



the soul & let your spirit fly

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

Pope Francis' *Joy of the Gospel* presents beautiful words and imagery to help the faithful understand discipleship in this 21st century world. Far from an outmoded label, discipleship – *the authentic practice of Christianity* – compels us to embrace a vocabulary which defines the missionary nature of our baptismal calling.

Accompaniment represents one of many key words in the lexicon of missionary discipleship. Pope Francis invites the faithful to delve into its meaning and become facilitators of grace rather than arbiters (EG 47). In essence, he asks us to develop “the art of accompaniment.”

“The Church has become more aware of the need to *accompany* people,” says Father Michael Vaughan highlighting a new level of conscientiousness and attention. “We live in a time period where there is so much confusion and woundedness,” he adds indicating the “need for coaches and mentors” on our faith journey.

“Not just telling people where to find water to quench their thirst but walking with them,” Father Michael says clarifying the metaphor and suggesting accompaniment as synonymous to coaching and mentoring in the faith context.

(Story continues on page 4)

THE FINE *art* OF ACCOMPANIMENT

*Helping others
to hear
the voice of God*

*As we accompany one another,
we become Christ for one another,
opening up together
the mysteries of life and faith. ...
we allow each other to sort out
the complex situations of our lives
and follow a pathway that leads to
holiness and wholeness.*

Bill Huebsch
The Art of Accompaniment

THE BODY OF CHRIST

The People of God



From L to R: Denise Wesleder, Elizabeth Pott, Monica Goodale, Gonzó Duran, Diane Marcotte and Menchie Cabrera

Good Shepherd's parish staff members capably translate their formal job descriptions to grace-filled ministry. Amid daily operations, an innate mindset of *accompaniment* lives – walking with others as trusted and known companions, helping them to find the heart of God while also recognizing God's grace when others accompany them.

On accompanying others– “As the first point of contact for the parish office, we often interact with people who are suffering the loss of a loved one, sick, or experiencing hardship,” says Diane Marcotte, communications and development coordinator keenly aware that “the most important thing I can do is listen with empathy and understanding.”

“To be truly present to parishioners means sharing in their joys and in their sorrows,” adds Elizabeth Pott, confirmation preparation coordinator. “It means laughing and crying with them, without motive, without thoughts of next steps, without judgment, without wondering ‘what’s this going to mean for me?’” she accepts honoring how forgiveness and

listening represent the more powerful aspects of accompanying people to God's presence and love.

“Doing youth ministry and confirmation preparation, I’ve had to really hone that skill,” Elizabeth says of her listening capability. “Listening...to hear their story and let them know they are being heard...that’s what all of us want,” she senses.

Menchie Cabrera, religious education coordinator and parish advocate assisting with marriage annulments, “sees an immediate need to journey with people.”

“I listen a lot,” Menchie reflects seeing how “it is the hardest thing for a person to re-live the most difficult time of his/her life by telling someone they barely know” their story.

“I feel humbled by their trust and openness, for the sake of being in communion again with the Lord,” she shares. “Most of the time, I don’t say a word... I just listen and open my arms and offer my shoulder for them to cry on.”

Diane affirms the many joyful times, too, hinting that the

combination of joyful and sorrowful times – and everything in between – represent a familial closeness.

“To accompany is to walk with the person and support them wherever they are in their lives – to show them that we as a church family are here for them,” Diane asserts.

On being accompanied– As often as the staff accompanies parishioners, they easily recall their own experiences of *being* accompanied.

Receptionist Monica Goodale values her multi-faceted position because any given day “is never the same” as the one before she conveys.

Monica tells of God’s “timing of placing me at Good Shepherd the same year, within a month, of discovering our oldest son had to have open heart surgery.”

“Through the waiting, hoping and persevering through five heart surgeries, God has brought many wonderful people into our lives to support and pray for our family,” she reveals with immense gratitude for the overwhelming extent of parishioner accompaniment.

“We were able to have nurses, a respiratory therapist and hospital staff from our church watching over him when we were not able to be with him during the severe COVID outbreak,” Monica says.

