

Advent, 2024

Dear St. John of God Parishioners and Friends,

When I was looking for a Catholic parish for my young family in the early 1970s, a friend who had earned his medical degree at UCSF Med Center on Parnassus suggested St. John of God. I tried it and quickly fell in love with the friendly community and the strong Vatican II spirit that was evident in every liturgy. I knew I had found my spiritual home.



From its beginning in 1967, ***the parish's primary mission has been to provide spiritual care and sacraments to UCSF patients and their families and to the medical professionals, other staff and students there.*** But I didn't really understand the importance of that work until I volunteered to bring communion to the hospital. Ask anyone who has participated in this parish ministry and they will tell you how grateful the patients are. Many people with serious illnesses come to UCSF from all over the state and sometimes from other states and other parts of the world. Often they are here alone, overwhelmed, vulnerable and without local support systems to help. The ***small and simple acts*** of praying with them, listening to them and giving them the Eucharist are so appreciated. It's not unusual for patients and family members to break down and cry during these visits.

Now when I think about how important the parish's mission is, I also think about my friend Cathy. In December of 2020, she started to experience GI problems and sought advice from her doctors. Because it was so difficult to get appointments for diagnostic tests and timely medical care during the Covid pandemic, months went by during which Cathy lost a lot of weight and strength but still had no answers about the source of the problem. Finally she got a referral to a GI specialty practice at UCSF. When I found out she was at UCSF on Parnassus, I called Father Kabipi and asked him to visit her and he promised he would.

In July, her new medical team discovered a massive tumor in Cathy's intestinal tract that had metastasized to several sites in other organs. She began chemotherapy almost immediately. But after just two rounds, she ended up back at UCSF in the ER with septic shock. This became a pattern over the next several months. Cathy's husband and their two adult daughters were with her much of the time at UCSF and I was relieved to get updates from them reporting that Father Kabipi had visited and anointed Cathy and gave communion to all of them. Father Kabipi continued to check in on her when she was at UCSF. In October she was moved to a palliative care unit at UCSF and she died just a few weeks later.

I wish there was a happier ending to this story, but I'm so glad our parish was able to provide spiritual care and comfort for my friend and her grieving family in that dark time.



I'm writing to you today with this important request: Will you consider making a special gift to St. John of God parish during our year-end campaign so we can continue to offer hospital ministry services to patients, students and staff at UCSF Medical Center? You can make your gift online by scanning the QR code to the left or by visiting www.sjog.net/appeal. You may also write a check and mail it to our address: St. John of God Catholic Church, 1290 – 5th Avenue, SF, CA 94122. Write 2024 Year-End Appeal in the memo line. ***Your gift will benefit other patients like***

Cathy. Our parish is also in the process of resuming hospital visits by lay Eucharistic Ministers. If you are interested, contact Bob Gajewski at ludski1@comcast.net.

Thank you for your generosity and your prayers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Becker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "B".

SJOG Finance Committee: Bill Becker, Susan Fox, Dave Freitas, Bob Gajewski, Father Narcis Kabipi

PS Two-plus millennia ago a little baby was born in Bethlehem of humble parents - an insignificant event in the grand scheme of things. Or is it? ***He became our Savior and the Prince of Peace!*** As we await Christ's coming to us again this Christmas, please accept our very best wishes for a peace-filled Christmas season for you and your family. ***Please join us at Mass if you are able.*** Here's our Christmas schedule:

***Christmas Eve (Dec. 24) – 4:15 pm;
Christmas Day (Dec. 25) – 9:30 am, 11:30 am***

