

Dear Benefactors,

Lent 2020

Nancy (Compston) and Michael Nuti have deep roots in Smith Valley. Four and five generations of Compstons and Nutis have worked the land and sheep in and around Smith Valley for hundreds of years. This is their home; St. John the Baptist Mission is their church. This valley, and their families, shaped the Nuti's love for country life and their community. At the center is their Catholicism, which their mothers witnessed to them by demonstrating their own daily commitment to faith. In other words, these two remarkable women taught Michael and Nancy how to own the mission ... both the daily operations of the mission itself and the mission of the universal Catholic Church.

Close friends, Marion Compston and Mary Nuti became the leaders of religious education at St. John the Baptist when a religious order of sisters who ministered to the community was called to Las Vegas. As a result, these two women left a long and lasting mark... working well into their 70s caring for the church and its people.

"That was ingrained in us," says Nancy. "You saw there was a need, and you did it. You cleaned the church. My kids cleaned the church. Was it fun? No, but it needed to be done."

Eventually, the two women witnessed the marriage of their children, Nancy and Michael, who became involved in ministry soon after they wed, starting as confirmation leaders and evolving to youth ministry. Though Nancy volunteered alongside her mother and mother-in-law most of her life, she didn't give much thought to taking over the reins until Father Paul McCollum became pastor and created a formal director of religious education position. Marion told Nancy that it was time for her to take the lead and encouraged her to apply for the job.

"Like I used to say to Father Paul, I became director of the religious education job by default. It was 'de fault' of my mother," Nancy says with a chuckle.



St. John the Baptist Mission

Competent leadership is essential at mission churches since they generally operate with no full-time pastor or staff. Missions are affiliated with a nearby parish, in this case, Holy Family in Yerington. The pastor provides support and oversight and presides at weekly Mass. In the 90s, St. John the Baptist created an Advisory Board to help manage and build the mission community. Today, 10 volunteers serve on the board.

As younger people left the community, others moved to Smith Valley after raising their own children. Those who were Catholic eagerly embraced St. John's Mission and became leaders alongside long-time Smith Valley families. They brought ideas from their former communities, one of which was whole family catechesis.

The ministry leaders at St. John's Mission took the concept of family catechesis and tailored it to meet the needs of their community, which is comprised of differing cultures, education levels and socioeconomic backgrounds. As they open the evening together, someone reads the gospel in English and Spanish. Each family discusses the reading and answers directed questions together within their family unit.

Michael guides a discussion of the Gospel and a forum for questions of faith and church teaching as it relates to their lives. For questions outside his scope of knowledge, Michael works with Father Jesus Ballesteros, the current pastor, who often comes to the sessions despite it being his day off.

“The first week, no one wanted to say anything,” says Nancy, “but within a few weeks they were all enjoying each other’s company.”

Family catechesis not only gives the language of faith to these parents; it builds community with their neighbors. The faith discussions reveal the stories of their lives and their fears, such as children losing their faith, having families far away, or dealing with sacramental marriage irregularities. This gives everyone a look at the struggles of their fellow Catholics.

Though long-time families have traditionally been the backbone of the mission, the people of St. John’s work together to meet the needs of their community. Michael has no doubt the mission will be active for many years to come. “It’s just a handful of us who are involved in the day-to-day workings of the church, but it is very easy to get others to help,” says Michael. “If we were to fall out of the picture, someone else would pick it up. There is always someone who recognizes the need.”



St. John the Baptist Mission

Despite their distance from other Catholic churches, Michael feels connected to the faithful of the diocese. “Our extended Catholic family is always welcoming to us. It is one big happy family to me.”

Nancy agrees, but would like to share their home and mission with Catholics throughout the diocese. “I am proud to live where we live,” says Nancy. People say it’s too far to come here, but it’s something we want to share. It is special and unique to see ... especially if you weren’t born and raised in Nevada.”

“It is a beautiful place,” says Michael.

The Season of Lent is near and soon the liturgy will call us to enter into a time of prayer and penance that will lead us into reflection on the great mystery of our faith; the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Always we are called to look at our own lives and find those things that may in any way hinder us from deepening our relationship with God. Our practice of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving is meant to be of assistance to us by turning our attention away from ourselves and toward God and those in need. You will be in my prayers as we begin this annual Lenten journey that leads to the celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection.

Thank you for all you do for the missions of the Diocese of Reno. Asking for a remembrance in you Lenten prayers that we may faithfully continue our work in making Christ know and loved among our people, I’m

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Randolph R. Calvo

Bishop of Reno



Through your will, you have the power to help the Church in Nevada continue to do God’s work. Bequests may be made in many ways other than outright cash – Stocks and Bonds, Savings Bonds, Property, Trusts, Life insurance policies, Annuities, Real Estate, Living Trusts, etc. As you prepare or update your will, think of the good works of the church that you would like to continue to help when your life on earth ends. The legal title for bequests to the Catholic Church in Nevada is: “ I hereby bequeath to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Reno and his Successors, a Corporation Sole, _____ for the work and ministry of the Frontier of the Faith.” This will insure tax exemption of the Internal Revenue Service and that your gift will get to the Frontier of the Faith for your intended purpose. For further assistance regarding wills or any gifts to the Diocese, write;