



# North Texas Catholic



BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



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Nellie Edwards, the artist of "Mother of Life," began doing sacred art nine years ago. Currently, she is working on a children's book, which will be published by The World Apostolate of Fatima, just ahead of the upcoming 100th anniversary of Our Lady of Fatima. Her website is [PaintedFaith.net](http://PaintedFaith.net)





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## A Changing of the Seasons

It goes without saying that this is a busy time of year. A new liturgical year has begun. We prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus. And then it's a new calendar year. During this time we celebrate the Christmas season rejoicing in the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord.

What happens after? Plain old Ordinary time? Well, yes and no. Yes, it will be Ordinary time, but being "ordinary" does not prevent us from continuing to grow spiritually. (As an aside, it's called *Ordinary* because it is the season of counted weeks.) Rather, as Moses pointed out to the Israelites, we should keep the Lord front and center in our lives — for doing the will of God "is no trivial matter for you, but rather your very life." (*Deut. 32:47*)

For us at the *NTC*, we live our faith out by producing this magazine and our website. We consider it our ministry and our vocation. And that means we always do our best to share the Good News happening in our diocese in a manner that's engaging, effective, and always points to Christ.

This redesign is one of the ways we're aiming to do that. With the help of our awesome designer Rachel Marek, we've come up with a cleaner, more elegant, and more modern look. You'll see bigger, crisper pictures, easier-to-read fonts, better navigation, and new sections (including one on saints, see Pg. 37; and one promoting the many local stories and features we have online, see Pg. 46).

We also brought in talented cartoonist Tom Gould (see *Lighter and Brighter* on Pg. 36), new writers, and new columnists. If you don't see some of these folks in our pages, you'll certainly see them on our website. You'll also come across many references to the website in this magazine — because [NorthTexasCatholic.org](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org) is truly a labor of love for our staff and there is no shortage of great content there.

We hope you enjoy the new look. We thank you for being faithful readers. And we wish you a blessed Christmas (all 12 days of it) and a happy New Year!

In Christ,

Juan Guajardo  
 Associate Editor

P.S. A special thanks goes out to our editor, Jeff Hensley, my friend and mentor, who gave me the tools to carry forth his mission. Please pray for him as he continues returning to full health.



## THE CALL TO RESPECT LIFE

### It's Everyone's Responsibility

**T**he Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrates the apparition of the Virgin Mary, pregnant with the unborn Jesus, to St. Juan Diego in 1531 in Mexico. One of the Gospel selections for this feast includes Luke's account of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth; the event in which the unborn John the Baptist leaps with joy in his mother's womb at the arrival of the unborn Jesus present with his Mother.

The message of Guadalupe to Juan Diego is simple and relevant to each of us living today, "I am your Mother." In this message and apparition we also celebrate the arrival of the Gospel and the start of evangelization in the Americas.

It is providential that the first evangelizer to the Americas is the Mother of God, along with the unborn Jesus, because mothers and their unborn children are very vulnerable to a dominant and evil ethic concretized in law through the 1973 Supreme Court decision known as *Roe v. Wade*. This false ethic elevates an impoverished sense of human freedom over the foundation of the human dignity of each person created in the image and likeness of God. Mothers and their unborn children speak prophetically to each of us today of the Gospel of Life.

The protection of the lives of the unborn is essential to formation in faith and morals of our Catholic

people. Previously, attempts to foster this mission were made through a separate office in the diocese and funded exclusively through an annual banquet that has proven to be inadequate to provide for its intended purpose.

This situation and the strong importance of the mission have prompted me, after consultation with those involved in religious formation and pro-life ministry, to initiate the following changes to integrate more completely the respect for human life into the outreach and formation of our people in faith and morals. The services provided up to now through the Office of Respect Life will now be more directly integrated into the full ministry of the Church with better stewardship of resources.

First, Youth for Life, which has previously been a separate project, will now be overseen and directed by the Youth Ministry Office of the diocese. This makes education, awareness, and action regarding the respect for life a crucial and integral part of the faith formation of our young people. Such action and formation will include greater promotion and participation in the annual March for Life, the orchestration of 40 Days for Life, and Lock-ins for Life in our diocesan and parochial ministry with youth.

Secondly, every parish will be encouraged to develop through stewardship a vibrant respect life

program of awareness and outreach for women vulnerable to abortion. Each religious education program should include the dignity of the unborn child as part of formation of the authentic social teaching of the Church.

Thirdly, the administration and oversight of the Gabriel Project will be transferred to the direction of Catholic Charities Fort Worth. The Gabriel Project assists unwed mothers with material and spiritual resources and services needed to provide for their children — both born and unborn. This places the Gabriel Project under the competent and trained staff of Catholic Charities Fort Worth to care better for unwed mothers in distress.

As we start 2017, let's take the opportunity to bring to our own awareness, through prayer, study, and service, the inclusion of the most vulnerable into our shared life as a community and society. Let's make a sincere effort to let go of selfish individualism and place the needs of our common home before our own private and exclusive desires. This is a fresh start to proclaiming the Gospel of Life in the shadows of the Culture of Death.



+ Michael F. Olson

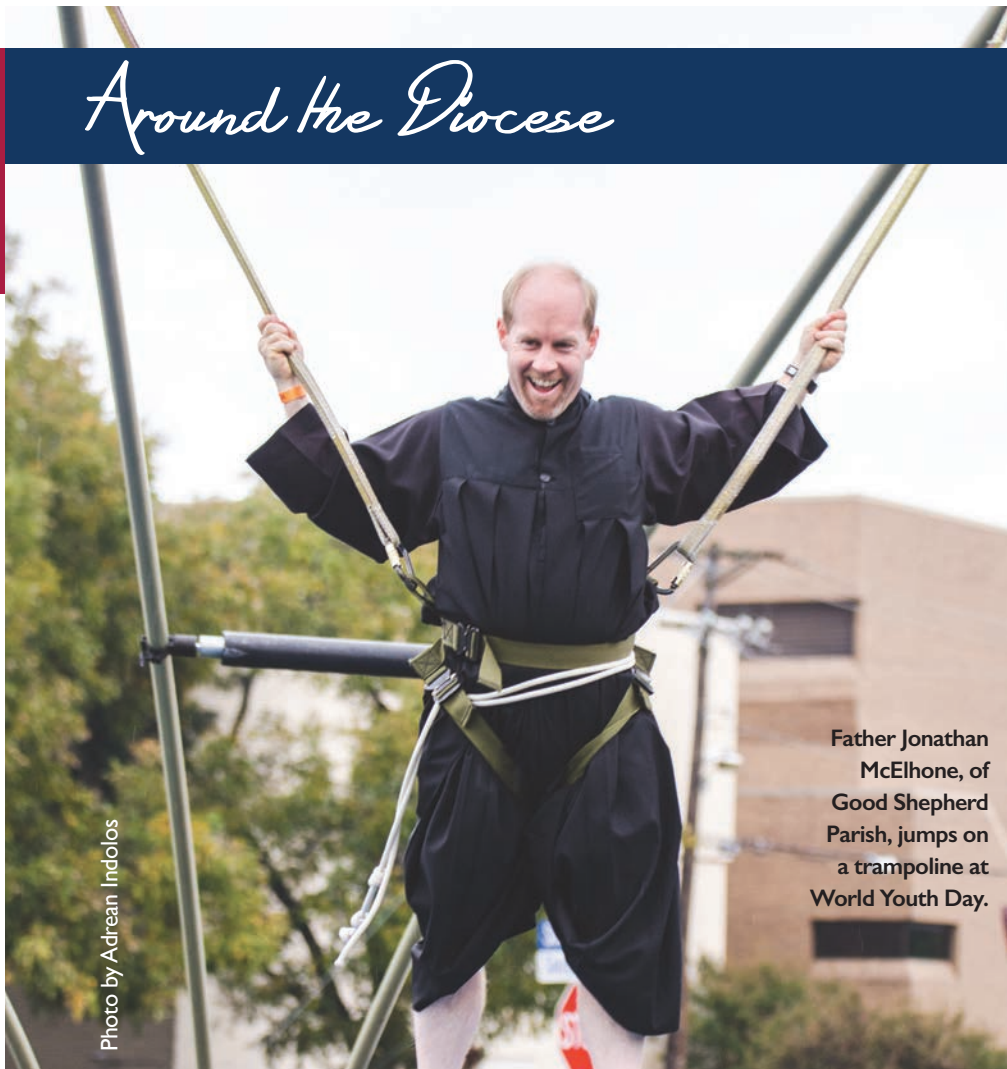


Photo by Adrean Indolos

Father Jonathan McElhone, of Good Shepherd Parish, jumps on a trampoline at World Youth Day.

## Faith, fellowship, and fun merge at World Youth Day, North Texas

ARLINGTON — Hundreds of diocesan youth celebrated life and faith with Bishop Michael Olson, music, games, and a priest who raps, during World Youth Day, North Texas at Arlington's Levitt Pavilion on November 6.

The event started with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson and several priests. The day also featured Adoration, food trucks and vendors, fun activities, and two musical performances.

World Youth Day, North Texas takes place annually in the Fort Worth diocese in response to St. John Paul II's request that dioceses around the world host local "World Youth Days" to celebrate the young Church.

Although the ground was wet from

the rain, many of the youth still showed piety by kneeling in the mud and on jackets placed on the ground. This especially impressed Fr. Pontifex, one of the two musicians performing in the concert held later in the evening.

"This is the celebration of life and youth," Fr. Pontifex continued. "This is the future of the Church. I think it's great that this diocese has such a passion for the youth to facilitate something like this on a Sunday.

"Tonight, they'll walk away knowing it was good and fun, and also connected to the Church," he said. "You don't have to separate that."

— Michelle McDaniel

## Fr. Michael Gaitley, author and speaker, presents message of mercy to Denton college students

DENTON — On Nov. 10, nationally-renowned Catholic author and speaker Father Michael Gaitley, MIC, presented Jesus' message of mercy to more than 100 college students at St. John Paul II Church and Campus Ministry in Denton.

Fr. Gaitley began the evening by concelebrating Mass with Father Kyle Walterscheid, pastor of St. John Paul II Parish. The best-selling author of many Catholic books, including *33 Days to Morning Glory*, then shared stories about his faith journey, his vocational discernment, and his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Divine Mercy.

"God doesn't love [in] the way human beings love. We love people because they're attractive, funny, talented, rich, and powerful," Fr. Gaitley said. "God loves us because we're so weak, broken, and sinful. God's merciful love is like water that rushes to the lowest place."

— Jacqueline Burkepile

Father Michael Gaitley ▶



Photo by Jilliam Lim

## Appreciation dinner highlights diocese's religious education leaders

FORT WORTH — Given the Fort Worth Diocese's expanse, it is crucial that those imparting the faith, both employees and volunteers, understand they are not alone.

"They need to know that we've got their back," Department Director of Catechesis Marlon De La Torre said.

Recognizing that need, diocesan officials, including Bishop Michael Olson, hosted a Dec. 2 appreciation dinner at St. Patrick Cathedral for directors and coordinators of religious formation and education programs throughout the diocese.

"Whether it's full-time, part-time, or volunteers, the great thing about our diocese is we have such a wide range of ages, genders, races; it runs the full gamut here and shows the diversity of our diocese," Director of Youth Ministry Jason Spoolstra said. "But we're all here for the same goal, which is creating disciples and raising the next generation in the Church and faith."

