Francis desired this **Year of Prayer** to deepen our prayerful encounters with the Lord and to prepare







## Stewarding our Parish Campus

Good Shepherd's upcoming parish plan aims to address many of the ongoing and routine facility matters to ensure proper maintenance and repair of the campus. Further, following an architectural assessment conducted in 2023, the parish learned of potential opportunities to improve and grow Good Shepherd facilities. Blessed with these professional insights, the parish is equipped with knowledge and options that can respond to fruitful missionary discipleship when the time is right.

Until then, as disciples **ENCOUNTERING** Jesus, **ACCOMPANYING** others in their journeys, inviting people to **COMMUNITY** to love and know Jesus, and **SENDING** disciples out perpetually to share the Gospel, Good Shepherd Parish and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School work diligently to steward our parish home.

The detail below covers facility work that has been visible and underway throughout 2024, including work that is budgeted and planned to begin in the near future. Annual inspections are also noted and typically require some repair work.

### Recent repairs and maintenance completed

- Exterior painting of parish buildings
- Interior painting of classrooms
- Replacement of HVAC units for parish center, classrooms and office
- Installation of new playground
- Installed new smart boards
- Replaced exterior lighting on all parish buildings
- Tree trimming and/or removal
- Preschool water tested (*in accordance with state laws*)
- Replaced emergency lighting

### Budgeted/planned repairs and projects

- Sanctuary roof repairs and indoor refurbishment from water damage
- Painting and installing a seal coat
- Bathroom remodel
- Parking lot repairs and ADA improvements
- Floor repairs in Father Philip Wells Parish Center
- Replacement of classroom chairs

#### Planned Grant-funded projects

(Includes several ADA upgrades)

- Replace wrought iron gate/fence, increasing height, safety.
- Install bollards to protect the piazza
- Install safety glass in the office areas

### Annual inspections

(Inspections anticipate and plan for repairs)

- Roof inspection (*yearly*)
- Tree trimming (*yearly*)
- Water valve inspection (*yearly*)
- Kitchen fire inspection (*bi-annually*)
- HVAC (*Quarterly*)
- Fire system inspection (*Quarterly and annually*)

our hearts for the graces of forgiveness, divine mercy and inner conversion in the coming Jubilee Year 2025.

**Walk with One** springs forth as a special initiative of the Eucharistic Congress encouraging individual outreach to just one person who is waiting for an invitation to Jesus.

**The Rescue Project** launches next year during Lent at Good Shepherd Parish. A mission of the ACTS XXIX non-profit apostolate founded by Father John Riccardo, The Rescue Project is an eight week experience that proclaims the Gospel compellingly, leading participants to the decision to surrender to Jesus and mobilize for mission.

**Jubilee 2025, Pilgrims of Hope**, in the Church's tradition of Jubilee every 25 years, will mark a time of grace for all stewards of faith, hope and love. Be transformed as "tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel," and with "sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth." Begins Dec. 24, 2024.

*May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven.*



# CLARIUS FACTA QUAM VERBA LOQUUNTUR

## DEACON BILL SOUSA RETIRES AFTER NEARLY 25 YEARS OF SERVICE TO GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH

**A**ctions speak louder than words. The sounds of noble action reverberate in our hearts, more than our ears: wild applause when justice is served; enthusiastic echoes when kindness and virtue prevail; or humming determination when peace and comfort result. These sounds ring in our hearts.

Sometimes that loudness is a booming quiet... a quiet pause in honor of action. A reflective quiet making room for all that is good. A mental prayer of thanksgiving for a man of action, such as Deacon Bill Sousa.

Upon the announcement of Deacon Bill Sousa's late summer retirement, the significance of his ministry at Good Shepherd Parish began to sink into ears and hearts and minds.

At 88, and after nearly 25 years of service, the parish's first-ever permanent deacon clearly made an indelible mark. Here is a man who preached and sang on Sunday, and then went out daily as a disciple answering the call to serve, and demonstrating what it means to live the Gospel.

The Latin phrasings seem appropriate since Deacon Bill taught Latin for decades to high school and middle school students. He might ponder the saying, agreeing, but also possibly positing that words have their place, too.

His words — carefully organized into gifted *homilies*— were powerful, loud, clear and distinct, reminding hearers of the Word, and their Christian duty of holy action. Yes, actions and words have always gone hand in hand with Deacon Bill. In a deft interplay of conviction,

mercy and love, Deacon Bill has led as a voice and a witness to the Gospel.

"I really enjoyed doing it," Deacon Bill says of the preparation and work that went into his homilies. He shares how "thinking, reading and praying" were required as he developed his talks, always focused on sharing a meaningful message and doing so within a reasonable time frame for maximum effect. "It didn't just come to me," he admits of the process of delivering a sermon. It was a labor of love.

### *Quo vadis?*

*Quo vadis?* Where are you going? Deacon Bill notes this curious and recurrent message in a written reflection. He had asked his Latin students many times, "Quo vadis? Where are you going? What are you doing with your life? Are you on the right track?"