“I used to think that if I asked and prayed enough, God would answer my prayer the way I wanted,” she explains. “Through my Cursillo retreat I now know that God’s plan is better than what I can imagine and I only need to be open to His will and not my own,” she

says referring to moments of grace and “the blessings that God provides as he brings people into our lives if only for short moments to strengthen our faith.”

Similarly, Business Manager Denise Wesleder ponders years of accompaniment, and walking with others.

“I was asked to fill in for 30 days while Fr. Wells tried to find someone to fill the position here back in 2000,” she recalls.

“Twenty-two years later, I’m still working here,” she laughs signaling a deeper sentiment—one of great witness to the intimacy and intentionality that comes with accompaniment.

“I think my favorite, most grace-filled story of serving here is of working on the Dedication Committee for our new church back on March 13, 2010,” Denise reminisces.

“I worked with an amazing group of volunteers and we forged a bond that still exists today,” she says of the “once-in-a-lifetime experience.”

Denise’s specific memories of the church dedication Mass and the work that led up to it speak to the culmination of accompaniment in the breaking of bread with one another. The parish staff answers the call to break bread with one another, cooperate with grace and celebrate the divine mystery that lives within the community.

New Director of Youth Ministry Gonzó Duran:

“...accompaniment goes beyond...”

*What does he mean?
Read more on page 5*

Let's Gather

AND AWAKEN THE JOY!

*In the smiles and greetings of brothers and sisters in Christ,
we gather with joy, in faith, hope and love, ready for fellowship, fun and hospitality!
Mark your calendars with gratitude and praise God as we gather.*



HOT AUGUST NIGHTS CAR SHOW WOWS!



Ministries in Motion



The **Car Show** on Saturday, August 28 was a hit! With more than 60 cars on display, attendees had a great time strolling among all the entries while enjoying food truck fare – chicken and waffles and Italian ice. Despite the smokey skies, community spirit cleared the air! (And many were donning a dual purpose mask that day, grateful to filter any hint of smoke!) With an “open house” feel to the event, parishioners also welcomed neighbors and friends who were curious to see all the activity.

Ministries-in-Motion, *recheduled from September to October 17*, marked a special event that cleverly blended the carnival aspect of festivals gone-by with a creative take on parish ministry outreach. After months of pandemic, and the gradual and safe return to the important ministry work of missionary disciples, Ministries in Motion allowed hundreds of attendees

the chance to meet ministry leads and learn about the myriad ways to engage within the parish community and beyond. Parish youth also appreciated the chance to take part in carnival games and win prizes as they, too, witnessed the joy of parish involvement.

COMING UP NEXT!

Friday, November
12
2021



“Make & Take” Craft Event

Join us for this special opportunity to release your inner artist! Friday, November 12 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. gather in the Father Philip Wells parish center to create and craft a range of pre-arranged options. Advance sign-up required. Participants rotate between multiple craft stations. Take home your creations, share or gift. Stir into flame the gifts of God as you awaken the joy of accompaniment, community and the upcoming seasons of Advent and Christmas.

December
A FULL month of Christmas
Joy
2021



Adopt-A-Family

Get ready for an entire month of JOY as we move through Advent, towards Christmas, reaching out to those in need. Watch for opportunities to participate and donate as we “adopt” several families to ensure they experience the joy of the season. Pull tags from our “giving tree” in the Narthex for recommended donations. Either drop your donation at the parish office OR attend a special donation event/family movie in the parish center – The Star – to make your contribution on Dec. 4/5.

*Save these dates for future
Let's Gather events!*

CALENDAR

of upcoming events

Check the bulletin and parish website for details as events approach.	Friday, January 14 2022 Game Night/ Bingo	Friday, February 11 2022 Date Night
Saturday, March 26 2022 March Madness	Sunday, April 10 2022 Easter Egg Hunt	Saturday, May 21 2022 Let's Gather at the Table Family Dinner



The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into the ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to

remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other.

Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, 169.

(Continued from page 1)

Pope Francis writes further that “so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and goal in life” (EG 49).