Despite rainy weather, about 70 of the approximately 120 invited came from Weatherford, Stephenville, Wichita Falls and points beyond to enjoy dinner, good company, and reflection from Bishop Michael Olson.

— *Matthew Smith*



Photo by Ben Torres

Teens listen to a pro-life lecture during the Lock-In for Life.

## Teens learn about pro-life cause at annual Lock-in For Life

ARLINGTON — When Jason Spoolstra attended his first Lock-in for Life as a youth in 2001, he did not know that one day he would be leading it as the director of youth ministry for the Fort Worth Diocese.

Now he coordinates the diocesan Lock-in for Life in a different parish each year to help teach teenagers the importance of human life in all stages, but focusing on the unborn.

In the event's 18 years, more than 2,500 teens have attended and listened to the talks, met others from the diocese, and learned about the fight against abortion.

Hosted by Most Blessed Sacrament Church

in Arlington on Nov. 12-13, the first half of the night centered around faith and learning, with a video of a sonogram of twins, breakout sessions about abortion, and Eucharistic Adoration. The second half focused on fun and fellowship, allowing the teens to enjoy sports, games, movies, prayer time in the chapel, or even sleep.

The lock-in ended the next morning with a presentation given by Spoolstra on the March for Life in Washington, D.C. Attendees were invited to write an essay and enter a competition to receive a scholarship to participate in the country's largest pro-life rally.

— *Michelle McDaniel*

**"One of the chief fruits of mercy is belonging...**

**With God's mercy, we have citizenship in**

**God's Kingdom. Having accepted God's mercy,**

**we belong to Christ and each other."**

**BISHOP MICHAEL OLSON** ►  
on God's mercy during the Closing Mass  
for the Year of Mercy on Nov. 19.



Check out our full story on the closing of the Year of Mercy:  
**NorthTexasCatholic.org** and click on **'Local News'**

# READY, SET, GROW!

AMID A POPULATION EXPLOSION, ST. MARTIN DE PORRES PARISH BUILDS A HOME

By Susan Moses

**T**alk about acceleration. Toyota and other major corporations are transforming eastern Denton County from pastures to an expansion epicenter. In the heart of the Highway 380 corridor, St. Martin de Porres Parish is preparing a future home for thousands of Catholics.

The Frisco parish was established in February 2015 after seven years as a mission of Holy Cross Church in The Colony. According to founding pastor Father Richard Kirkham, they have expanded from two Sunday Masses with 250 people to five weekend Masses with 700 people. The church is constructing a larger facility in Prosper and plans a September 2017 move.

“In 15 years, as many as 9,000 families may attend St. Martin,” said Fr. Kirkham. The numbers back him up. As one of the fastest growing areas of the country, the parish boundaries hold a population topping 100,000, with projections soaring as high as 300,000 by 2030. With an estimated 10 percent being Catholic, that’s 30,000 in need of a church.

Bishop Michael Olson explained that many don’t realize eastern Denton County belongs to the Fort Worth Diocese. Often, parishioners work in Dallas or its northern suburbs but live in Frisco, Little Elm, or Prosper.

“We’re playing catch-up with this part of the diocese. We’ve been looking at land and how to get it, but buying land is what holds us back.”

Visiting the parish Dec. 4, Bishop Olson addressed the critical need to care for Catholics who are here and to welcome the people who have recently moved to the area.

“One of the greatest needs of people



Parishioners listen to a catechesis session by Bishop Michael Olson after celebrating Mass at St. Martin de Porres Parish in Frisco. (NTC photo / Ben Torres)

Continued on Page 8



Bishop Olson and Father Richard Kirkham distribute Communion to families during Mass at St. Martin de Porres Parish on Dec. 4. (NTC photo / Ben Torres)

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in a highly mobile population is to belong. Our culture in the U.S. can be isolating, which builds fear and distrust. In the Church and in the local parish, we belong to Christ and to each other.”

He continued, “Not all are going to church. We need to change that. You have a responsibility to evangelize by how you live and by inviting them to church. Welcome them not as strangers, but as members. Be kind and gracious, because they are coming home.”

### EDUCATION FOSTERS COMMUNITY

Opened in 2012, Holy Cross Catholic School became part of St. Martin Parish in 2015 because the new location on 60 acres has better accessibility and allows more growth.

The only Catholic school in Frisco and Prosper is currently “bursting at the seams,” according to Principal Nancy Kirkpatrick. When she joined as development director two years ago, 40 students attended, and now enrollment has climbed to 140. Moving to a new facility in August permits them to add middle school grades, and she anticipates reaching maximum capacity by 2020.

In addition to supporting the school, the parish quickly began an innovative education program for its members. Everyone gathers on Family Faith Formation evenings for supper and fellowship. Then teens leave for Confirmation class, empty-nesters attend a Bible study, and families remain for faith lessons, activities, games, and crafts.

Director of Faith Formation Laura Myers said, “The aim is to inspire parents to teach their own children, that together as a family they will be talking about God. Another benefit is that people are volunteering to be part of this ministry. Often, transplants feel

like a drop in the bucket of a large parish, but with Family Faith Formation, it’s easy to plug in.”

Jeff Sprigg, a father of four, added, “My kids are excited to be there. It’s an active evening that gets them involved and talking. It builds community.” An assignment to complete at home ensures that practicing the faith isn’t reserved for Sundays.

### THE PATRONAGE OF ST. MARTIN DE PORRES

Born in 1579 in Lima, Peru, St. Martin de Porres faced poverty and discrimination because of his mixed race.

Prohibited from joining the Dominican Order, he trained as a barber and physician. His only path into the Dominican community was to volunteer as a servant. After eight years performing menial tasks, he was accepted as a Dominican lay brother. Ten years later he was assigned to the infirmary, where he cared for all, regardless of wealth or race.

Principal Kirkpatrick said, “St. Martin was of mixed race, and a diverse population is moving to the area; our students are Anglo, Hispanic, Vietnamese, and African.

“Our mission is to ‘embrace the spirit of St. Martin de Porres through diversity and humble service toward all of God’s creatures.”

Bishop Olson praised the name selection committee for “a prophetic choice. He’s a wonderful patron for our times, with concern for social justice, the common good, immigrants, and the environment.”

As both school and parish face rapid expansion, Bishop Olson cautioned, “It requires time, sacrifice, patience, and responsibility to build a church. We need to have trust and faith in God on this, and we need to be the welcoming face, the welcoming hand.”



# A GREAT & NEEDED MINISTRY

## RESPECT LIFE MINISTRIES DECENTRALIZE TO ENCOURAGE PARISH PARTICIPATION

By Susan Moses

The many changes occurring in the Office of Respect Life are a reflection that “pro-life is not a separate department for the diocese. It should be part of every department and every parish,” said Michael Demma, director of Respect Life for the Fort Worth Diocese.

By infusing pro-life teaching into all education, focusing on sanctity of life at the parish level, and shifting the coordination of some services, the diocese hopes to strengthen hearts towards the dignity of all human life.

### YOUTH AND EDUCATION

In the last year, leadership of the Youth for Life program has changed to the diocesan Youth Ministry office. Youth for Life’s many activities include the recent Lock-in for Life, the March for Life pilgrimage to Washington D.C., pro-life rallies in Austin, pro-life boot camps in the summer, and local rallies promoting chastity and the sanctity of life.

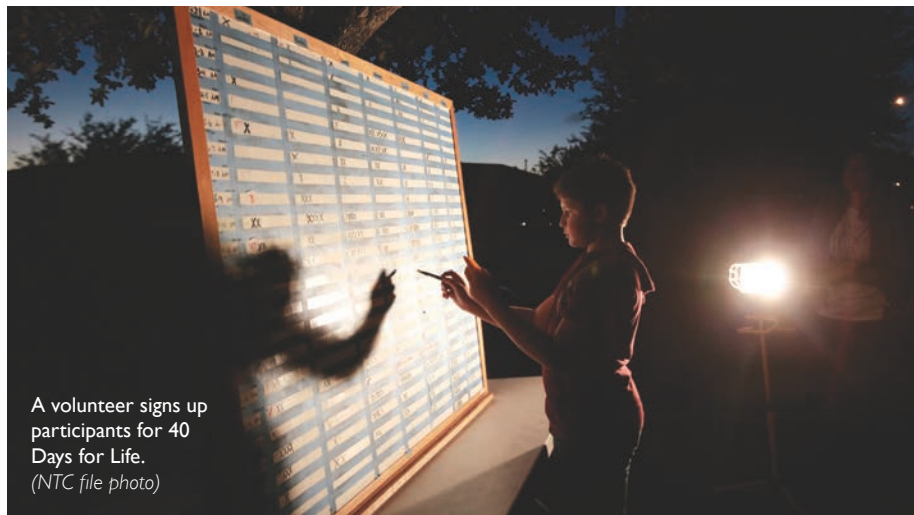
“The secret weapon in the battle to protect all life is youth. We’ve seen a significant raising of awareness on pro-life issues among young people, and a significant growth in pro-life clubs in Catholic schools. The abortion issue is split about 50/50 culturally, but the youth are our hope, a strong hope,” Demma said.

Education at every level — Catholic schools, youth ministry, marital preparation, and even from the pulpit — will incorporate more teaching about pro-life issues, according to Demma.

“To restore the foundation of the dignity of human life, we must start early in the catechesis of our children,” he said. “Dignity must be firmly planted in every mode of teaching that we expose to our children, our young adults, and to ourselves.”

### THE GABRIEL PROJECT

The Gabriel Project assists women in crisis pregnancies by assigning a trained Gabriel



A volunteer signs up participants for 40 Days for Life. (NTC file photo)

Angel to support a mother with spiritual and emotional support through the pregnancy and beyond, and to help the mother find resources for herself and the baby.

According to Demma, the Gabriel Project aligns well with the service resources of Catholic Charities. Beginning Feb. 1, Gabriel Angels will serve as a bridge to help mothers and fathers tap into the medical, economic, and material resources of Catholic Charities. Angels will continue to partner with women in support and friendship.

Angela Walters, the diocesan Gabriel Project coordinator, explained that “Catholic Charities assists a Gabriel Mom (a client in crisis pregnancy) with resources and long-term case management” so that she will eventually become self-sufficient.

About 25 parishes have Gabriel Angels and there are 12 Gabriel Project Parish Coordinators. Walters said, “We are growing the ministry each and every day as we receive more and more referrals of moms from hospitals, from word of mouth, and from pregnancy resource centers. We need many additional trained Angels as more moms come to us.” Currently, about 125 volunteers are helping Gabriel Moms.

Demma plans for each parish to have a Gabriel Project coordinator and for each

deanery to have a Gabriel House to store baby items and accommodate parenting classes or meetings.

### OTHER PRO-LIFE MINISTRIES

The Bishop’s Pro-life Banquet will cease, as the Respect Life office determined it is not an effective tool to help individuals in crisis pregnancy, although it did foster camaraderie. “We have other events that build a sense of pro-life community that include the family, like the annual Respect Life Mass, Life Chains, Good Friday Rosary Vigil, and 40 Days for Life,” Demma explained.

The Respect Life Office will continue its support of Rachel Ministries, which offers retreats that promote healing after abortion. Plus, with physician-assisted suicide now legal in six states, the Respect Life Office plans to devote some resources to end-of-life concerns.

According to Demma, roughly one-third of parishes in the diocese currently have a Respect Life committee. He plans to work with pastors and parishioners to establish Respect Life committees in every church.

