



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

Called to be Saints

ALREADY SANCTIFIED FOR SAINTLY PURPOSE, STILL SAINTS-IN-THE-MAKING

A quick glance at some of the opening verses of St. Paul's letters to the early Christian communities shows how the apostle regarded people as saints *already*.

Romans 1:7 – "...to all the beloved of God in Rome, called to be *holy*."

1 Corinthians 1:2 – "...to the church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been *sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours."

Ephesians 1:1 – "...to the *holy* ones who are [in Ephesus] faithful in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 1:1 – "...to all the *holy* ones in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and ministers."

St. Paul clearly understood that God created all believers for sainthood. He proclaimed that belief in Jesus "sanctifies and makes holy" men and women of faith *supernaturally* by God's grace. But it doesn't stop there. Belief in Jesus should prompt a simultaneous and continuing growth toward profound holiness.

Set apart for Christ, Christians are already saints yet also nascent saints "in the making," with the full potential or fullness of sainthood just ahead. Living up to our saintly status means hearing Jesus call us, too...

"To the church in Elk Grove, gathered at Good Shepherd Parish, sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to you who have been called to be holy... called to be saints."

(Continues on page 4)

Practice the faith...

Awaken THE SOUL

Ben & Jordan Medel "GOD WAS WORKING IN OUR LIVES AND HEARTS"

Newlyweds Ben and Jordan Medel's love story involves far more than falling in love with each other – they also fell in love with God.

"We just kind of took it step-by-step," Ben admits, defining struggles and joys along the way but landing on the realization that "it was God working in our lives and hearts."

Married just a few months ago in September at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Ben, 25, and Jordan, 23, openly narrate their three-year journey to the altar. It began as colleagues at Chico State University, Ben pursuing a degree in Psychology and Jordan working towards a nursing degree.

"I was a cradle Catholic longing for more," Ben shares of his upbringing in Santa Barbara, conveying time away from the Church after high school and an emptiness experienced in a shallow faith, "that prevented me from loving God as a Father."

"So, I came back," he tells, adding his interior prayer, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. I don't trust you as I should." Ben describes going to confession after many years away, revealing he "was just bawling." Emotionally and honestly, he describes awakening to a faith he "didn't really know too much about."

"I learned a lot about Catholicism," Ben says, identifying Bishop Barron's YouTube videos as a key source. He also read C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, praising it for drawing him in and back to Christianity.

"I wanted to pursue my faith and I thought I had to leave Jordan to do it," Ben recalls, just over one year into their relationship.

"I didn't have the strength to rely on God for even the littlest things," Ben admits, knowing in his heart, "I was going to marry Jordan." He wanted to understand his faith and beliefs so that he could pass them on to his children someday.

In a month of conversations, Ben learned that Jordan had been baptized at Good Shepherd as a baby.

"I didn't really grow up in my faith, so when Ben re-discovered his faith, I did too," Jordan interjects. They talked a lot, started attending Mass together in Chico, and together resolved to live in their apartment, but separately.

Ben graduated in 2023 and Jordan in 2024. Knowing they would return to Elk Grove, Jordan contacted Sharon and Rich Dorricott, ministry leads for the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA, formerly Rite of CIA). She entered the program and received her Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation at Easter Vigil 2025.

"I never had a 'dream wedding' outlook," Jordan confides, but "going through RCIA, getting married in the Catholic Church was the only thing I cared about."

"That's what mattered most for me – a sacramental marriage – me, Ben and God," she imparts.

"RCIA was a big part of helping us grow as a couple," Jordan explains, adding that the FOCCUS pre-marriage inventory for engaged couples also meant a lot to them.

"It hit differently," Ben comments on their ceremony, indicating "there are no words. We got the full grace."

Their understanding and wisdom of sacramental marriage run deep, as Ben draws associations to the cross of Jesus and everyday sacrifices.

"Marriage is a weighty and important responsibility, and it's not always easy," Ben surmises, advising that entering marriage with this awareness is a healthy outlook.