Accompaniment can “make present the fragrance of Christ’s closeness and his personal gaze” (EG 169).

Everyone can do this! Everyone can develop the fine art of accompaniment, become companions in faith and mentor each other. “We are more than simply bystanders” (EG 171), writes the Pope appealing to the faithful to awaken each other and respond to God’s love.

“It is important to understand that we don’t need to have much training to do this,” Father Michael insists emphasizing “the most important thing is to have encountered Jesus” in our lives and share that with open hearts.

As Pope Francis exhorts “the art of accompaniment teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other.” Recalling Exodus 3:5 and the sheer intensity of Moses’ reverence for God and the sacred space he stood upon before the burning bush, disciples are mentors who revere “the other” by being present, helping others hear the voice of God, and recognizing the divine mystery in each other. ✚



FATHER MICHAEL OFFERS 4 TIPS FOR MASTERING

the fine art of accompaniment

Accompaniment is an art but not a complicated one. I have thought of the process as the following:

1 Meet people where they are –

We are all at a different place and we must understand that not everyone has received the same formation or preparation. They might never have understood certain matters regarding the faith, or they might simply have strayed, as we all do at times.

Remove your sandals

2 Listen to their story –

We must be good listeners. Many times we have formulated answers in our head before even listening to someone attentively.

Revere the sacred space

3 Invite them to take the next step forward –

Jesus did not just listen to others but he invited them to be the best images of themselves. He invited them to take the cross which was to lead them to the inner freedom they truly longed for. It wouldn’t be true love if we stood on the sidelines watching someone we care for harm themselves.

Help others hear the voice of God

4 Walk with them as they journey –

This is leaving the 99 sheep to attend to the one. (Parable of the Lost Sheep, Matthew 18:12-14 and Luke 15:3-7) Won’t our local crossfit team check in with us if they didn’t see us at the gym? Many times in the Church we live in *anonimato* where it seems like no one cares.

Recognize the divine mystery and accompany each other



DIGGING DEEPER:

What is ACCOMPANIMENT exactly?

GONZO DURAN
Director of Youth Ministry

“Accompaniment is a big part of our mission statement,”

Gonzo says of [The Grove](#), Elk Grove’s new Catholic youth community for middle school and high school teens. “*Accompanying young people in their pursuit of becoming missionary disciples*,” he quotes with great interest in further defining the intricacies of this watchword. Gonzo aims to magnify how accompaniment goes beyond the common perception of “serving, or serving with others.”

Accompaniment is different he explains “because with accompaniment we’re recognizing who we are, we’re recognizing our brokenness, and *then* we can walk along in our faith journey together.” This mutual understanding allows hearts to open and discipleship to flourish Gonzo maintains.

“It can be hard,” he says referring to a natural inclination to “help the person next to us when a lot of the time we just need to *walk* next to them as companions.”

In fact, accompaniment is about thinking and being as we are doing; how we are present. Gonzo stresses, “It’s *not* seeing each other as someone who needs to be fixed, or worked on, or that they need stronger faith” but rather a deeper understanding of “I’m *also* walking on my journey and we’re both on our way to heaven together.” Sacred ground.

“Jesus is the savior, right?” Gonzo asks and answers, “not us.” He punctuates how judgement has no place when everyone settles into a mindset of true accompaniment.

The Grove launched in October connecting young Catholics across Elk Grove’s three parishes and one mission church. This regional model is the first of its kind for the Diocese of Sacramento and entails a three-year phased program. Its vision is a meaningful youth community journeying together towards sainthood.

Gonzo, humbled by the charge to build a sustainable youth ministry, draws upon his own undergraduate degree in theology and recent law degree to guide his work. He will learn the results of his bar exam in November.