“Respect Life is a great and necessary ministry, but it needs more than the three of us in the office,” Demma said. “We are making these changes to strengthen the program and make the culture of life a focus in the parishes.”

# FINANCIAL LIFELINE

THROUGH AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM,  
VINCENTIANS ARE HELPING BORROWERS  
SADDLED WITH PAYDAY, TITLE LOAN DEBT

By **Jacqueline Burkepile**

As the fight to regulate predatory lenders continues, the Catholic Church is taking immediate steps to help North Texans struggling with the debt of high-interest payday or title loans.

Those interest rates — typically between 200-600 percent — eventually become too much for the borrower to handle, so the Fort Worth District Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul launched the Mini-Loan Conversion Program (MLCP). The program helps victims of predatory lenders pay off their high-interest, short-term loan by converting it into a loan with an interest rate lower than 5 percent.

Fort Worth resident Andrea Reed participated in the MLCP pilot program. She has two children, and after her car broke down, she resorted to a payday loan of \$450. Reed said her payday lender automatically withdrew \$250 from her bank account for five consecutive months. Due to the loan's excessive fees, she fell behind on her bills and rent. Thanks to MLCP, now her monthly loan payment is \$75.

"When they paid off this loan for me, it allowed me to start saving \$25 a month. It helps me stay current on rent and bills," said Reed. "I'm only a nurse's aide and I don't

make a lot of money. It really helps me all the way around."

According to the Texas Fair Lending Alliance, the typical payday or auto title loan is a small-dollar, high-cost loan due in full in two weeks to one month. They are usually used to pay for rent, utilities, car repairs, or medical expenses. While the Texas Constitution prohibits charging more than a

10 percent interest rate, these agencies found a legal loophole by registering as Credit Access Businesses under the Credit Services Organization Act.

For example, some lenders may charge a fee of \$25 for every \$100 borrowed, plus extra fees on a weekly or monthly basis until the loan is paid. These charges result in annual percentage rates of at least 300 percent. With such high fees, borrowers have difficulty paying off the loan principal, resulting in an unending cycle of debt they cannot pay.

On June 2, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau proposed a rule to end payday "debt traps." They

said "consumers are being set up to fail with loan payments that they are unable to repay," are "faced with unaffordable payments," and must choose between "defaulting, re-borrowing, or skipping other financial obligations like rent or basic living expenses..."

## DID YOU KNOW?

Catholic Charities Fort Worth is also helping combat the predatory practices of the payday loan industry. Visit our website and click on 'News' for the story!

[NorthTexasCatholic.org](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org)



Bishop Michael Olson, the Texas Catholic Conference, and Catholic Charities Fort Worth have backed the proposed regulations. No final rule on the regulations has been issued yet.

The MLCP process begins with meetings between representatives from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the predatory loan victim. If approved, he must first open a savings account of at least \$25 with a financial institution recommended by the society. This savings account shows the society that the borrower is serious about this loan commitment. It also encourages the person to be more financially responsible in the future.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul grants loans up to \$1,500. Minimum payments could be as low as \$50 per month, depending on the amount borrowed. The loan's expected pay off date is between 9-18 months. If it is repaid on time and the



Kite Rin/Shutterstock.com

client completes a financial literacy class, the society will reward the borrower by returning 10 percent of the loan amount.

Rozanne Veaser, the Fort Worth District Council MLCP administrator for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, said an SVdP savings account backs up each loan. The account currently holds several thousand dollars completely funded by grants and other donations. This collateral ensures that the credit union does not lose money if an MLCP client defaults.

Veaser added that she hopes this program will help the many people who fall into the traps of payday and car title lenders.

“This is a matter of justice and charity. We need to help those people who are in financial difficulty,” Veaser said. “And we are called as Catholics to help them, so I think it’s important that I take part in this.”

Jim Pace, an MLCP coordinator and a parishioner of Holy Family Church in Fort

Worth, helps approve clients for the program.

“Clients must feel despondent to have to face the inability to live within their income. This program gives them the ability to see above ground,” Pace said. “It must be horrible for these people... to wake up in the morning and [think] that they will never get out of debt.”

Father Daniel Kelley, pastor of St. Joseph Church in Arlington, also praised MLCP. He said the program has potential to help many people who are in desperate situations.

“I’ve heard so many stories about people who fell victim to these loans. They lose their cars, their jobs, and eventually become homeless because of this,” Fr. Kelley said. “These payday and car title loans are legalized companies that rob and take advantage of the poor and of people’s desperation. That’s why we need to help these people.”

To learn more about SVdP’s Mini-Loan Conversion program, visit [svdpfw.org](http://svdpfw.org) or call Rozanne Veaser at 817-675-8984.

## A CLOSER LOOK

African-Americans and Hispanics make up 70 percent of payday loan borrowers and 62 percent of auto title loan borrowers.

— League of Women Voters of Texas

In the Fort Worth-Arlington area, the average payday loan APR ranges from 429 to 484 percent. The APR for auto title loans ranges from 233 to 317 percent.

— Catholic Charities of Fort Worth

The median income for Texans who take out payday loans is \$22,464.

— Texas Catholic Conference

One in six payday loan borrowers in Texas is disabled.

— League of Women Voters of Texas



Vince Lujan (left) and Manuel Bravo make up the bilingual worship band Jesus Team A (Jesús Te Ama in Spanish). (NTC photo/Adrean Indolos)

# A JOYFUL SOUND

How two men are attempting to build bridges between English and Spanish-speaking Catholics using the power of music

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Ask Vince Lujan what sparked his interest in music and he travels back in time to a pee-wee football field in Spring, Texas. Though small for his age, Lujan loved living out his gridiron fantasy with the other 10-year-old neighborhood boys. One bad tackle changed everything.

“I got hurt and my mother decided that was enough of football,” said the 36-year-old remembering his disappointment.

Instead of running around a practice field, Lujan spent his afternoons at the music studio where his mom took piano lessons. Surrounded by the sound of different instruments, something

finally caught his attention.

“I was walking down the corridor and heard a guitarist playing,” he continued. “I watched him and thought, ‘Wow, I want to do that.’”

Years later and now an accomplished musician, Lujan is leader of two bands — the Vince Lujan Project and Jesus Team A, a bilingual praise and worship band he co-founded with Manuel Bravo. The latter has performed locally at Shepherd’s Cafe, DCYC, the Dallas Ministry Conference, and the Catholic Underground in New York and Los Angeles.

“The members of Jesus Team A come from different experiences and backgrounds to make beautiful music together.”



he said, describing the group's dynamics. "We make a joyful sound and, hopefully, a beautiful sound that can connect with people."

Lujan credits much of his musical success and spiritual formation to a turning point in his life. After the music studio where he took lessons closed, the burgeoning guitarist turned to the music ministry at his parish as an outlet. Folk Masses were popular in the 1980s and Lujan — then in his early teens — tried to jam with church musicians but "I didn't want to just strum along," he admitted, "and I didn't feel welcome."

Influenced by guitar legends like Fats Domino, Richie Valens, and Chuck Berry he listened to on an "oldies" radio station, the teenager was eager to imitate more nuanced styles and complicated riffs. He found musical guidance in an unlikely place — a Spanish Mass at St. Anne Church in Tomball, Texas.

"We spoke English at home so going to a Spanish Mass was a big culture shock to me," he said looking back on the experience. "But there were guitars and a lot of rhythms and different styles for me to sink my teeth into. Experiencing different melodies was exciting."

Sarah Swonke, director of the Spanish choir at St. Anne, had the foresight to pair Lujan with Señor Pascual, an older member of the music group.

"He didn't speak much English and I didn't speak much Spanish, but we spoke guitar," Lujan said, praising his late mentor's ability to teach him new chords during rehearsals. "He took an interest in my skill and ability and wanted to help. I was really grateful for that."

Swonke, who became the young guitarist's Confirmation sponsor and considers herself his madrina or godmother, recognized Lujan's innate ability to compose and perform.

"Music is in his heart and soul," added the 86-year-old who still serves as her parish's cantor. "He was a natural."

Along with encouraging his musical talent, Swonke also instilled in her young protégé an appreciation for social justice outreach. As president of the parish's St. Vincent de Paul Society, she regularly involved choir members in ministering to the poor.

*He didn't  
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spoke guitar.*

"I would go along with her to drop off food or clothes to families she knew in the area who needed it," Lujan recalled. "It wasn't about saving the world. She had a relationship with these people and it was very much about community, faith, and family."

Watching her build bridges of care and concern between people impressed the cradle Catholic and would later have an effect on his music. Eventually, college brought Lujan to Denton where he studied jazz and guitar performance at the University of North Texas and began attending Immaculate Conception Church. Another UNT student, Manuel Bravo, was a member of the parish's Spanish music group and the two men — despite language difficulties — became fast friends.

"Manuel is from Mexico and comes from humble beginnings," Lujan said, recalling their early friendship when he spoke English and Manuel primarily

Spanish. "He is a songwriter, poet, and very spiritual guy. I really loved his music."

While in college, the two musicians would stay up all night jamming together. Eventually they toyed with the idea of forming a band and recording original compositions.

They chose the name Jesus Team A which becomes Jesús Te Ama, "Jesus loves you" in Spanish by simply capitalizing different letters.

"We want to build bridges between communities so people could connect like we did and we wanted music to be part of that," explained Lujan, who is also an experienced youth minister.

Bilingual lyrics became part of the group's calling card.

"It bridges that gap between the English and Spanish speaking people so we can experience Christ in and through each other," the bandleader continued. "That's what we're called to do — be church to each other."

Jesus Team A offers an eclectic mix of sounds from high-energy tunes used for youth gatherings to more solemn hymns appropriate for liturgy and Adoration. The band is currently raising funds to produce its first full-length album of material.

Never has the band's message of unity been more important, Lujan suggests.

"In this current divisive climate, we are all going to have to figure out how to live together and build bridges to different cultural, language, and economic communities," he said.

Everyone has a need to be loved, welcomed, and accepted.

"Our hope, as music ministers, is to use our gifts in ways that will fill that need and hunger," the guitarist added. "We want people to experience Christ in each other through song"



A young woman carries a crucifix during an international border Mass in Arizona. The Church in America is gearing up for a V Encuentro process that seeks to identify and engage more the Hispanic population in the United States.  
(CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)

# A WATERSHED MOMENT

The Church is gearing up for the 2018 Encuentro in the Diocese of El Paso. While its flavor is Hispanic, its impact promises to cross cultural, racial, and linguistic boundaries.



More than 20,000 emerging Hispanic Catholic leaders nationwide.

# ED

se of Fort Worth.  
and language boundaries.

**By Mark Pattison**  
**Catholic News Service**

*Editor's Note: This article was updated with NTC staff reporting.*

**A** “moment of grace.”  
A “watershed experience.”  
A “privileged opportunity.”  
That’s how Catholic leaders describe the fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry to be held in September 2018 in Fort Worth.

The Catholic Church, nationally and locally, is already gearing up for the massive effort, which is expected to identify more than 20,000 emerging Hispanic Catholic leaders nationwide and involve more than 1 million Catholics from all walks of life.

The movement will empower Hispanic/Latino Catholics to live their vocation more fully as joyful missionaries to the Church.

The effort received a personal endorsement from Fort Worth Bishop Michael Olson at the U.S. bishops’ fall general assembly in Baltimore on November 15, the official launch date of this initiative.