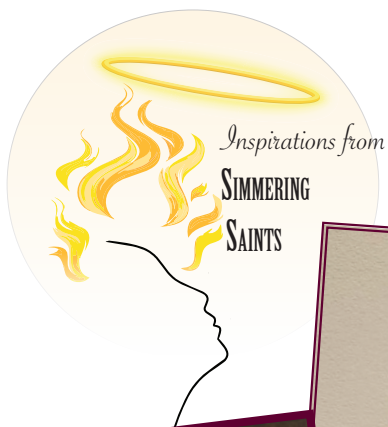
"Love always requires sacrifice... giving all that you have," Ben assures, anguished at the fairy tales and misconceptions of love, the Church and God's perfect design.

Still settling into married life, Jordan works as a nurse for UC Davis and Ben works with adults with special needs. He plans to pursue a Master's degree in counseling.

The newlyweds turn to their Catholic faith individually and together.

"I pray the rosary before work, and on my days off we pray it together," Jordan shares. She also enjoys listening to Father Mike Schmitz's "Bible in a Year" podcast as she continues to grow in her faith and deepen her love for Jesus. Ben, an avid reader, lists several books that he "reads for joy, not necessarily to finish." He participates in the Soldiers of St. Michael men's ministry.

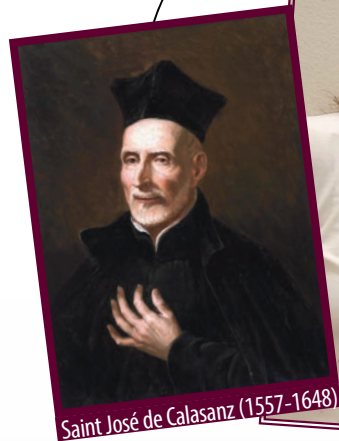




"It has everything to do with love"

Maria Gamez admires Saint José de Calasanz

Founder of the Pious Schools and the religious order commonly known as the Piarists



Maria Gamez speaks fondly of her 20 years at Good Shepherd Parish. She recalls volunteering when her kids participated in Kinderchurch. As they grew, she helped in the classrooms as they prepared for First Holy Communion. Every year thereafter, she moved closer to her current status of "more active and involved," she says, amused and pleased at the same time.

Last year, Maria hosted a *Walking with Purpose* Bible study. She returned again this year, marveling at God's action in her life.

"I am a para-educator," Maria explains, sharing that her professional work takes her into the classroom with children. "So, now, I also work with adults," she says, referring to her experience with the women's ministry.

She leads weekly discussions on life topics and scripture. She sees a thread of educational commitments weaving a pattern in her life but admits that trepidation plagued her before taking on the small group in 2024.

"I follow the example of the Virgin," Maria expresses, noting she opted not to say 'no,' because "God has a purpose for me."

"Yes, I'm going to do it," she says, recounting her yes, her fiat, in the spirit and courage of the Virgin Mary. "Something is growing in my soul and in my mind," Maria observes, crediting the Blessed Mother for an ever-present inspiration in her life.

But another saintly role model inspires Maria, too, for a long list of reasons. As a child growing up in Nicaragua and attending Catholic schools there, José de Calasanz's holy history influenced the schools, teachers and pupils.

Known *also* as Joseph Calsanza, and Joseph of our Lady, he was celebrated for his kindness and mercy.

"He is the patron of Catholic schools," Maria shares, noting the honor bestowed by Pope Pius XIII in 1948, although recognizing this is not commonly known in the United States. (Today Catholic schools patronage is shared with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. Thomas Aquinas, among others.)

Nevertheless, in the early 17th century, José de Calasanz opened small, free schools for poor children, first in Spain and then throughout Europe, becoming a trailblazer for charity, outreach and education. He trained fellow priests as

teachers, forming the order of Piarists.

"I'm in education and I teach catechism," Maria says, connecting her mindset of charity and virtue back to her own childhood roots in Central America. The legacy of St. José de Calasanz remains prevalent to her.