On his way to Good Shepherd to baptize children one Saturday morning many years ago, Deacon Bill met a stranger in a Starbucks parking lot. With his "tattered jacket and a week-old growth of a fuzzy beard," Deacon Bill, ready to help, soon sensed that the man only wanted to ask him a question. And he did, asking, "*Where are you going?*"

Somewhat stunned, Deacon Bill thinks to himself, "Is there a message for me?" The man's piercing gaze and familiar words touched him, causing him to wonder about this phrase that had always been so prominent in his life.

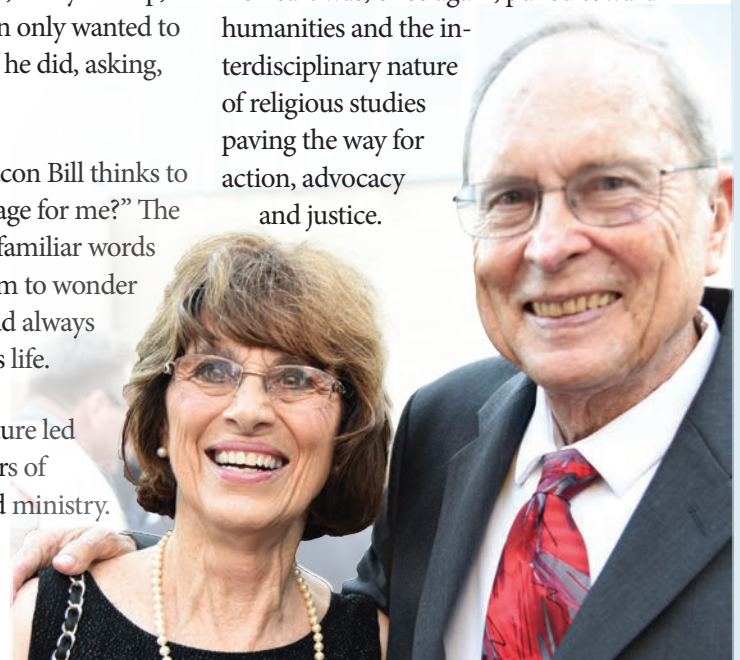
This innate reflective nature led Deacon Bill through years of discernment, service and ministry. He always examined the messages before him.

William N. Sousa was born in Alameda, California in 1935. When it came time for college, he knew the road would take him across the San Francisco Bay. He entered St. Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park in the early 1960s to pursue a degree in Philosophy with minors in English and Latin.

"I had the dream of becoming a priest," he remembers. However, moving forward in thoughtful discernment, he answered God's calling for him to be a husband, a father, a teacher, a politician and a deacon. Some of these roles unfolded simultaneously, and some successively, like doorways one must go through to arrive where we must.

Bill married Sharon in 1966, and today, as they approach their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in just a few years, they relish their family and the joy of their two sons' families and three grandchildren.

In 1973, Bill opted to further his education by pursuing a Master of Arts in Religious Studies and a minor in English at the University of the Pacific in Stockton. His choice of studies revealed how his heart was, once again, pulled toward humanities and the interdisciplinary nature of religious studies paving the way for action, advocacy and justice.





# Actions speak louder than words

## *Actio Sequitur esse*

By 1977, Bill began teaching Latin part-time at Edison High School in Stockton's southern reaches. The area experienced a disproportionate share of poverty and community funding. By 1979, Bill found a parallel calling in politics. He served on the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors for 17 years and for a period as Vice-Mayor of Stockton, too, always committed to social justice issues; serving the poor, preserving agricultural lands, and caring for the environment.

**Actio Sequitur esse.** Action follows essence. "What you *are* is what you *do*," Deacon Bill writes with reverence to Christian identity rooted in a relationship with Jesus above all else. This relationship, along with abiding faith, and commitment to justice and ethics have long been the essence of William Sousa. His actions followed suit.

In 1998, Bill accepted a position with the Diocese of Sacramento as the Director of Social Justice. His work focused on Catholic Social Teachings committed to etching out among the faithful an understanding of the preeminence of these teachings to who we *are* as Catholics and to who we must *be* as disciples encountering Christ in one another.

With the new millennium, Bishop William Weigand ordained William Sousa to the permanent diaconate on Pentecost Sunday, June 10, 2000. Again, Deacon Bill's essence quickly translated to "*doing*" as he embraced his Good Shepherd assignment. Subtly, loudly (in a good way), and effectively, Deacon Bill embarked on a ministry of meaning and hope, desiring to impart what Jesus asks of us.

Deacon Bill and Sharon were instrumental in forming the Good Shepherd Conference of the Society of St. Vincent DePaul.

"We were very happy to go to people in their homes and apartments," Deacon Bill recalls of visits to bring food, medicine and consolation to those in need. "It was an exciting time, a sacred time," he mentions, exuding the joy that comes with the selfless gift of oneself.