“It is of the utmost importance to foster the ongoing formation and leadership development within Hispanic and Latino Catholic communities,” Bishop Olson said. “V Encuentro is a privileged opportunity to prepare all of us as missionary disciples ready to serve the entire Church and for the Church to affirm and receive the gifts that Hispanics and Latinos bring to the Church in the U.S. in so many diverse generations.”

The theme for the fifth Encuentro, or “V Encuentro,” as it is known in shorthand, is “Missionary Disciples:

Witnesses of God’s Love,” according to Auxiliary Bishop Nelson J. Perez of Rockville Centre, New York, chairman of the bishops’ Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs.

“It is a great opportunity for the Church to reach out to our Hispanic brothers and sisters with Christ’s message of hope and love,” he said.

### **WHAT IS V ENCUESTRO?**

The V Encuentro is a four-year process of reflection and action that calls all U.S. Catholics to an intense period of formation, consultation, missionary activity, leadership development, and identification of ministerial “best practices.”

Drawing from Pope Francis, the goal of V Encuentro is to do two things: discern ways for the Church in the U.S. to better respond to the needs of the growing Hispanic community and to equip Hispanic Catholics of all generations to go out and be missionary disciples for the Church.

“This is carrying forth the tone of Pope Francis” to reach out to the peripheries and to be a welcoming presence to others, said Joel Rodriguez, director of Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

“It’s conversion,” Rodriguez continued. “The Bible from Genesis to Revelation points us to

one God, Jesus Christ, and Encuentro just points us to Him. It’s a calling to discipleship so that we can go out and share the Good News.”

### **A CATALYST**

Encuentro started in 1972, after the U.S. bishops saw the quick growth of Hispanics in the Church. In a way,

**The Hispanic population within the Church is saying, ‘We still need your support, however, now we’re also ready and prepared to help. Where do you need us?’**

**Continued on Page 16**

## From Page 15

Rodriguez explained, the first Encuentro was a call from Hispanics to the Church, to “look at them, notice them” at time when there was minimal pastoral outreach to Latinos in the U.S.

Since then four Encuentros have led to a slew of changes, including the creation of the USCCB’s Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs, a national pastoral plan for Hispanic Ministry, and a growing respect and appreciation of the Church’s cultural diversity.

“Back then, in 1972, it’s what [Hispanics needed],” Rodriguez said. “Come now, more than 40 years later and the Hispanic population within the Church is saying, ‘We still need your support; however, now we’re also ready and prepared to help. Where do you need us?’”

“It’s not just an asking for help, it’s also a ‘Hey, we’re here. We’re educated. We’re prepared. We’re catechized. We’re here to help the Church.’”

### THE PROCESS AND THE GOALS

The bishops anticipate more than 1 million Catholics will participate in missionary activity and consultation over the next two years. The V Encuentro will be the culmination of parish, diocesan, and regional encuentros, which start in January and continue through June 2018.

Parish encuentros will take place around the country in May and June in an estimated 5,000 parishes. So far, 10 parishes in the diocese are participating, according to Rodriguez, but he expects that number to go up in the next few months as more local meetings occur.

In the fall of 2017, diocesan encuentros are scheduled, with expectations that more than 150 dioceses will be taking part with a hoped-for 200,000 participants.

The Encuentro for the Diocese of Fort Worth is expected to take



See Bishop Olson talk about V Encuentro on [YouTube.com/NorthTexasCatholic](https://www.youtube.com/NorthTexasCatholic)

place in October 2017 and will draw more than 1,000 local Catholics.

“It’ll be a very blessed day of spiritual growth,” Rodriguez said. “A lot of formation will be taking place that day.”

Regional encuentros are slated for March-June 2018, with some 10,000 delegates expected; the regions will conform

to the U.S. bishops’ 14 episcopal regions. The regional meeting for North Texas Catholics will be held in San Antonio.

Then comes the V Encuentro, to be held Sept. 20-23, 2018, at the Gaylord Texan in Grapevine. “After this national gathering, our local Church will have a deeper understanding of mission and evangelization,” said Juan Rendon, diocesan director of Permanent Deacon Formation.

But that’s not the end as there will be a post-encuentro working document written to implement the V Encuentro’s results.

Among the outcomes Bishop Perez said should result from the V Encuentro are:

- the identification of best practices and pastoral initiatives in the development of resources in parishes, dioceses, schools and national organizations
- an increase in the number of vocations to priesthood, religious life, and the permanent diaconate
- an increase in the percentage of Hispanic students in Catholic schools from the current 15.5 percent to 20 percent
- identification of at least 20,000 emerging leaders ready for ongoing formation and ministry in the Church
- an increased sense of belonging and stewardship among Hispanics.

### THE HOPE FOR UNITY

Rodriguez said that Encuentro goes beyond the overarching theme of evangelization.

The “big, magnificent movement” of Encuentro helps bring different cultures, generations, and ethnicities together as one Church, he said.

“This is open to everybody,” he continued. “This is open to non-Hispanics as well because it’s full and total integration. The flavor, as you would say, of Encuentro is Hispanic. But it doesn’t say it’s not open to anybody.”

Hence, Rodriguez, who is working closely with Bishop Olson, other ministry leaders, parish delegates, and priests to bring the local effort to fruition, encourages all parishes to participate.

“It’s not a segregation movement, it’s an integrational movement,” Rodriguez said. “So if it’s announced in their parish and they want to learn more about it, the doors are open.”

◀ A woman prays during Holy Thursday Mass at Immaculate Conception Church in Denton. (NTC photo / Adrean Indolos)





## FATHER WARREN MURPHY, TOR, BELOVED PASTOR AND TEACHER, DIES AT 87

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

“Fr. Warren was happy to be a priest. He loved his fellow friars like brothers, he loved his family, he loved music, and he loved the ocean where he grew up.”

That’s how Christina Alves, director of liturgy and music at St. Andrew Church in Fort Worth, remembered Father Warren Murphy, TOR, who died November 11 at the age of 87 in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania after an extended illness.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held November 16 at St. Francis Friary — Mt. Assisi in Loretto, Pennsylvania.

Local parishioners will remember Fr. Warren at a Memorial Mass scheduled for January 4, 2017 at 7 p.m. in St. Andrew Church. A reception will follow the liturgy.

At a celebration in 2004 honoring his 50th year as a Franciscan, Fr. Warren explained what called him to take his vows. “I read a biography of St. Francis when I was 21, and I said, ‘This is a person I want to copy.’ He was extraordinary... In everything he saw God.”

The native of East Boston, Massachusetts obtained a Master of Music degree in piano and worked as an organist before entering the Third Order Regular Franciscans of the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1951.

After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy from St. Francis College (now University) in 1956 and completing his theological studies at St. Francis Seminary, Fr. Warren was ordained to the priesthood on May 28, 1960.

During his long and faithful life as a Franciscan, Fr. Warren ministered for 15 years at St. Francis College as both administrator and teacher of chant, music appreciation, music history, and seminary chorus. As the order’s superior, he was part of



Father Warren Murphy

the administrative staff at both St. Francis Seminary in Loretto and Toronto, Canada.

Arriving in the Diocese of Fort Worth in 1980, the Franciscan friar was the parochial vicar at St. Michael Church in Bedford before serving as pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth from 1981 to 1988. He was then assigned as pastor to St. Andrew for the next 20 years before retiring in 2008. In 2012, Fr. Warren returned to St. Francis Friary where he served in the ministry of prayer.

Fr. Warren shared his love for music and liturgy with the parish communities he served. “He had a total appreciation for music ministry, and he even guest conducted the choir in rehearsal and on a Sunday once,” Alves said.

When John Thome spearheaded the fundraising campaign to build a parish hall at St. Thomas, Fr. Warren’s easy going manner helped the chairman cope with the stress that often comes with soliciting money for a major construction project.

Thome’s wife Kathy recalled, “I remember him telling John when the fundraising wasn’t coming in for the new hall, ‘God will provide.’ He was always very down-to-earth

and positive.”

Father Tom Stabile, TOR, pastor of St. Andrew Church, says his predecessor had a big heart.

“He came into parish work after many years in formation and teaching and was willing to accept mentoring from priests in the diocese,” Fr. Stabile explained. “He learned well and became a very good shepherd.”

Interested in reaching out to the broken, the marginalized, and those discriminated against in society, Fr. Warren started a ministry to people with same-sex attractions, their parents, families, and friends.

“He was approached by families who had children who had ‘come out’ and they didn’t know how to deal with it,” the pastor said, recalling the ministry’s early history. “They came to him for counsel and he saw the need to create the ministry. With (the late) Bishop Joseph Delaney’s approval, it became a diocesan ministry.”

What started as a support group for parents grew to include Catholic adults with same-sex attraction.

“He (Fr. Warren) always approached it by having materials that explained what the Church says about it. It was always based on Church teaching,” Fr. Stabile emphasized. “He wanted a safe place where people and their families could talk.”

Alves will remember Fr. Warren’s grin and the twinkle in his eye. “He always kept a funny story to share, and he loved to do things to bring joy to others, like dressing up as Santa for the preschool children or a Scottish bagpiper at a staff party,” she continued.

Fr. Warren is survived by four nephews, one niece, and his Franciscan brothers.

Memorial contributions can be made to support retired TOR friars, c/o P.O. Box 137, Loretto, PA 15940.

*Correspondent Susan Moses contributed to this article.*



# GARY FRAGOSSO RETIRES AFTER 20 YEARS WITH DIOCESE

By Michele Baker

**M**ost people think of building the Kingdom in a spiritual sense but for Gary Fragosso, who will retire from his position as the Finance and Administrative Services Assistant Director for Property Management after 20 years with the Diocese of Fort Worth, building the Kingdom is a concrete reality.

“It’s kind of interesting to tell people I’m an architect,” he said during a recent interview with the *NTC*. “People ask what kind of houses I build, but architects build buildings mostly; not houses.”

Yet, under Fragosso’s watchful eye, houses of learning, fellowship, and worship have been built during a period of enormous growth for a diocese that serves more than 900,000 Catholics. And while his role in these projects has been largely administrative, the unassuming Midwesterner brought a particular set of skills to his position.

“I’m uniquely qualified to do this job,”

Fragosso said. “Where am I ever going to have another opportunity like this?”

Indeed.

Fragosso earned a degree in architecture with a minor in economics at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. When he moved to Texas to develop new buildings for RadioShack, he continued his education, earning his MBA at the University of Texas, Arlington in 1990. In September of 1996, he was hired by the diocese as a construction coordinator, charged with overseeing building projects and working with contractors. Over the years, his position has evolved to include making sure parishes and schools have their finances in order and are in compliance with diocesan procedures.

“I like to be collaborative,” he said. “It’s good when people seek and heed your advice. When it’s under budget and on time, it can be very rewarding.”

Even as he prepares to vacate his

position at the end of December, the periphery of Fragosso’s workspace remains littered with stacks of blueprints, spec sheets, and schedules — although most of it has found its way to the desk of his office mate. Asked how he will spend his retirement, Fragosso responds with a good-natured laugh.

“My wife has got a list of ‘honey-do’s’ that should keep me busy for the first couple of years!” All kidding aside, though, he’s looking forward to the well-deserved rest he’s earned.

“I’d like to get healthy,” he said. “You know: eat better, exercise. My mom is 94 years old. She and my sister live in the area so it’s going to be good to spend time with them. Maybe travel a little; I have a brother and sister that are still back home in Greendale, Wisconsin.”