"I ask for his intercession, and how to be a missionary disciple," Maria adds, searching for guidance, because "education is everything."

She turns to the saint when she feels "overwhelmed with the everyday routine, and tired. I ask St. José to help me create a bond with the kids."

Maria rekindles memories of witnessing and experiencing this bond with her teachers, indicating they gave "the best example."

"When I think of the good St. José did for others, it has everything to do with love," Maria assures.

Love must be the thread woven into life, and into every encounter, every educational experience.

"Any details have to be with love," Maria says, pointing to a little smile, a hello, or a genuine interest in someone's day.

"Open your heart and the grace of God will guide us," she suggests certain that this education of the heart is exactly what St. José de Calasanz had in mind all along.

WHAT A JOY IT IS TO BE SIMMERING SAINTS, SIMMERING APOSTLES, SIMMERING MARTYRS.

— Blessed Mario Borzaga



The Communion of Saints

A spiritual fellowship of saints, *living*

The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles displays 25 stained glass windows depicting the communion of saints. John Nava set out to feature 135 prominently known saints, but also the people in the pews, the people in the world, but not of it.

Four of the panels include "anonymous" saints (shown here), who blend into the background. Men, women, and children "step into" the artwork, side-by-side with the saints. They recognize their call and desire to move toward the light of the saints.

The awe-inspiring installation of sanctified souls journeying to their heavenly home is a powerful reminder – everyone is created for sainthood. The artist wanted the saints to look like people we know now, according to the Cathedral website. He wanted people to identify and see that "a saint could look like me."

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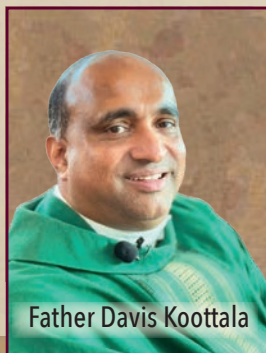
Sainthood is about our priority "to be with God"

The Fellowship of Saints

"We are saints in Christ," assures Father Davis Koottala, priest-in-charge, *pro-tem* (while pastor Father Michael Vaughan fulfills a military chaplaincy duty). "This is a call, in whatever manner," Father Davis says, referring to unique paths, albeit extraordinary summons to every soul.

Father Davis remembers several occasions when he visited the relics of great saints, inspired by their lives and piety, and desiring their intercession.

"For me, St. John Vianney is a great inspiration," Father Davis shares, noting the particular significance for priests since the "Curé d' Ars" is the patron of parish priests and confessors. Traveling to his shrine in France, Father Davis relates his moving experience of "sitting in the confessional, using his vestments and vessels, and praying." He recalls these privileges were afforded him by the archbishop at the time, who was grateful for Father Davis' help.



Father Davis Koottala

"My prayer to St. John Vianney for his intercession was, 'I am not yet a saint but I am trying to be more holy,'" Father Davis remembers. He shares a similar experience he had in Italy. "I sat on the edge of Pope Pius X's bed. I asked him for prayers that I might be more holy."

On another occasion in India, he visited the tomb of Mother Teresa in Calcutta. Kneeling before it, he uttered his prayers in her spiritual presence, "You are a great inspiration."

Admitting the stature of these three saintly giants, Father Davis clarifies that sainthood calls *everyone*.

"We are given the freedom to choose holiness and choose a life increasingly devoted to Christ and the will of God," Father Davis says, adding, "I do need to be a saint," or else face the eternal consequence of separation from God in the darkness of hell.

"We need to do this," Father Davis

implores, recognizing "we all have struggles, we all have to fight against evil."

"I am not able to go alone. My saintly calling is not intended to be solo or unaided," Father Davis explains, citing a community or fellowship between self and others, journeying to God together. "It is a saintly fellowship culminating at the heavenly banquet," he affirms, pointing to the Eucharistic banquet as a foretaste.