The permanent diaconate was still somewhat new in the Diocese at the time of his ordination, and he admits, "I wasn't sure what I would be involved with," yet, he adds, "I grew into it."

He describes diocesan outreach and retreats that took him to other points in the Diocese of Sacramento. He speaks fondly of the diaconate and how activities always included and involved deacons' wives. The diaconate was a good fit and this "didn't surprise me," Deacon Bill submits. He knew in time, as he knows now, what you are is what you do.

## *Quo vadis?*

**Quo vadis?** Steadily, that inescapable question searches receptive hearts. Deacon Bill asked it of himself as a husband, a father, a politician, and a change maker... amid the privilege of baptizing babies and children... upon chance encounters with neighbors and strangers... while visiting those in need... while faithfully teaching and as he stood preaching.

*Where are you going?*

**The answer for Deacon Bill was always clear...to serve.**

## Encountering Christ in the Eucharist, encountering others

"The personal encounter [with Jesus] is translated into a statement with others," Deacon Bill expresses, clarifying, "...those we meet, those we care for."

"The Eucharist is the key because it is the love of Christ crucified to be shared; it is our example of the outpouring of love," he adds, calling to mind the words of the Eucharistic Prayer, "Do this in memory of me."

"Jesus is the source of all life and goodness and he shares it with us," Deacon Bill says turning to what he describes as a shining metaphor: "I am the vine and you are the branches."

When asked what he most desires for the people of Good Shepherd, Deacon Bill imparts these everlasting truths as a perfect blessing for parishioners to cherish:

"That they will **LIVE OUT THE WORDS OF THE GOSPEL**," he says confident there is no other way to see and know Christ "as the way, the truth and the life."

"It just makes so much sense... it is what we are to be doing!"

He refers to the conclusion of a homily he shared in June, 2021 not as a conclusion, but to reinforce the perpetual ministry of God's love.

"The Eucharist is not just something we cherish and adore from afar. The Eucharist is telling us to go in love and peace to change the world. The Eucharist lives on in us... beyond this church building, beyond the tabernacle that holds the reserved Jesus; To our neighbors experiencing hard times, to our friends in family crises, to those who do not love us, to those who need food and clothing, those who just need a shoulder to cry on. For we are Christ's servants, all of us. We are Christ's representatives; we are Christ's light of the world, fed in our festive banquet of love. 'Urged to join in the cycle of love, and life and hope. We must not stand idle.' And, sisters and brothers, they will know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Amen! Alleluia!"

ECCE EGO SUM, DOMINE, MITTE ME!  
HERE I AM, LORD, SEND ME! ISAIAH 6:8





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## *Awaken* Practice the faith ... THE SOUL



**K**atie Fernandez joined Good Shepherd's Office of Religious Education (ORE) about seven months ago, following her September 2023 marriage and subsequent move to Elk Grove.

"I met my husband, Martin, at a Fiat-sponsored dance event," she says, having traveled the distance from her Auburn, California parish to participate occasionally with the Fiat Catholic Young Adult Ministry. Little did she know then that she would call Good Shepherd Parish her "home" for worship and work.

"Something I have found that deepens my faith is my marriage...the *vocation*," she clarifies.

"It has dramatically changed how I see myself," the newlywed indicates sharing

her fresh perspective on living and *practicing* one's vocation. "It's a mirror and you see yourself through the eyes of someone else," Katie comments delving deeper into "the opportunity to look interiorly and see, *through your spouse*, where God is calling you."

Katie suggests that the sacrament of matrimony leads to change and growth. "You can better love your spouse, and better love God," she says.

The ORE office assistant and data entry specialist admits, "I'm terrible about setting habits," referring to particular spiritual routines. Yet, in the vocation of marriage, a spouse may offset *this*, and the other brings *that*.

"When Martin and I were dating and engaged, we started praying the rosary daily," Katie mentions, sharing how it was a regular part of her husband's upbringing. "He brought the devotion to our relationship and he helped me to understand it," she says, now regarding the rosary as "one of the most powerful forms of prayer...and I've seen the fruits."

"We go to adoration together when it works for both of our schedules," Katie adds, rendering a beautiful vision of their time before the Blessed Sacrament. "In a small way, it is a kind of a renewal of our marriage vows where we're bringing each other before Christ, sitting there in prayer and thanksgiving for all the gifts He has

given us already, and we just sit and bask in His love that has been freely given," she conveys.

"It's only been a year and I can't imagine what's down the road for us," Katie shares, more keenly aware now of daily marital self-sacrifice. Yet, she also senses that the challenge is "an incredible calling."

The upcoming season of Advent brings into focus a period of reflection and repentance and Katie views these as necessary cues for every relationship. "If you have consistent time for reflection and repentance — *coming together in deeper love* — your joyful moments will be magnified...beyond what you were anticipating," Katie imparts with a special petition. "Please pray for us and we'll pray for everybody, too...any small thing that we can do for others, *even a little prayer*, well, that speaks volumes," she affirms.