“I chose to answer God’s call and respond to the need,” he says desiring to share his gifts and talents. He worked in youth ministry for eight years at Mission Basilica San Juan Capistrano and while there, gained a yearning to help refugees and migrants navigate the legal requirements for work or citizenship. He also has a special motivation to ensure that youth hold priority in the Church, especially after experiencing breakdowns during COVID-19. **Visit: thegroveyouthministry.com**



Sacred Ground HOLY MASS

The lyrics and tune to *This is Holy Ground* might play in one’s mind while walking into church. Inaudibly humming, there is a profound recognition that *we’re standing on holy ground*, and the *Lord is present*. Like Moses before the burning bush, people join in wonder and awe. Christ is present in the assembly, in the priest *in persona Christi*, in the word and in the Eucharist.

The Lord is present accompanying the faithful throughout the liturgy. Author/theologian Bill Huebsch writes, “Every dimension of liturgical life sees itself as designed to accompany everyone to understand more fully the amazing forgiveness, love and real presence of Christ.”

“The Sunday Mass is the moment when the community comes together in word, sacrament and community to build the Body of Christ,” says Father Michael pointing to the vast richness of experiences ... a sacredness for all who open their hearts.

“There is a tendency to consider the Church just as the place ‘where I go to Mass,’” he continues and expounds on this narrow perspective. “By saying this, I am limiting everything that the Christian community is called to be,” he suggests referring to the scope and truth of the Gospel.

Return author Brandon Vogt writes, “The Mass isn’t just some casual gathering where we exchange pleasantries, sing songs, and listen to a nice talk.” Rather, Mass is holy, and sacred “where we encounter Jesus, in the flesh.”

“The parish is my spiritual family where the faith of others helps me to grow in my own,” Father Michael says conveying the essence of accompaniment “where genuine friendships are made but, most importantly, where missionary disciples are formed.”

Following Christ, *prioritizing Christ*, missionary disciples give thanks and worship through sacrament and sacrifice.

“It is the place where I put my time, talent and treasure at the service of the community,” Father Michael summarizes stressing the significance of the baptismal commitment and the obligation “to seek holiness and to extend the Kingdom of Christ in the world.”

Read these resources for more insight on the art of accompaniment:

- *The Joy of the Gospel* - Pope Francis 2014 (*Evangelii Gaudium*)
- *The Art of Accompaniment* - Bill Huebsch 2017
- *Christ is Alive!* - Pope Francis 2019
- *Return* - Brandon Vogt 2021

At times of loss and grief, **LAZARUS** **MINISTRY** consoles

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

The Nicene Creed offers a powerful reminder of what we believe. And the closing words invoke in us an ever-deepening faith and hope in the promises of Christ – *that beyond this life, there is eternal happiness with God.*

This is the work and fruit of the Lazarus Ministry – to perpetuate this hope and accompany families and friends who upon the loss of loved ones find themselves planning for a Catholic funeral. Named for the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John’s Gospel, the Lazarus Ministry is often known elsewhere as the bereavement ministry.

“Being there for them and comforting them in their loss, that’s our mission,” Ministry lead Elizabeth Ponce explains of the care and compassion offered to the grieving.

Involved with Lazarus Ministry for over six years, Elizabeth views the accompaniment of the bereaved as the first important steps of ushering death into life.

“We’re walking with people in the first hours of grieving” she explains recognizing their emotion, and more so, their trust that any concerns will be eased. “Their heaviness is lifted from their shoulders,” Elizabeth shares

especially grateful for fellow team members who respond readily when the need arises.

Lazarus Ministry members move with grace as they guide family members through a list of decisions to be made for a Catholic funeral Mass. They take care in their meetings – and the necessary time – to gently introduce or refamiliarize families with the Mass and Catholic faith. Many are non-Catholic, or non-practicing, and appreciative of the sensitive outreach.

Ministers help in the selection of readings and music if desired, and if a vigil is planned, they make arrangements with deacons. They also attend the funeral Mass and serve as Mass coordinators ensuring that every detail is properly addressed in a spirit of collaboration with all liturgical ministries.

Lazarus Ministry also coordinates the annual Lazarus Mass which occurs near All Soul’s Day as the Church commemorates all the faithful departed. This special liturgy invites all the families to return for a vigil Mass



Lazarus Ministry from L to R: Josie LaMar, Liz Ponce, Gino Maiolini and Sharon Dorricott.