Holy Help

Jesus announced, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you." (John 14:16-17)

Father Davis repeats the verse, emphasizing the Holy Spirit's help but also stressing how "there is an inner conflict for us. Our conscience – *the light of the Holy Spirit* – tells us when something is wrong," he confirms.

Saints

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Inspiration from Sts. Pier Frassati & Carlo Acutis

Canonized on September 7, 2025 by Pope Leo XIV in Rome, the world benefits from the work, words and wisdom of these saints.

St. Pier Frassati - patron of youth, young adults, athletes and ordinary people. St. Pier became known as the "man of the beatitudes." Pope John Paul II described him this way noting his "exemplary work of bringing comfort and happiness to those who were poor, suffering, meek, hungry, thirsty, and in need of mercy, and who was himself clean of heart, a peacemaker, and persecuted for the sake of the Gospel (cf. Mt 5:3-10)."

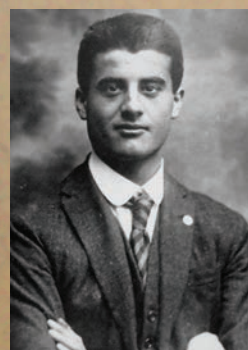
St. Pier jotted the words, "*Verso L'Alto*," on a photograph following his last mountaineering adventure before dying at the age of 24 from Polio in 1925. Meaning "*to the heights*," the phrase embodies the call in everyday life to go "to the heights," encounter Christ in all things, and in a particular way, through the community of the Church, those who are poor and marginalized, and the Holy Eucharist according to the US Bishops website.

St. Carlo Acutis - patron of computer users and programs in this digital age, St. Carlo turned to his own computer skills to share Eucharistic miracles with the world via extensive website chronicling. With ardent Eucharistic and Marian devotions, he evangelized with words and action before passing away at 14 of Leukemia in 2006.

With great maturity and wisdom beyond his years, St. Carlo's quoted writings demonstrate his desire to be with God.

"...You put yourself in front of the sun you get tanned... but when you get before Jesus of the Eucharist you become saints."

"Our aim has to be the infinite and not the finite. The infinite is our homeland. We have always been expected in heaven."



On Simple Saints

"...FOR ME NOT ONLY A FEW GREAT SAINTS WHOM I LOVE AND WHOM I KNOW WELL ARE 'SIGNPOSTS,' BUT PRECISELY ALSO THE **SIMPLE SAINTS**, THAT IS, THE GOOD PEOPLE I SEE IN MY LIFE WHO WILL NEVER BE CANONIZED. THEY ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE, SO TO SPEAK, WITHOUT VISIBLE HEROISM BUT IN THEIR EVERYDAY GOODNESS I SEE THE TRUTH OF FAITH. THIS GOODNESS, WHICH THEY HAVE DEVELOPED IN THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH, IS FOR ME THE MOST RELIABLE APOLOGY OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE SIGN OF WHERE THE TRUTH LIES."

POPE BENEDICT XVI, April 13, 2011

Conversant with heaven's saints and steeped with priestly insight, Father Davis lingers on these thoughts of good conscience gifted by God. With gentle caution, he warns that the holy help of conscience suffers when would-be saints misread it or ignore it altogether.

"We cannot justify ourselves. We have to be responsible," Father Davis insists, suggesting the call to sainthood must be a "priority in life...a priority to be with God," involving the fellowship of saints, and the courage to listen and hear Jesus.

It's Not About the Title

While most saints will never bear the title, Father Davis returns to the notion of everyday saints walking the earth with a priority to "be with God." Yes, the Vatican's Dicastery for the Causes of Saints has a full plate examining causes, miracles, and heroic virtue but it is God who examines hearts.

"It is about *how* we live...God is always looking inside our hearts," Father Davis holds firmly. "What I do before God - *our acts, thoughts, words and deeds* - these make us saints."

Go Make Disciples



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School Choirs Radiate the light

"Music speaks where words fail," says Cynthia Ringor, music director for [St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School \(SEAS\)](#). She knows this to be fact, having witnessed the power of music and song throughout her own life.

