



# HOLY APOSTLES

## CATHOLIC CHURCH

*- Encountering Christ & Making Disciples -*

### An Inside Look at Our Music Ministry Preparing to Celebrate Christ on Christmas

Our Holy Apostles Music Ministry has been preparing for a celebration of Christmas that begins even as Advent ends, on Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve.

From ministering at special events throughout Advent, to Christmas Masses, the talented members of our Music Ministry will shine bright for our parish community in the spirit of stewardship during this blessed season.

Audrey Sujkowski, our Director of Liturgy and Liturgical Music, has been serving the people of Holy Apostles as a staff member for the past 22 years. Although she puts in a lot of extra work this time of year, the end result is always worth it.

“This year, Christmas will be a marathon weekend, with the fourth Sunday of Advent going right into Christmas,” Audrey says. “There will be seven Masses our ministry will serve, including the 8 a.m. Mass on Christmas Day.”

There are 20 members in the parish choir, as well as a Hand Bell choir and a Samoan choir, which will all be ministering to the parish at the various Christmastime liturgies.

A special choral piece is planned for this year’s Christmas celebration – John Rutter’s “Candlelight Carol,” a work released in 1984. The piece by the English composer describes the Virgin Mary’s adoration of her Son on the night of His birth.



*Members of the Holy Apostles Music Ministry lead us in song.*

This will be in addition to Rutter’s “Psalm 23,” and Audrey explains that the ministry started working on “Candlelight Carol” before COVID and is excited for the chance to revive it.

The Hand Bell Choir, made up primarily of homeschool students, ministered at the Feast of All Saints in November, and will minister at the Feast of the Immaculate Conception as well as all the high feasts. In addition to our vocalists, who serve as cantors and in the choir, Holy Apostles’ Music Ministry also

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## STEWARDSHIP OF TALENT

*Bring Your Gifts to the Spotlight!*

**T**he word “talent” often conjures up images of stage performers in the spotlight, captivating awestruck audiences with their impeccable musical or acting skills.

While these talented performers are certainly deserving of applause, the majority of the population sits hidden in the shadows, staring on in amazement while feeling overlooked – and perhaps wishing to possess such talents themselves. But even when we feel overlooked and untalented, God knows better. As Christians, we are all called to dig deep and trust that we are uniquely blessed with valuable talents and abilities, even if our talents aren’t so obvious or don’t garner applause and accolades.

Along with “time” and “treasure,” “talent” is one of the “three Ts” of stewardship. Exploring our natural inclinations and preferences, as well as the intricacies of our unique personalities, can unearth God-given talents.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same spirit,” writes St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. “There are different forms of service, but the same Lord.”

Some people have the gift of working peacefully with children. Equipped with patience and gentleness, they are able to guide young souls to the Lord. Yet, others shudder at the thought of a classroom full of 5-year-olds,

and instead seek the quiet solace of behind-the-scenes tasks – decorating the church, sewing altar cloths, or stuffing envelopes.

Our interests and abilities are varied, and our volunteer options are endless, as we are called to give our talents back to God in loving service. Examine your heart and prayerfully discern your gifts, then direct those gifts towards serving the people of God.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr., author of *Life’s Little Instruction Book*, once said, “Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There’s plenty of movement, but you never know if it is going to be forwards, backwards, or sideways.”

If our gifts of talent are not guided by the discipline of prayer, just like an octopus on roller skates, we will get nowhere fast! Yet, if we keep our eyes on the goal of heaven and serve the Lord with joyfulness, our efforts will produce a bountiful harvest. In the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will reap bountifully.”

The next time you sit quietly in the shadows behind a glaring stage spotlight, rest assured that your talents are no less impressive in the eyes of God, and will always be “applauded” when directed to the service of His people.

*Our interests and abilities are varied, and our volunteer options are endless, as we are called to give our talents back to God in loving service. Examine your heart and prayerfully discern your gifts, then direct those gifts towards serving the people of God.*

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

## RECEIVING GRATEFULLY AND SHARING GENEROUSLY AS HIS DISCIPLES

Dear Parishioners,

**A** few weeks ago, we changed our clocks from Daylight Savings Time to Standard Time. For us, that meant moving our clocks back an hour on a Saturday night before going to bed. Though we now have light earlier in the day, each day we are losing some more daylight.

As we live through these darkest days of the year, our Church also celebrates Advent and Christmas this month. Advent is a time of hopeful anticipation of what is to come – the Second Coming of Christ and the celebration of His birth. As Advent moves us to the darkest day of the year, we embrace the themes of hope, peace, love, and joy. As the amount of light in each day begins to grow, we celebrate that the Light entered into its creation in the birth of Jesus.