When taking the long view of a career that has been spent working for the Church, however, Fragosso sees himself as a simple servant.

# PAT MILLER FINDS NEW APPLICATIONS

## FOR FAITH AND SERVICE UPON RETIRING FROM DIOCESE



By Michele Baker

**W**hen an energetic “people person” with a deeply engrained sense of service enters the workforce, 30 years of fundraising and development work for the Church can disappear in the twinkling of an eye.

But don’t tell Pat Miller, who will retire from her position as Associate Director of the Advancement Foundation for the Diocese of Fort Worth in December; that the next chapter of her life means she’ll have to slow down.

“I’ve always been active,” she said during a recent interview with the *MTC*. “And I enjoy working with a team; being part of something.”

The oldest of four children, Pat grew up in the largely Irish and German Catholic community in Dubuque, Iowa. There she attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through 12th grade and learned to embrace what she calls a “Midwestern work ethic” from her parents, whom she described as “hardworking people committed to community service.” For young Pat, the combination of faith and community service came together when she joined the Girl Scouts at age seven, an association she maintains to this day.

“I’m a lifelong Girl Scout,” she said.

“There’s been a tradition of scouting in my family.”

After high school graduation and a stint at Clarke University, Pat had yet another opportunity to join her faith and love of service together; this time as Director of Development for Wahlert Catholic High School in Dubuque. That position ignited a passion for fundraising that not only set the course of her career; but also changed her life. After 20 years of working with her boss, Don Miller, the widowed gentleman and father of nine asked Pat to be his wife. When she accepted his proposal in 2001, the then 50-year-old who had been single her whole life became a wife and mother.

Her marriage to Miller eventually led Pat to Fort Worth, where her new husband had taken a position as Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Fort Worth. Shortly after their arrival, Pat, too, found herself using her years of experience in service to the diocese in various aspects of fundraising and development. Now, more than twelve years later, Pat is ready to join her husband Don, who retired from his position with the diocese two years ago.

“I’m ready to experience life in a different way,” she said. “I want the freedom to be spontaneous.”

That spontaneity will not, however, interfere with the countless professional associations Miller has developed over the course of her career. A Certified Fund Raising Executive, or CFRE, since 1991, she is the current President-elect of the Fort Worth Metro Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, a board member and the immediate past President of the Partnership for Philanthropic Planning Lone Star Council, and serves as Board Chair of Girl Scouts of Texas Oklahoma Plains.

“I still want to be a part of the community,” Miller said. “Peer professional relationships are important. Besides, after all these years, I don’t know it all, but I’ve got a broad range of experience that gives me a comprehensive view of the field.”

So, with all of her professional associations intact, what does retirement look like for Pat Miller?

Between visiting 22 grandchildren spread across the country, enjoying season tickets to Texas Rangers baseball games, and planning to catch up on some reading, Pat would be remiss to let her skills get rusty.

“I’ll most likely become a community volunteer,” she said.

Most likely, she will.

# Most Merciful Mother

For local Catholics, Our Lady's message and compassion endures

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

**M**onica Lopez knows the power of devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Four years ago, the mother of three school-age children was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer. She believes praying for the intercession of the Virgin Mary, who appeared to Juan Diego in 1531, spared her life.

“That’s why I’m here,” said Lopez, a parishioner at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Decatur. “I know she’s been at my bedside. I could picture her, see her, feel her. She helps us. She’s our mother.”

**Continued on Page 22**





A statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe is seen at a side altar inside St. Patrick Cathedral. (NTC photo/Ben Torres)



See more photos on  
**NorthTexasCatholic.org**  
Simply click on 'Photo Gallery.'

## From Page 21

Folklorico dancers watch matachines perform a dance in celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe. (NTC photo/Ben Torres)



That sentiment was shared by the hundreds of people who arrived at St. Patrick Cathedral before sunrise to hear the Mariachi Imperial band serenade Our Lady of Guadalupe on her Dec. 12 feast day. Standing before a statue of an

of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the young warriors carried percussion instruments as they stepped to the resounding beat of drums. Each sacred dance represented a prayer.

“It’s a beautiful way to start the day,” said Joe Govea, who welcomed worshippers to the 5 a.m. gathering. “The Mexican people have always had a strong Catholic faith and they are bringing that faith to America. Traditions like this will help strengthen the Church.”

Liturgies throughout the United States honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe observe what many in the Hispanic community simply call, “the miracle.” Nearly 500 years ago, Juan Diego, a poor, humble Aztec Indian and recent convert to Catholicism, was walking to early morning Mass when he encountered a beautiful, young woman on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City.

The lady, he recognized as the Virgin Mary, wanted a church built on the site of a former pagan temple. When the bishop, hearing the request, asked the peasant for proof of the apparition, he returned with a tilma filled with beautiful Castilian roses from arid, infertile ground. As the roses spilled out of the cloak in front of the bishop, they were replaced with a miraculous image of Our Lady that continues to mystify scientists.

Today the intact, unfaded cloth is on display in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe — the most visited Marian shrine in the world. When Pope Francis visited Mexico in 2016, his first Mass was in the basilica where he told the crowd Mary is the mother of everyone, especially those who suffer or feel as though “they weep in vain.”

But Our Lady of Guadalupe’s first outreach was to the Aztecs who were predominantly pagan and practiced human sacrifice in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. To help the ancient indigenous people understand who she was, Mary chose an outfit weighted in symbols significant to them.

She dressed in clothing indicating

“I could picture her, see her, feel her. She helps us. She’s our mother.”

olive-skinned maiden, surrounded by an aura of golden rays, the musicians honored the Patroness of the Americas by performing “*Las Mañanitas*” — a traditional Mexican song reserved for birthdays and holidays.

Following the mariachis, Sol Ballet Folklorico treated the congregation to folk dances rich in symbolism and heritage. Dressed in colorful costumes and carrying roses, members of the troupe told the story of St. Juan Diego with choreography.

Continuing the centuries-old celebration, matachines from Decatur paid homage to the Mother of Jesus with a rhythmic, solemn procession through the aisles of the cathedral. Wearing ceremonial *naguillas* featuring an image



Folklorico dancers process into St. Patrick Cathedral on Dec. 12, performing a dance in celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe (NTC photo/Ben Torres)

royalty and a sash around her waist meant she was with child because that was the way Aztec women dressed when they were pregnant. A four-petal flower, symbolizing the God above all gods to the Aztecs, rested on her swollen abdomen and told the Indians this was the mother of the true God. For this reason, Our Lady of Guadalupe is called Patroness of the Unborn.

The appearance of Mary to Juan Diego helped the Aztecs embrace Christianity. In the years following the miracle, 8 million indigenous Indians joined the Catholic faith—the largest conversion in the history of the Church.

Pope John Paul II canonized Juan Diego in 2002.

Melody Thompson remembers learning about the first indigenous saint from the Americas while a student at All Saints Catholic School.

“This humble man goes up the mountain and experiences something

we’ll never experience,” the Holy Family parishioner said, recalling the lesson she has now passed down to her two children, Jackson and Payton. “He got to see the Virgin. It was a miracle.”

Married 17 years ago in St. Patrick Cathedral on Dec. 11, the eve of Our Lady’s feast day, the bride made sure she included a tribute to the patron saint in her wedding ceremony. Thompson placed flowers in front of the statue at the cathedral’s side altar.

“I dedicated my future family to her,” the young mother remembered.

After the mariachis and dance companies finished their tributes, feast day activities continued with a Mass concelebrated by Father Sojan George, HGN, Father John Robert Skeldon, and Father Robert Strittmatter.

“We’re here to celebrate the Virgin of Guadalupe. She loves each one of us like a mother,” said Fr. George, the cathedral’s rector who made a personal pilgrimage to

her basilica in Mexico City. “As we gather on this feast day, let us seek her intercession that we may grow in our love for her son, Jesus Christ.”

Fr. Skeldon gave the homily in Spanish and ended his message with a prayer.

“As you comforted St. Juan Diego, and through him the Mexican people in their time of distress by reminding him you were his mother, so now comfort us,” he implored. “In the many trials of our lives, remind us of your tender, gentle care as our mother.”

Those words resonated with Juan DeLeon. The usher at St. Patrick Cathedral prays to Our Lady of Guadalupe every morning.

“Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego so many years ago and we kept that faith,” he insists. “Even when they tried to outlaw Catholicism in Mexico, devotion to her is something that could never be taken from us. I was raised that way and it will continue with my family.”

# SHARE YOUR GIFTS WITH JESUS

*by letting Him be your guiding light*

With the birth of Jesus, we celebrate so much. There is probably no other particular tradition more associated with Christmas than the giving and receiving of gifts.

Yes, we all love the tree, singing carols, spending time with family, and all the other rituals, but there is something special about the purchasing, wrapping, and setting of gifts under the tree that gives rise to a tremendous amount of anticipation and joy.

Gifts are such a part of this holiday that they were a part of the first Christmas. The gold, frankincense, and myrrh given by the Magi might seem like strange things to give a baby, but while studying this story from St. Matthew's Gospel in the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, New Testament I* discovered what a couple of the Church Fathers had to say about these royal gifts.

St. Irenaeus said the gifts of the Magi signify the mystery of Christ incarnate. Gold, a symbol of his royalty represents the kingship of Jesus. Frankincense, used in the worship of God, points to his divinity. Myrrh, a burial ointment, signifies the humanity of Christ, especially in his passion and death.

St. Gregory the Great says the treasures signify the gifts we present to Christ in our daily lives. Gold is Christ's wisdom, which shines in us; frankincense is the prayer and adoration we give Him; and myrrh is our daily self-sacrifices.

While reflecting on the meaning of these first Christmas gifts, I began to think about what gifts I bring to Jesus. In October I attended a Called and Gifted workshop presented by the Catherine of Siena Institute. The spiritual gifts workshop, which was created by Sherry Weddell, the author of *Forming Intentional Disciples*, really shines a light on the ways God has gifted me, and in giving me these gifts, has called me into action for Him and his kingdom.



*Shutterstock.com*

Throughout the daylong workshop, it was stressed that these gifts are not just the natural talents we have. We can be talented at playing sports or an instrument, or any number of human tasks, but these are not necessarily the ways that God has gifted us.

The Called and Gifted program also emphasizes that spiritual gifts, or charisms, are not just for our own personal growth, but they are meant to build up others. In fact one of the tell-tale signs you have a particular gift is that other people regularly recognize it in you.

So, while we are still in the midst of the Christmas glow of gift-giving and receiving, and with the Feast of Epiphany around the corner, this is a good time for us all to take a bit of time and think about what gifts we bring to Jesus.

In this case I am not speaking of a physical gift, something for Jesus to unwrap. Rather I am thinking of gifts that Jesus has already given us that, maybe, we have yet to unwrap.

To be sure, Jesus has given all of us gifts

and He is counting on us to use them to further the Kingdom, but to discover them takes more than an Amazon search of [Your Name] + gifts. Discerning our giftedness takes time and prayer. Certainly the Called and Gifted workshop is helpful, but meeting with your priest is also another place to start.

God loves each of us fiercely and individually. This means that each of us is called and gifted in the same way, fiercely and individually. It makes no sense for me to compare myself to someone like St. Teresa of Kolkata. I was called and gifted to serve youth and young adults in North Texas, not the poorest of the poor all over the world. I imagine that she would no more want my job than I would want hers.