By their Fruits

YOU WILL KNOW THEM

offered in memory of those in our parish family who passed away in the year preceding. Each name is read from the ambo and candles bearing the names of the deceased shine brightly conveying the eternal light of Christ.

“This is something that I love,” Elizabeth imparts describing this accompaniment of the bereaved as “love from the heart.” She, too, is deeply inspired “knowing I’ve shared something I deeply believe” ...receiving back a “warmness” which most assuredly is the life of the world to come.

Hearts of Compassion Ministry a “fruit” of the Lazarus Ministry

Often ministry reveals additional needs. Lazarus Ministry discovered that grieving families might welcome further outreach and support beyond final commendation of a soul to the Lord. In 2015, Hearts of Compassion Ministry was born to support loved ones grieving loss.

“We offer two, seven-week small group sessions,” says ministry lead Suzanne Dodd detailing content for the peer support program.

Hearts of Compassion ministers participate in a two-day certification process with the diocese. Their ministry centers on helping people understand the grief process, and managing a range of feelings and emo-



Hearts of Compassion Ministry from L to R: Sylvia Guido, Suzanne Dodd, Monica Small, Sally Mercado and Judith Marshall.

tions such as stress, loneliness, denial, guilt, anger and depression. They also look at the spiritual elements of grief and healing and the importance of memories.

“I think the Lord has touched me with understanding,” Suzanne contemplates recalling her own journey with loss and grief.

She shares how the Be- attitude “Blessed are they

(Hearts of Compassion *cont...*)

who mourn, for they will be comforted” has become a central message of the ministry, affirming God’s love and presence throughout mourning.

“I’ve seen this,” Suzanne testifies of Jesus’ presence in their sharing. “He’s in the room...grace...in the room,” she insists.

Suzanne explains how many are firm in faith, but other participants have been away from a faith practice. “They want the Lord in their lives” and Hearts of Compassion offers a supportive environment to pursue and find the comfort of the Lord.

The fruits are many and Suzanne easily lists the healing fruits of the ministry.

“Courage and strength, both physical and emotional; openness to the Lord; compassion for others; new friendships; allowing family back into one’s life; transitioning from loneliness to helping others,” she pauses.

“I’ve experienced the loss that they have, and the Lord helped me through it,” she says hoping that those who mourn will learn to trust again – to realize there is a new journey to begin.

*“Offer every hour
of your life in intentions
so that whatever you do,
you do your best, ...
the destination is heaven.”*

Leela Mattathil

A parishioner since 1994, Leela Mattathil’s lifelong journey of prayer exemplifies how *encountering Christ in prayer, naturally leads to accompanying others – prayer is foundational.*

“Prayer keeps our relationship intimate with God,” Leela proclaims with the refreshing certitude that comes with personal experience. She knows that through prayer, and in persistent and varied forms of prayer, one develops a relationship with God and recognizes the call to holiness within the mystical body of Christ.

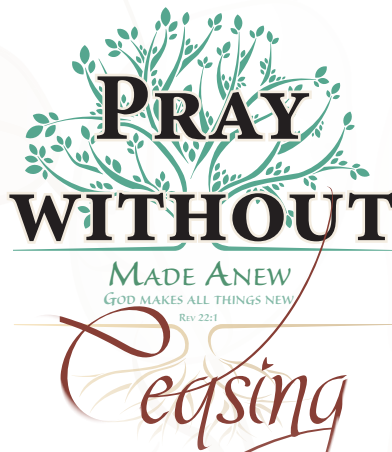
“And within the mystical body, we want to save everyone,” she appeals asserting a natural transformation that unfolds when prayer becomes the centerpiece of daily life.

“I view it as a purification...a communion with God,” she maintains as she shares a retrospective timeline, pinpointing profound moments of grace in her life.

For Leela, at the early age of four, her pastor in Kerala, India initiated what would become a repeated theme in Leela’s life; an awareness – a trust – in her “otherness.”