Each Sunday is an opportunity, as we light a new candle on the Advent wreath, to reflect on how these four themes are lived out in our lives as disciples.

**Hope** – No matter what comes in our life, can we live in a spirit of hope in our Lord who is always with us? Can our confidence in God’s amazing and generous love sustain us even in the darkest moments of life?

**Peace** – So many things can rob us of peace: the death of a loved one, job loss, busyness, economic uncertainty, and success to name a few. Can we trust the Prince of Peace enough to know that we are not alone,



that He is with us in all times?

**Joy** – This Advent, instead of looking for external sources of joy, can we give time to our Lord in prayer, forming a deeper relationship with Christ and allowing Him to become our fountain of joy?

**Love** – Can we take time this Advent to savor the many loving relationships of our life, especially our relationship with Jesus, the Father, the Holy Spirit, the saints, our parish community, and our loved ones? Embracing this love will help us to look forward with joyful anticipation to the fullness of the Kingdom of God that awaits us.

God did not make us for darkness but rather for His light. May this Advent and Christmas fill us with hope, peace, joy, and love so that we live every day as children of God’s light with a renewed spirit, receiving gratefully and sharing generously as disciples of Jesus.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Handwritten signature of Fr. Tom Jamka.

Fr. Tom Jamka  
Pastor



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## Embracing the

## *Parish Offers Numerous Opportunities*

**A**dvent is the time we prepare our hearts and homes for Christ's coming to us at Christmastime. But it can be hard to resist the pull of a noisy holiday season.

"Gifts, good food, and holiday songs aren't bad things," Fr. Tom says. "But they also aren't what Christmas is really about. There is a reason why many of the readings in the Church during Advent focus on Christ's Second Coming and the need for watchfulness. If Jesus were to come back right now, would you be ready for Him? Thinking about that question and answering honestly is a good way to determine if you need to reorient your life or cut back on some activities this Advent so you can stay focused on Christ."

One of the ways we can focus on preparing for Christmas is by making space for quiet time during Advent.

"This may mean saying 'no' to other activities or things that you 'should' be doing so you can prioritize the most necessary thing — prayer," Fr. Tom says.

During the Fridays of Advent, we will pray Vespers in the church at 6:30 p.m. — except for Dec. 8., when Vespers will begin at 6 p.m. This solemn service gives parishioners an opportunity for communal prayer.

"This is a good way to re-center our hearts on God during this busy time of year," Fr. Tom says.

In addition, Fr. Tom encourages parishioners to spend time meditating on the Blessed Mother leading up to the birth of Christ.

"What was she thinking and feeling?" he says. "What was she doing to get ready for Jesus? How can you imitate her? *The Reed of God* by Caryll Houselander is a great little book about Mary that you can use to help guide you in this meditation."

Holy Apostles' Perpetual Adoration Chapel is a quiet spot where parishioners may drop in to pray at any time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. There are also children's Holy Hours on Tuesdays and Fridays from 9 to 10 a.m., and Saturdays from 1 to 2 p.m., providing parents with the opportunity to teach their children the importance of prayer.

As we pray and reflect throughout Advent, it is an ideal time to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Fr. Tom says



*Parishioners Deborah Washington and Frank Sanchez (as Santa) after celebrating Christmas Mass*

this can help us to receive the Christ Child with pure hearts. Here at Holy Apostles, confessions are available from 7 to 7:45 a.m. Monday through Saturday, or by appointment. We will also be hosting an Advent penance service on Dec. 20 at 6:30 p.m.

Looking at the world around us, it is easy to feel discouraged. But Fr. Tom encourages the need "to keep our eyes focused on the Lord," and look for joy in the small things of everyday life.

"If we listen to the Lord and observe the ways He is at work, we will come to see our lives and everything that happens to us in a different light," he says. "Gratitude

# Advent Season

## *to Enter into This Season of Preparation*

and daily prayer are essential if we wish to have Christian joy. I think it's also important to recognize that joy doesn't necessarily mean being overly exuberant or even that we always feel happy. Joy flows from charity. It means that by loving God and resting in His love for us, our hearts are not as moved by the evils of the world or the bad things that happen to us. Nothing can take God's love away from us. If we truly believe this, then we will want to share that with the people we know who don't know God or haven't experienced His love for them."

In addition to preparing our hearts and minds for Christmas, we also have some service opportunities during the Advent season. The parish partners with the St. Vincent de Paul Society to have a Giving Tree for our community members in need. Parishioners can take gift tags off the tree to purchase gifts for children, and/or give donations to Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem.

Other ways we can give through service include spending time with the lonely, bringing meals to those in need, visiting the elderly, and cultivating a spirit of generosity towards others through our time and talent.