"I was always in choir and I have played the piano since second grade," she reminisces, adding that her choir teacher at St. Simon Church in Los Altos inspired her to always hold music in her heart.

"I wanted to be that same person," she explains of her role model, "Mrs. Napoli." Today, "Mrs. Ringor" brings a joyful and passionate presence to her young students as they discover their own love for music.

Before joining the SEAS staff in 2023, Cynthia served as the teens' choir director at St. Clare's in Roseville for nine years. She recalls learning about the SEAS position after her mother's passing in 2021. Her mom always loved music, and her memory induced in Cynthia a "full-circle" revelation.

"She was my true inspiration! I prayed, 'Mom, can you just guide me...Where am I supposed to go?'" she wondered. And by God's grace, the signs were there.

"I'm so excited to be here and let me tell you, these kids are amazing," Cynthia assures.



Cynthia Ringor, SEAS Music Director.
At left, Cynthia with her mother, Celestina (Lily) Ringor, her musical inspiration.



Go Make a Difference, Go Make Disciples

Students in every grade level benefit from "primary music class" a few times a week. The combined voices of third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students routinely sing as a choir during Friday morning Masses throughout the academic year. Students in sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade "elective" choir also sing at Friday Masses, rotating with the younger choir.

Older grades select choir as an elective, growing their musical interest and talents as they practice for the Annual Diocesan Choir Festival, graduation and other special events. All students look forward to the annual Christmas school concert and participating in the Christmas Eve Mass Choir. They sing at the 4 p.m. Mass on Christmas Eve.

Cynthia shares that most students do not come from a musical background, although some take voice or instrument lessons outside of school as extracurricular activities. Others also participate in external musical theatre programs. As the music director, Cynthia incorporates music theory and singing techniques into her classes, introducing a variety of musical instruments for students to play and experiment with throughout the year.

"We cover a lot of Catholic music," Cynthia explains, stressing, however, that her goal is to expose them to everything. "I expose them to classical music, pop, rock, country...to every genre and music from around the world," she says.

"I'm very traditional," Cynthia admits of her priority to use the *Breaking Bread* missal/hymnal from the pews. She wants children to learn and know the songs, encouraging them to sing in church, and by association, their families may do so too.

Cynthia notes that SEAS students have some favorite songs, to be sure, which are clearly evident when they sing.

"They love singing *Loving and Forgiving; One Bread, One Body; Gather Your People; and We Come to You*, to name a few," Cynthia says, quickly adding one



of Christ with song!

more to the list, "and *Go Make a Difference!*"

The tunes seem to play on repeat in the minds of parishioners who hear these young, music-minded disciples spread the Gospel with their voices.

"I think they just truly love singing," Cynthia observes, also sensing the "leadership aspect." She refers to the gratification and honor students experience from leading others in song during Mass. She infers that these young voices gain a real and noticeable understanding of how they "bring a sense of joy... a sense of community" to the congregation.

It's musical discipleship! It's missionary discipleship!

From the Heart

When Cynthia points to how "music speaks," she infers that it is the heart that speaks in music in a way that words alone cannot quite articulate. Music draws from the deep well of emotions and feelings within every soul, whether it is a moving version of *Ave Maria*, or a convicting version of a country ballad. SEAS students know how to tap that heart source. In touch with and exuding pure delight, these children and young teens turn up the volume and harmonize faith, hope and love as vocal instruments of God's perfect plan.

Last spring, older students participated in the Annual Diocesan Choir Festival, singing Basil Valdez's *Lift Up Your Hands*. They evoked such emotion and

technique that the choir scored a "five out of five" from adjudicators who work to mentor young voices in choral performance. Students are already working on next year's selection, *Be a light*, by Shawna Edwards, Cynthia explains.

"These kids *bring* the light," she stresses, indicating how they inspired the song choice and radiate the light of Christ with song.