Thus, I think one of the lessons we can learn from three Magi following a star to the Savior and offering Him deeply meaningful gifts is that Jesus is the light that guides our life. When we follow this light we find the gifts He has given us to share and it is this gift giving and sharing that make our lives deeply meaningful.



# LOOK AT THE EXAMPLE OF ST. ANDREW

*and walk others towards Christ*

Recently, I had the joy of accompanying five of the men in the permanent deacon formation program and their wives on a pilgrimage through Italy ending in Rome.

These pilgrim days were filled with the complete elements of a true spiritual pilgrimage: prayer, travel, walking, daily Mass at holy sites, reflection, and community. As with most pilgrimages, it was also filled with unexpected surprises, one of which was a reminder about how we have a responsibility to lead others to a relationship with Jesus Christ.

During the pilgrimage, we visited Florence, a bustling city in the Tuscan area of Italy. As can happen, the busy nature of this vibrant city along with the grandeur of the cathedral and the preparations necessary for celebrating the Mass all combined to misalign the spiritual focus of the pilgrim journey. However, the Lord is generous with those who seek Him, and the blessing He bestowed was tremendous.

Following our tour guide, I entered the sacristy and was met with great kindness by a sacristan. The sacristan asked me to follow him to the side altar where the items were prepared for Mass. Upon arrival at the altar, he showed me the readings and the Missal and the vessels for Mass. Everything was in place. We were getting ready to head back to the sacristy when he said, "Oh yes, and Father, there are several relics here in the altar." I turned and behind a window on the front of the altar there were several relics on display. The sacristan pointed out the skull of St. John Chrysostom. A vessel next to that contained the forearm (the bones were visible) of St. Andrew.

Before I had time to respond to the overwhelming reality of these relics, the sacristan



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pointed to a case behind the presider's chair that contained a large silver cross. Inside the silver cross, he pointed out, is a large piece of wood — a relic of the True Cross of Jesus Christ.

The enormity of the sacred objects was not lost on the pilgrims. Second only to the holy wood of the Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was the forearm of that understated apostle, St. Andrew.

Remember that it was St. Andrew who recognized the Lord and brought his brother, Peter, to meet Jesus Christ.

Read John 1:40-42, and it is easy to visualize Andrew walking with Peter to see Jesus, and then with hand and forearm at Peter's back, Andrew moving Peter toward Christ. He literally led his brother to Jesus Christ. For this reason, we call our discernment events for men the "St. Andrew Breakfast" or the "St. Andrew Dinner." We are seeking to lead them to that intimate relationship with Christ and to help them seek and do his will.

The journey to Jesus Christ and to doing his will is not an individual, isolated act. The

Church is a community of believers, and we are together on the spiritual journey. Throughout the Holy Gospels, we are shown how Jesus Christ time and again makes his presence known to us on the journey, most importantly after his resurrection. It was on the way to Emmaus, that "Jesus Himself drew near and walked" with two of the disciples (*Luke 24:13-15, 27,30-32*).

St. Bonaventure, commenting on the journey to Emmaus, notes three points relative to Christ's presence: the harmonious journey of the disciples; their conversation along the way; and the disciple's proper reception of and association with Christ.

Bonaventure also points out the significance that there were two on the journey. When there is more than one person on the journey, they can support each other. During their journey the disciples also received and connected with Christ although they did not recognize who He was. They talked to Him, and He began to reveal things to them.

On my pilgrim journey through Italy, I knew we loved Jesus Christ and were in his presence throughout. However, the Lord was generous in making Himself known to us in a dramatic way at that Mass in the Cathedral of Florence. It was an intense reminder of his love and of our responsibility to be with others on the journey, especially those seeking to serve his Church in the line of the apostles.

As we continue our journey together, let us look at the example of St. Andrew and see who we can walk alongside with and gently move closer to answering the call of Jesus Christ. Please continue to pray for vocations to priesthood, religious life, and the permanent diaconate. St. Andrew, pray for us.

# HOW TO WALK YOUR CHILD TOWARD GOD

*Our role is help our children know and recognize God*

A child will naturally seek out a parent for reassurance, comfort, and help in the joys and struggles of everyday life. The child recognizes that mom and dad have helped him cope with the daily challenges of life especially as he grows in physical, mental, and spiritual maturity.

## A JOURNEY TOWARD GOD

As children created in God's image and likeness, all of us are naturally in a constant state of journeying toward God. As parents, we must be keenly aware of our journey because of our role to help our children know and recognize who God is by our witness of faith. We seek to help our children see and begin to understand the importance of building a relationship with our Lord. The child begins to know and understand who God is because he sees his parents actively walking with God and including Him on this journey through a daily practice of the faith, especially in the active participation of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, which serves as the source and summit of the Christian life (CCC 1324).

Our duty as parents is to provide the visible and tangible realities of God's existence and Divine Providence within the daily structure of life.

*"Furthermore, wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation, He manifested Himself to our first parents from the very beginning." He invited them to intimate communion with Himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice (CCC 54).*

Part of the task of leading our children to God is how we project our own faith in word and deed toward our children. If we express the Catholic faith as a chore, then our children will embrace a similar attitude to the point of making it part of their character. On the opposite end of the spectrum, if we as parents express our faith

*As parents, we must be keenly aware of our role to help our children know and recognize who God is by our witness of faith.*

with a charitable attitude, intimately desiring a relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church, then our children would hopefully embrace this Christian attitude as part of their character.

## PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

A parent can walk their child toward God in many practical ways. The **FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT PRACTICAL STEP** you can take with your child is to be a visible instrument of prayer, where your son or daughter actually sees and hears you praying to Christ. This initial witness of faith is probably the most important because it sets the stage for everything else you want your child to learn about their faith. In prayer, the child begins to see the direct correlation between faith and prayer. This formula becomes the seed bed toward living out the sacramental life in word and deed. Thus, nightly family prayers, praying and blessing your children at bedtime, prayer before meals and praying

for others sets the stage for their journey.

A **SECOND PRACTICAL STEP** is making the sacraments, especially reconciliation and Holy Communion, a privilege and a priority. The sacramental life is rooted in Christ; to genuinely love Christ and His Church we must actively engage the gifts of grace we receive in the sacraments themselves. In baptism we enter in the Kingdom of God. We can remind children of its importance by celebrating their baptism date as we would celebrate their actual birthday.

A **THIRD PRACTICAL STEP** to consider is to create a sacred space, i.e. a prayer space in your home. This typically consists of placing a Bible on a stand opened in a highly visible area where you reflect on the Word of God as a family at least two to three days a week, preferably every day.

And this leads to a **FOURTH PRACTICAL STEP** — introducing the lives of the saints. The Christian witness of the saints can only strengthen the journey and give our children further hope that it is not impossible to have a relationship with our Lord and walk with Him.

As you can see there are various ways we can lead our children toward God. Ultimately our role and function as parents is to lead our children to heaven, hence we walk to and with God alongside our children.

St. Augustine, one of the greatest saints and Doctors of the Church, gives us a small taste of what it means to walk with God through a description of his intimate participation in the Mass:

*How I wept, deeply moved by your hymns, songs, and the voices that echoed through your Church! What emotion I experienced through your Church! What emotion I experienced in them! Those sounds flowed into my ears, distilling the truth in my heart. A feeling of devotion surged within me, and tears streamed down my face—tears that did me good (Confessions, 9, 6, 14; CCC 1157).*

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**This could be you.**

# SWEET MEMORIES

## and the golden gift of faith

**B**ig Kate, my mother, loved the color gold.

She had a stunning tweed suit, gold with brown hues running through the fabric. My father made the suit for her, although, as owner of Pueblo's only tailor shop, his specialty was "fine men's clothing."

The lovely outfit he made for Mom was an exception.

My father said there were exceptions to every rule, which is possibly why I had the best looking cheerleading sweater in the Catholic school football league.

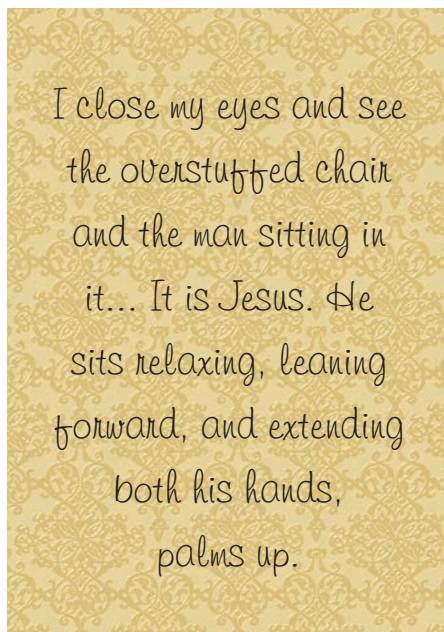
Each year when our cheer uniforms came in from the athletic company that made them, Daddy momentarily stopped tailoring, took my sweaters to the tailor shop and sewed the big chenille emblems on. I was the only one on the cheer squad whose emblems never loosened, because Daddy attached them with the strongest silk thread and his finest sewing machine. He did this "cheerfully" for seven years.

Mother's gold wool dress was her Sunday best. When friends complimented her, she would smile, "Joe made it! And, you know, my favorite color is gold!"

It was a shock to everyone the day Joe Cribari died. I was a teen and even though I considered myself grown-up, I now know I was a child. My best friend and I had walked home from the football game, and we were in a playful mood as we pressed our noses against the window on my front door. We saw my mother's somber face as she opened the door: "Daddy just died." We all cried.

My father, at 54, was the eldest of 13, one of whom was alone now to run "Cribari Brothers Tailoring."

Big Kate did her best to maintain our homelife and my youth. So, when she sadly discarded her bedroom furniture, she traded with me, taking mine to her room, and purchasing a new set for me. It included a canopy bed, frilly blue quilt, fluffy blue rug, and a blue lamp on the nightstand.



Blue was my favorite color.

A few months later Mother redecorated the living room, and not surprisingly, used the color gold. Gold was on the walls, the speckled carpet, the brocade fabric on our sofa, and the pleated damask draperies.

Mom also made a new cover for our comfortable, overstuffed chair. It had two overlapping cushions on the back, a gold fringe hanging around the bottom of the chair, and matching ottoman.

That chair and ottoman were the most important parts of our living room because my father loved to sit there, resting his feet, or holding grandchildren on his crossed leg, letting them play "horsey." Sometimes he turned the ottoman upside down so the little girls could pretend it was a doll cradle. What color was it? I'll let my mother explain:

"I don't care what color it is, as long as it's gold."

Big Kate passed away when I was 36, with children of my own. I didn't inherit any golden furniture, with one exception.

I received the overstuffed chair: in

spiritual form.

Our house was a cozy 900 square feet. But it felt big. My bedroom was about 10 by 10 feet, with a tiny closet that housed school uniforms, Sunday dresses, cheerleading outfits, and not much more.

Nevertheless, as a child afraid of the dark, I imagined living in that closet, sitting on Daddy's ottoman, with toys on the chair. In that imaginary playhouse, I fell asleep.

Today, lacking a father with a bouncy foot and a mother who loved the color gold, I close my eyes and see that closet, the overstuffed chair and the man sitting in it. It isn't my father in the chair, though.

It is Jesus. He sits relaxing, leaning forward, and extending both his hands, palms up.

And so, at prayer times, I close my eyes, and see myself perched comfortably on the ottoman, bending forward to Him. I place my hands in his. I talk to Him and He listens. I look into his eyes, and they never veer. Then and there He hears my meandering thoughts, provides solace, forgives my sins, and dispenses never-ending joy. That's the best part. The joy.