“People would ask me to pray for them, so I prayed for all who asked,” she explains. Soon, engaged in church activities and charitable acts, “my prayer became ‘whatever I can do for others,’” she says describing her youth and teen years which were deeply influenced by her grandmother who instilled a devotion to daily Mass, prayer, and the rosary. “I felt attracted,” Leela remembers.

She reflects on her journey



through high school and college, praying to the Holy Spirit, “you are my Lord and my teacher,” and all the while attributing nothing to her own ability but everything to the Holy Spirit.

“Small things led me to more prayers,” she expresses describing her embrace of the cross and the resulting infusion of faith, hope and love. As with the sacraments, which are “an invisible infusion of grace,” Leela senses an outpouring of grace during prayer.

Even in the most trying of times in her life, prayer carried her through; in Bombay as a new nurse when she witnessed atrocities and, thereafter, in a restrictive nursing position in Saudi Arabia where she hid her Bible and rosary in a napkin to avoid detection. Kneeling and crying out to God that she might flee her circumstances, she vowed in prayer to give everything to the glory of God.

That was 30 years ago, and since then Leela’s faith life has remained rooted in prayer, true to her promise.

Her commitment led her to spiritual awareness manifest in the Eucharist, and a calling to daily Mass and to service as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion in which she has recognized a profound joy in intercessory prayer for each receiving communicant.



*Leela Mattathil’s
testimony to the
POWER OF PRAYER*

“The Eucharist is my soul and source of everything,” Leela says revealing her open heart and prayer that Christ may “let my body be the channel of God.”

She confides that many ask her for prayers, and God’s answers are miracles. She acknowledges God’s answers to prayers may not always be what we ask or hope for, “but praying makes you stronger” equipping the prayerful as participants in the divine mystery.

In Good Shepherd’s Our Lady of Divine Mercy meditation garden (one of Leela’s favorite spots), she encourages prayer and refers to Phil 4:13.

“Prayer produces more fruit than we know,” she affirms adding “through Jesus, we can do everything.”

Leela advocates talking to God in meditation, Lectio Divina, a prayer routine for the dying and souls in purgatory, and spiritual reading on the lives of saints.

Holy Mass and reading holy Scriptures and praying the Rosary should be held above all Leela insists as she conveys “Mother Mary always leads us to her son, Jesus.”



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Awaken TO MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP *Accompaniment ~ always in Season*

Throughout the calendar year and the Church's liturgical seasons, accompaniment represents one of four pillars of missionary discipleship – *Encounter, Accompany, Community and Send*.

As we perpetually renew our encounters with Christ “**our response to this encounter ... needs accompaniment**” as outlined in US Catholic Conference of Bishops companion resource* for *The Joy of the Gospel*.

“We cannot live a life of discipleship alone. We need others to model lives of discipleship and accompany us as we grow in the spiritual life and experience ongoing conversion.”

“As missionary disciples, we are called to love and accept all people in a way that invites each person to a deeper relationship with Christ and a greater alignment of their lives with his teachings.”

Accompaniment “offers us a chance to be truly present to others, especially to those those who are struggling: ‘Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way.’” (EG 46)

**Living as Missionary Disciples - USCCB evangelization resource 2017*

The season of Advent ✨ A SPECIAL SEASON OF ACCOMPANIMENT

Advent beckons the faithful to pause and prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth and the Second Coming of Jesus, our lord and savior. It also marks a time of heightened or renewed opportunities to walk with one another – family, friends, non-practicing Catholics, and “nones” who claim no faith practice at all.

Advent can be a special season of accompaniment because it is resplendent with the truth, beauty and goodness of faith. It can be a time to ponder ~

- Am I accompanied?
- Do I accompany others on their faith journey?
- Can I master the art of accompaniment?

Advent begins Sunday, November 28 and the second reading from 1 Thessalonians (3:12—4:2) seems to invite us into a season of accompaniment.

Brothers and sisters:
*May the Lord make you increase and abound
in love for one another and for all,
just as we have for you,
so as to strengthen your hearts,
to be blameless in holiness before our God and
Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all
his holy ones. Amen.*