Recently, they offered *The Prayer of St. Francis* for the School's Blessing of the Animals on October 4. The music echoed among those gathered, making palpable the united prayers to God to "make me a channel of your peace."

The third, fourth and fifth grade choir earned the title of "Passionate Singers," for the energy and exuberance they deliver every time they sing.

"They make your heart melt," Cynthia says, just as when a first grader volunteered to sing the Gospel acclamation at a Friday morning Mass in October.

"She led the Alleluia," Cynthia shares, mentioning, "there was no fear, no nerves." She adds that the confidence factor is true for all the budding choral talents.

"They're gaining a great foundation in music," Cynthia says, while also noting that music education gives students a head start in skills and virtues such as faith, trust, loyalty, and conviction. ✚

Music Education Brings Value

How blessed are the students at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton to experience the joy of God's gift of music!

Scanning the Internet, countless research studies indicate music training can improve memory, reasoning, and executive function, while also boosting reading and math skills. Beyond academics, it fosters creativity, empathy, self-confidence, and better mental health, and can reduce negative behaviors like drug and alcohol use.

The following summary represents the broad category groupings and related benefits:

Cognitive & Academic Benefits

- Enhanced Brain Function
- Improved Academic Performance
- Stronger Literacy and Language Skills
- Better Spatial-Temporal Skills

Socio-Emotional & Psychological Benefits

- Increased Confidence and Competence
- Improved Mental Health
- Reduced Risky Behaviors
- Enhanced Social Skills

Other Benefits

- Developed Motor Skills
- Increased Hope and Engagement



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Let's Go

GROW IN FAITH
 & DISCIPLESHIP!

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GSCCEG.ORG

Visit GSCCEG.org to learn more about upcoming events.

In Community, we flourish

Nov. 8 — Bingo!

If you haven't made it to one of Good Shepherd's periodic Bingo nights, now is your chance! Following the 5 p.m. Vigil Mass in the Father Philip Wells Hall. The first card is free with subsequent cards at \$1 each. Gift card prizes. Candy and pizza also available at \$1 each. Sponsored by Parish Life Activities (PLA) ministry.



Nov. 22/23 — Knights of Columbus Annual Crafts Fair!

Mark your calendar and plan to visit this beloved tradition in the parish hall. A wide variety of handmade crafts including jewelry, kitchen creations, fine art and holiday gifts and decor. Proceeds benefit the Knight's scholarship fund.



Nov. 30 — Advent begins!

Join Good Shepherd for any of seven weekend Masses to commence the new liturgical year and shine a bright light on Missionary Discipleship! Plus, at every Mass, the parish's new, five-year plan will be rolled out with many special features and commentaries to capture the essence of Good Shepherd's spiritual vision. Start the new year with us... shine like stars!



Dec. 6 —

Advent by Candlelight. Returning once again, beautiful hosted tablescapes and a candlelit evening for women as we enter into this season of light and hope. Sign-ups to attend are Nov 1/2 and 8/9. This evening does not disappoint!

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

Dec. 12 - 14 — Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations!

The parish celebrates Our Lady of Guadalupe's Feast Day as well as her patronage over our diocese. Consult the website and bulletin for specific times for mañanitas, mariachi, Mass and treats! Mass and festivities occur on both Dec. 12 and Dec. 14.



Dec. 14 — Family Movie Night

with The Grove. Gather on this third Sunday of Advent (Gaudate Sunday) for a family-friendly movie in the Father Philip Wells Hall. Celebrate the joy of the season in community! Visit the parish website for movie and time details!

Dec. 16 - 24 — Sibang Gabi Novena.

Gather in faith and fellowship for this early morning Filipino devotional, nine-day series of Masses.



January 6, 2026 — Conclusion of Jubilee Year 2025, Pilgrims of Hope.

Anticipating this ending, consider how it prompts new beginnings of forgiveness and hope! There is still time to pick up one of the brochures in the narthex and make a pilgrim journey to one of the designated diocesan churches. Pray, attend Mass and go to confession. Receive the graces of Jubilee!