I know my loved ones are in heaven with Him. But at those moments, in the revisited closet of my youth — which once sheltered me from monsters, and never, ever would have been large enough even for a folding chair — I sit with Jesus.

My mother loved gold, but she didn't leave me sacks of coins, or even a gold satin pillow. She left me sweet, shining memories, and the golden gift of faith.

*Kathy Cribari Hamer Beck's column has been recognized repeatedly by the Catholic Press Association. For more information about her book, ME AND THE CHICKENS, visit [SomethingElseAgain.com](http://SomethingElseAgain.com).*

# MORE LOVE IS THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS

Faith assures us love — not presents — makes it the season of more

Near the end of the beloved Charles Dickens' classic, *A Christmas Carol*, the cold heart of Ebenezer Scrooge is transformed and he exclaims, "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."

That was London in 1843 and Dickens was writing about making Christmas something joyful for those in need.

In 21st century America, we are faced with the consumptive Christmas, crafted by marketers and advertisers for the sake of business profits. To be effective, it must keep the focus of Christmas on us. Sadly, it works.

For nearly three months we are assaulted by the "Christmas is coming" frenzy that eats away at what should be a peaceful, reflective Advent, and imbues our Christmas with a compulsion to spend money we don't have on things no one needs.

I saw it for the first time this season in mid-October. Two women in the local toy store were pushing around several baskets filled to overflowing. I thought they were store employees restocking the shelves.

But when I got to the check-out, they were at customer service with six shopping carts piled high with toys. My daughter-in-law engaged them in conversation and learned they were Christmas shopping — for two children, age three and five.

"You're buying all those gifts for just two little boys?" I asked.

The grandmother assured me that was the case, and there was more to come.

Our faith assures us it is love, not presents, that makes Christmas the season of more. But over the years, Christmas has become the season of consumption, buying more gifts, spending more money, and running ourselves ragged attending to the superficial trappings of a "perfect" Christmas.

All of this adds to stress and frustration,



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and, often, to the sadness and depression many already feel at having to navigate a season of joy when they are impoverished, sick, grieving, or alone.

Faced with an ever expanding commercial Christmas, how can we ignite the true spirit of Christmas in our hearts, and "keep it all the year?"

First, we can take a lesson from Santa and keep a tight hold on the Christmas reins. He knows how fast joyful gift-giving can deteriorate into chaos if he lets Rudolph and the rest run wild through the sky.

For us, keeping control of our Christmas doesn't mean giving up our love of all things Christmas — twinkling lights, a beautifully decorated tree, gift giving, or even Santa — but it does mean scaling back and prioritizing.

Most importantly, it means refocusing on the Christ-child and the Holy Family.

Their Christmas story should be our Christmas story — a story of saying yes to God, of humility, gratitude, and love.

Our Christmas spirit is wrapped up in swaddling clothes. Like Mary, we need to keep the story of the Nativity in our hearts and reflect on it throughout the year.

Pope Francis has said, "In switching on the light of the Nativity scene, we wish for the light of Christ to be in us. A Christmas without light is not Christmas. Let there be light in the soul, in the heart; let there be forgiveness to others; let there be no hostilities, which are dark. Let there be the beautiful light of Jesus. This is my wish for all of you, when you turn on the light of the crib."

We can keep that light burning throughout the year by celebrating Mass and receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. We can also be the light of Christ by serving others. Whether we help one or many, service can lift us out of ourselves and our own pain. And as we move into the New Year, we can remember the Magi, making our resolutions as gifts to the Christ child.

Of course, we are people moved by our senses, so I'll admit I cheat a bit. I have a small pine tree next to my front door and keep it lit all year round with little white lights. Visitors are often surprised by the aroma of balsam in the middle of the summer. And since I spend a great deal of time in my car, I listen to the words of a beautiful hymn: "More love, more love, the heavens are blessing, the angels are calling, O Zion, more love ..."

*Mary Regina Morrell is a freelance writer, editor, syndicated columnist, blogger and religion consultant at Wellspring Communications in New Jersey. She can be reached at: [mary.wellspring@yahoo.com](mailto:mary.wellspring@yahoo.com).*

## January 1, Solemnity of Mary.

### Cycle A Readings:

- 1) Numbers 6:22-27  
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
- 2) Galatians 4:4-7  
Gospel) Luke 2:16-21

By Deacon Mike Ellerbrock

For nine months after the angel Gabriel's annunciation, Mary pondered his message about her miraculous child to be.

During that time, while visiting her cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth's unborn baby leapt for joy, and Mary spoke with eloquence and humility about her understanding of God's action in her life:

*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. ... For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed."*

Later when shepherds visited



*"And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."*

— Luke 2:19

dedicated in the Temple, she was following the Mosaic law of her time — a time when Jews believed that life is governed by the Ten Commandments as written on the tablets that once were stored in the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple's innermost chamber. Now we realize Mary, as mother of God, is the new Ark of the Covenant.

Yet Mary's joy was tempered when she encountered Simeon inside the Temple and he gives her something more difficult to ponder when he said, "This child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel ... and you yourself a sword will pierce."

the manger, sharing the good news they'd received during their night watch, Mary again reflected on these things in her heart.

In today's Gospel, Mary ponders and accepts her crucial role in the salvation of humankind. Luke's subsequent narrative further reveals the burdens placed on her heart as the mother of Christ — and challenges us to ponder and accept God's call.

As Mary takes Jesus to be

For me, feeling called to the priesthood in my 20s, I consulted priests, read Thomas Merton voraciously, prayed and took frequent retreats. Eventually, the deciding factor was my fear that I could fall into spiritual arrogance as a celibate priest on a pedestal, taking pride in my sacrifices for the Lord and parishioners.

Choosing marriage has drawn me into the mystery of Mary's simultaneous joy and fear about her Son's destiny, challenging me to test my faith as a husband, father, and ordinary guy. How would I handle working hard for a living, possibly losing a job, or having a sick or handicapped child?

Accepting God's call to marriage and the diaconate has allowed me to follow Mary as a grateful, lowly servant praising God.

### QUESTIONS:

How can I replace my tendency to control with trust in the Lord?

## January 8, Epiphany.

### Cycle A Readings:

- 1) Isaiah 60:1-6  
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13
- 2) Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6  
Gospel) Matthew 2:1-12

By Sharon K. Perkins

One of the things I love most about holidays is the anticipation of gathering our whole family in one place. Multiple adult children in several different cities on two continents present quite a challenge to get together. Throw some in-laws, stepchildren, ex-spouses and new babies into the assembly, and you've got quite a group! At the center of it all is my mother, who rejoices when all her children come home.

As complex as the family tree has become, the varieties of relationships don't seem to dilute the joy that permeates the holiday gathering. We've got relatives by



*"They all gather and come to you; your sons come from afar; and your daughters in the arms of their nurses."*

— Isaiah 60:4

blood and others by marriage. Other families have relatives by adoption — legal or otherwise.

My mother has two biological sons but she's collected countless other "sons" along the way. Some represent ethnicities and cultures different from our own. Their presence is not merely tolerated. They're all part of the family, and they each bring something special to the mix, even if it takes a while for some of us to discover what that distinctive gift is.

St. Paul reminds the Christian church at Ephesus of a mystery that has been revealed to him for their benefit. The Epiphany

of the Lord is best understood as that kind of revelation — a sudden manifestation or a clearer understanding of something in a whole new, often life-changing way. St. Paul shares this epiphany with the church of his time: that gentile converts are not merely to be tolerated in the Christian assembly, but regarded as "coheirs" with Jewish Christians and "members of the same body."

### QUESTIONS:

Who around you seems to be drawn to Jesus' light even though they are treated as outsiders? How can you welcome them into the family of God?

If we're honest, we could admit that almost all of us in the Christian household of faith are, in fact, descended from these "gentiles."

We've forgotten that we were once the outsiders; we've become secure, almost complacent in our identity as heirs of Christ's promises. We need Paul's reminder that there are still more "outsiders" being drawn to the good news of Jesus — people who don't look like us, live like us, or talk like us — whom the Lord is calling to the family gathering.

Our Father's joy is dependent upon the welcome we extend to these brothers and sisters. Let's roll out the welcome mat, pull up a chair, and help them feel at home.



**January 15, Second Sunday of Ordinary Time.**

**Cycle A Readings:**

- 1) Isaiah 49:3, 5-6
- Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-10
- 2) I Corinthians 1:1-3
- Gospel) John 1:29-34

**By Jean Denton**

I went to the sacrament of reconciliation for the first time at age 33 and, as a convert to Catholicism, I was surprised by a palpable sense of relief and gratitude for God's forgiveness.

Years later, I'm finally coming to the deeper understanding that reconciliation through Christ means He has paid the ransom to free me from my sinfulness.

But how does that work exactly, I've wondered.

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist calls us to take a hard look when he says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."



*"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"*

— John 1:29

Jesus' sacrifice was for all humanity. I can see how it plays out in real life, at least symbolically. Our sinful acts are wiped away by Christ living in innocent victims of violence, oppression, or discrimination when they suffer quietly and harbor no resentment or desire for retribution or reparation.

But Jesus' sacrifice is personal, too.

In college, one of my journalism classmates had cerebral palsy. I admired Rich's perseverance and abilities

particularly as a reporter for our campus newspaper. He was amazingly good at it despite his disability and never seeking special accommodations. I occasionally advocated for him especially when he needed to interview people who were uncomfortable with his speech impediment.

But sometimes when Rich wasn't around, I would joke with fellow reporters about some of his behaviors and difficulties caused by his condition. He likely sensed it, but Rich never let on that he was aware of our thoughtless,

shameful attitude.

To a fault, he was thoughtful and kind to me. He was an innocent, loving young man who chose to see only friendship.

In Rich, I now realize, I "behold" the Lamb of God, Christ suffering as a ransom for my sin. The person of Christ within him replaced the burden of my sin with his gifts of love and friendship.

It's futile to try to repay such a sacrifice. I have nothing to offer that is equal to Christ. Besides, according to Psalm 40, the Lord doesn't desire "sin-offerings."

Instead, John suggests, he wants me to accept his gift and live through the Spirit of Jesus that I've received.

**QUESTIONS:**

In your personal experience, who has paid a ransom for your sin? How has that given you new life?

**January 22, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

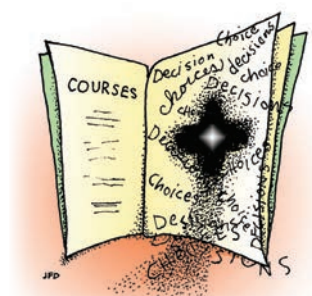
**Cycle A Readings:**

- 1) Isaiah 8:23-9:3
- Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14
- 2) I Corinthians 1:10-13, 17
- Gospel) Matthew 4:12-23

**By Jeff Hedglen**

As the Catholic campus minister at a large state school, I spend a lot of time commiserating with college students about their futures. Some come to the university with a definite plan. They know their major, the list and order of classes needed for their degree and what internships will best put them on track to reach their goals. But alas, such college students are the exception, not the rule.

According to National Center for Education Statistics, about 80 percent of students change their major at least once and, on aver-



*"He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him"*

— Matthew 4:21-22

age, college students change their major three times over the course of their college career. Yet even among students who are certain about their major, many often do not know what kind of career they want to pursue after college.