"This Advent, I hope that our love for Christ, our joy, and our desire to share Him with others continues to grow," Fr. Tom says. "Holy Apostles is known for its warm and welcoming congregation, and I am so proud of the way that our parish practices the virtue of hospitality, especially during times like Christmas when we have lots of visitors."

*"Nothing can take God's love away from us. If we truly believe this, then we will want to share that with the people we know who don't know God or haven't experienced His love for them." – FR. TOM*



*The Arts & Environment team after decorating the church for Christmas*

### *Christmas Mass Schedule*

**Christmas Eve** – 4 p.m., 7 p.m., and 10 p.m.

**Christmas Day** – 8 a.m.

*Since this Christmas falls on a Monday, it's important to note that we will still need to attend a normal Sunday Mass for our Sunday obligation on Dec. 23/24, in addition to a Christmas Eve Mass on Dec. 24 or Christmas Day Mass on Dec. 25.*



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## The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

*A Lesson in Catholic Stewardship*

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, celebrated on Dec. 8, holds a special place in the hearts of Catholics worldwide; but especially in America, as this is also the patronal feast day of the United States.

On this day, we commemorate the dogma that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was conceived without original sin. This means that Mary's soul was without blemish, making her the perfect vessel to carry and nurture the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception underscores Mary's unique role in the salvation of humanity and her exceptional purity, highlighting her as a model of discipleship. Beyond its theological significance, this feast offers essential lessons on Catholic stewardship and discipleship.

**Stewardship of God's Grace:** Catholic stewardship is about recognizing that everything we have, including our talents, time, and resources, is a gift from God. Mary's Immaculate Conception is a reminder that we are called to be stewards of God's grace. Just as Mary's purity was a divine gift, so are the talents and resources we possess. Stewardship encourages us to use these gifts in service of God and others, just as Mary used her life to serve God's plan.

**Imitating Mary's Fiat:** One of the most significant aspects of Mary's life is her fiat, her "yes" to God's plan. When the angel Gabriel announced that she would become the Mother of the Savior, Mary replied, "Let it be done to me according to your word." This act of surrender exemplifies the essence of discipleship. As Catholic disciples, we are called to emulate Mary's obedience, saying "yes" to God's will in our lives.

**The Call to Holiness:** The Immaculate Conception reminds us of the call to holiness in our daily lives. Mary's exceptional purity shows us what it's like to lead a life free from sin. While this may seem unattainable, her example emphasizes the importance of continuous conversion and striving for holiness as part of our discipleship journey. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception invites us to make choices that draw us closer to God.

**Mary as the Advocate:** In our Catholic tradition, Mary is often venerated as the Advocate, the one who intercedes on our behalf. As the Immaculate Conception and the Mother of God, her prayers for us are very powerful. In our stewardship and discipleship, we can turn to Mary as a source of inspiration and guidance. Just as Mary interceded at the Wedding at Cana, we can trust in her prayers as we navigate life's challenges and joys.

**Respect for the Human Person:** As the Immaculate Conception, Mary reflects God's glory in a special way. All human persons are made in the image of God and as such, we are called to value life from conception to natural death. Part of stewardship includes fostering a culture of life as we see the glory of God revealed in each unique human soul.

**Service to Others:** From her humble acceptance of her role as the Mother of God, to visiting Elizabeth in her time of need, to her support of Jesus throughout His ministry, Mary embodies selfless service. Catholic stewardship encourages us to follow her example by serving our communities and those in need.

In conclusion, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception holds a deep significance in the Catholic Church, serving as a reminder of Mary's purity, her fiat, and her unique role in God's plan for humanity. It provides a powerful lesson on stewardship, prompting us to recognize and use the gifts God has given us. Mary's example of discipleship, her holiness, and her advocacy for us further strengthen our commitment to following Christ. As we celebrate this feast, let us be inspired to say "yes" to God's plan, strive for holiness, and serve others with love and humility, just as Mary did.

# Meet Parishioner PETE OPETAIA

## GROWING IN LOVE OF CHRIST ALONGSIDE PARISH FAMILY

Family and community are an integral part of Samoan culture — and for Pete Opetaia and his family, this has extended to the entire Holy Apostles Parish community. Over the past 30 years, serving the parish through various ministries has been a way to grow in faith, as well as give back to God and the community.

“In our life back in the islands, we were so involved in serving our family and serving our community — that’s always been a part of me,” Pete says. “I see the amazing parishioners here and the parish really has that family feeling to it. I always like to look at how I can better mimic the life of Jesus in terms of serving people, so that’s how I started to get plugged in.”

“The church was looking for people who could sing, and so I started by joining the 9 a.m. Mass choir,” he adds. “Back home (in Samoa), I was leading the choir from a very young age, so it was easy for me to get involved and serve Jesus through our music ministry. From there, I started gathering my family who lives around here — my brother, my sister-in-law, my nieces and nephews — and created the Tautua Choir. ‘Tautua’ means ‘to serve,’ and we have been singing as a family in this choir for 22 years.”

The Tautua choir has 33 total members, all from Pete’s family. They sing at the 7 a.m. Sunday Mass, in the Samoan language — as Pete says, they sing the same parts of the Mass as the 9:00 and 12:00 Masses, but with “a little island twist.” They also serve at Easter and Christmas Masses each year, as well as the Feast Day of Divine Mercy. In the past, they have also performed for parish fundraisers, such as a 2019 concert for the parish’s capital campaign.

“That was fun because we not only got to sing, but we also got to perform Polynesian native dances,” Pete says. “We were able to rally up the family and perform the dances and sing praise and worship to God, utilizing important parts of our culture.”

Pete also has a special devotion to the Divine Mercy, which was introduced to him by his uncle in 2000.

“I went deep within the message of Jesus in the diary of St. Faustina,” he says. “It has transformed my spiritual life and really made me realize how much Christ loves us. It kind of trickled down from my uncle to me, and then from me to the rest of the family, and I’ve seen the oceans of mercy moving all the way to our island nation. I really can see Divine Mercy making its way around and bringing souls very close to Christ, and



*Pete Opetaia leading the Samoan Choir*

it really highlights the mission of Christ to serve one another.”

In 2005, Pete, his family, and other parishioners started a Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy cenacle group at the parish. Members of the cenacle get together to pray, discuss the message of Divine Mercy, and share that message with others. For many years, the cenacle members prayed specifically for the establishment of a Perpetual Adoration Chapel at the parish, and that prayer finally came to fruition. Pete has found the practice of adoration in the chapel to be very spiritually enriching.

“I take the 1 a.m. slot on Saturday night/Sunday morning, and it’s the most fulfilling time to get to spend with Jesus,” he says. “I would call down anybody and everybody to visit Jesus in Perpetual Adoration. He really is inviting everyone to know Him, love Him, and serve Him. It has really enhanced my spiritual life — it’s just been amazing.”

Pete really appreciates the Holy Apostles community and looks forward to continuing the journey together with his parish family.

“I am grateful the Holy Spirit guided me and my family to Holy Apostles,” he says. “When you look at everyone in the community, even though we have very diverse backgrounds, we are all one family. With all the gifts we have to share, there is no better way to use them than to serve one another and bring each other the light of Christ.”

“I just love Jesus, and I hope that my family and all the parishioners get to fall in love with Him too,” he adds. “I encourage all parishioners to dig deep because Jesus is calling all of us to be apostles of hope, mercy, and especially His love. He is waiting to create that personal relationship with each one of us.”

*“I see the amazing parishioners here and the parish really has that family feeling to it. I always like to look at how I can better mimic the life of Jesus in terms of serving people, so that’s how I started to get plugged in.” — PETE OPETAIA*



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4925 North Carefree Circle  
Colorado Springs, CO, 80917  
719-597-4249  
holyapostlescc.org

## MUSIC MINISTRY *continued from front cover*

includes several gifted instrumentalists, including two violinists, an oboist, clarinetist, and flutist.

The Music Ministry members share their talents in stewardship, and they are also very giving of their time.

“For some, they have a lot of other things going on,” Audrey says. “I’m amazed they are able to come to practice. But maybe the one and one-half hours during practice is their time and it matters to them. The religious texts they are singing can pierce the soul in a good way as it deepens your faith or understanding.”

The gifts the Music Ministry shares with us are intended to bring us closer to Christ.

“We’re hoping that is what the ministry should do,” Audrey says. “And with the Eucharistic Revival,

there are all different things that lead us to the love of Christ. Sometimes it can bring you home, which is what we’re currently doing with the Eucharistic Revival – understanding the presence of Christ in each other and the Eucharist.”

In addition to leading others to Christ through music, Music Ministry is also an opportunity for our choir and musicians to grow closer to Christ. Members pray together before each rehearsal and Mass and Audrey asks the members for any intentions and the members will offer prayers with what’s going on in their lives.

“We pray together,” she says. “This is another connection for us. And I’ll close with a prayer in the silence of our hearts. We offer it to Him.”

Those interested in joining the Music Ministry may contact Audrey Sujkowski through the parish office at 719-597-4249, but are asked to wait until after the Christmas Masses.

## LITURGICAL SCHEDULE:

**Weekend Mass:** Saturday (Vigil Mass): 5:30 p.m.; Sunday: 7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m.

**Weekday Mass:** Monday-Saturday: 8:00 a.m.; Wednesday: 6:30 a.m.

**Confessions:** Monday-Saturday: 7:00-7:45 a.m.