These major-changing nomads of the halls of higher education are very much like the people described in today's Scriptures: a people walking in darkness, longing for the light, any light!

While dark and directionless

times are hard and often longer than four years of college, nothing is like the look on a student's face when he or she finally has some peace regarding the direction for his or her life. It's as though this big, life-defining decision they have been waiting for, seemingly forever, has finally come and made a home within them.

I imagine it is this exact experience, taken to a transcendent level, that the first disciples felt when Jesus asked them to follow

Him. They had been waiting, not just for their whole lives, but with the entire nation of Israel, they had been waiting for centuries. They had wandered in spiritual darkness all this time and finally the Light had come.

When the darkness is so deep and has lasted for so long, the light is especially bright. This circumstance fueled the scene in Matthew's Gospel: "(Jesus) called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed Him."

Whether we are seeking direction in this life or to the next life, we all experience times of darkness, but as the psalmist says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?"

**QUESTIONS:**

When was a time of darkness that you have come through? What is something you have left behind to follow Jesus?

**February 5, Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

**Cycle A Readings:**

- 1) Isaiah 58:7-10
- Psalm 112:4-9
- 2) I Corinthians 2:1-5
- Gospel) Matthew 5:13-16

**By Deacon Mike Ellerbrock**

**W**hen Jesus tells his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth," his metaphor may have evoked bad memories and feelings of horror. At the least, it may have seemed a puzzling statement.

Under Roman domination, Jewish peasant farmers had to pay several annual taxes. Most burdensome were the temple tax of half a shekel to Jerusalem authorities and property tax to local magistrates levied at a high percentage of their agricultural produce. If they refused or were delinquent, Roman soldiers would cruelly salt their fields to destroy their livelihood. The threat was



— Matthew 5:13

In sacred ritual, Temple priests used salt to sparkle incense. All offerings had to be sprinkled with salt.

Israelites also used salt as a food preservative and source of flavor to spice up meat.

Jesus' declaration calls his disciples — then and now — to see themselves as the salt that cures, not as salt that punishes or oppresses. He calls us to be a cure for injustice and an antidote for oppression. By ministering to the suffering He urges us to be "the light of the world." Visible from the mountaintop, our bold

terrifying.

Frequently in Israelite history, conquering invaders would salt the land to declare their victory and intimidate the vanquished into servitude and worship of their new king. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, "salted land" was synonymous with "desert wasteland," a painful reminder of dark days.

On the other hand, it was Jewish custom to see salt as symbolic of a covenantal relationship.

discipleship cannot be hidden under a bushel basket, but instead must be "light to all in the house," glorifying God by our lives.

Also, Jesus calls all followers to be the salt that both preserves the faith and invigorates it with our actions.

The vast majority of Americans reported feeling "repulsed" by our recent national election campaign. Why did it sink so low? Are fear and anger so pervasive that our salt has gone sour, infected our spirit? As disciples of Christ we are called to be a light to all.

Founded on the ideals of indivisibility, liberty, and justice for all, the U.S. professes to be one nation under God. May our actions match our words!

**QUESTIONS:**

With a new presidential administration, what will I personally do to manifest healing and unity after such a divisive campaign? How can we as a nation be a light to the world?

**February 12, Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

**Cycle A Readings:**

- 1) Sirach 15:15-20
- Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34
- 2) I Corinthians 2:6-10
- Gospel) Matthew 5:17-37

**By Sharon K. Perkins**

**M**ost people would agree that living an ethical life boils down to our personal choices between "good" and "evil." Others might use different criteria, such as useful or not useful, pleasurable or not pleasurable, etc. Whatever our standards, we value the freedom to identify our own paths as one of the most treasured aspects of being human, and we resist someone else's telling us what to do.

Today's readings are full of references to making wise choices, but as St. Paul states, the wisdom informing those choices is "not a



— Sirach 15:17

wisdom of this age." The wisdom spoken to "those who are mature" takes the form of "statutes," "decrees," "commandments" and "law" — the very things that make postmodern society nervous.

Fearing a loss of freedom, some renounce organized religion and submission to God's commandments. But the Bible leads us to a great paradox. God, the author of human freedom, doesn't command us to act unjustly and "to none does He give license to sin." St. Augustine put it another way, writing that God is the master "whom to serve is perfect freedom."

In today's Gospel, Jesus not only affirms the "law and the prophets" but interprets them more rigorously, teaching that "whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

In our day-to-day living we constantly make choices, between the freeway or the backroads, a salad or a burger, or whether to wear the blue tie or the red one.

Very seldom do we actually choose between "good" and

"evil," but faced with what we perceive to be two "goods," we usually pick what we think is better; or confronted with two undesirable outcomes, we go for the one that's "not so bad." And we think that our exercise of choice comprises the extent of human freedom.

Today's readings are God's invitation to take his gift of freedom to the next level, to not merely settle for the lesser of two evils or the more expedient of two good outcomes. God wants us to be truly free in the deepest sense of the word, to be formed according to his life-giving divine wisdom and to act accordingly. His commandments are the means that make this possible.

**QUESTION:**

How do you use God's gifts of free will and his commandments to make daily decisions?





**February 19, Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time.**  
**Cycle A Readings:**

- 1) Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18
- Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10, 12-13
- 2) 1 Corinthians 3:16-23
- Gospel) Matthew 5:38-48

**By Jean Denton**

**A**grieving mother, speaking to the press after her son was charged with a deadly act of terrorism, is incredulous. “I don’t know where this came from. We have a loving home. Our family always has been respectful and caring,” she says. “Why would he do this? That’s not who we are!”

We hear that phrase often lately. For instance, congressional leaders condemning torture as a means of getting information from enemies note, “That’s not who we are!” An official of a city that had been making progress in race relations laments a hate crime, “That’s not who we are!”



*“I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”*

— Matthew 5:44

Their point is that our family, our country, our community is not one that lives by the power of subjugation and violence. It’s not in our makeup. As a people, we renounce such conduct.

This weekend’s Scriptures, in both the Old Testament and Matthew’s Gospel, exhort God’s people to take no revenge on those who hurt them and, in fact, to love their enemies.

According to Leviticus, God tells Moses to instruct his people thusly, “Though you may have to reprove your fellow citizen, do not

incur sin because of him. Take no revenge and cherish no grudge.” Why? God explains simply, “Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.”

In other words, don’t be a vengeful people, because that’s not who we are!

Jesus encourages his disciples in the same way. If I may paraphrase: You have heard it said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say to

you offer no resistance to the one who is — because that’s not who we are!

This is one of the most difficult teachings to follow. It’s human nature to strike back when someone harms or threatens us. More than once have I convinced myself that even if two wrongs don’t make a right, at least it’ll make me feel better. But it doesn’t. It just incurs more sin.

These Scriptures emphasize that being the people of God is not about seeking reward for our actions. It’s more fundamental than that: It’s about our actions growing out of who we are.

Call it integrity; call it honor. God calls it being holy.

**QUESTIONS:**

Presently, who do I see as my enemies and what are the greatest challenges to loving them? What must I do to overcome those obstacles?

**February 26, Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

**Cycle A Readings:**

- 1) Isaiah 49:14-15
- Psalm 62:2-3, 6-7, 8-9
- 2) 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
- Gospel) Matthew 6:24-34

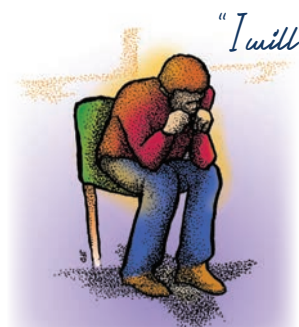
**By Jeff Hedglen**

**I**show my age and possibly run the risk of losing many Generation X and millennial readers with this example, but sometimes when I feel at the end of my rope, or look around at the state of the world or even look at how my day-to-day life can seem out of control, I often think of a 1970s television show called “Hee Haw.”

There was a recurring segment that featured a song with the lyric:

*Gloom, despair and agony on me*

*Deep, dark depression, excessive misery.*



*“I will never forget you”*

— Isaiah 49:15

*If it weren’t for bad luck, I’d have no luck at all;*

*Gloom, despair and agony on me.*

The song was meant to be comedic, but at times in my life I take this lyric quite literally.

We all go through times of doubt, worry, and despair. For some, this state of mind can be persistent. There are no simple answers or one-size-fits-all remedies. Even the powerful words of the

holy Scriptures are not some kind of divine magic formula that, when read, come with a guarantee to ease all symptoms and launch us into euphoria. Yes, miracles happen, but they are not the sole guarantee of God’s presence in our life.

God is present and aware of every moment of our life. While He does from time to time step in and dramatically impact the created order, more often than not God chooses to walk with us through the hard times to help us grow in holiness.

This week’s readings give us

some hope and some advice as to what to do when our world becomes too much.

First the hope: The prophet Isaiah says: “Can a mother forget her infant? ... Even should she forget, I will never forget you.”

Then Jesus reveals what we should do when we are overwhelmed: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” He means stop focusing on yourself and the temporal world and look to Him and his kingdom.

But not only that. Also seek to be righteous or holy like He is holy. Then, and only then, will there be perspective and peace. We might feel lost, but we are not forgotten.

**QUESTIONS:**

How does it feel to realize that God never forgets you? What are some things you do to seek first the kingdom of God?

# Clergy Assignments

## FOR THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL F. OLSON, STD, MA

**Rev. Dennis Gang, TOR**, new to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed as Parochial Vicar at St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, effective Nov. 23, 2016.

**Rev. Federico Gayoso, TOR**, has been appointed Parochial Vicar at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, from assisting at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, effective Dec. 1, 2016.

**Rev. Brijil Lawrence, SAC**, new to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed Sacramental Minister at Sacred Heart of

Jesus Parish in Breckenridge and Jesus of Nazareth Parish in Albany, effective Nov. 1, 2016.

**Rev. Robert Leonhardt, OFM**, residing at St. Maximilian Kolbe Friary in Crowley, has been recalled by his religious order, effective Nov. 1, 2016.

**Rev. Xavier Silvadasan** has been appointed Parochial Administrator at Holy Angels Parish in Clifton and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Morgan, effective Dec. 1, 2016.

# Catholic Schools

Find out more about the many events and activities going on in our Catholic Schools by reading the latest issue of "The Good News" online at [fwdioc.org/good-news-publication](http://fwdioc.org/good-news-publication)



## Introducing General Agent Chris Stark



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## FORT WORTH OPERA, CATHOLIC CHARITIES SHARE IMMIGRATION STORIES, REALITIES

The meeting room at Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) was filled to capacity on Oct. 27, as community members gathered to attend “Crossing Borders: Immigration and Education,” an evening event hosted by Fort Worth Opera in partnership with CCFW.

According to Heather Reynolds, CCFW’s president and CEO, the partnership between the arts organization and Catholic Charities offered a unique opportunity to share information about the realities of immigration.

“Immigration affects us all, at the collective level,” said Reynolds. “Our community, our economy, our school systems, employment landscape, are all impacted by immigration trends.”

Reynolds and Fort Worth Opera General Director Darren Woods share a desire to offer further insight into the personal stories of those affected by immigration, said Reynolds. Woods, in his opening remarks, explained that the opera company will offer *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* (“To Cross the Face of the Moon”), the world’s first mariachi opera, in Fort Worth on April 29 and May 7, 2017.

The opera, said Woods, is a “heartfelt

and emotional” bilingual performance, featuring the tragic story of a family divided by borders.

The panel discussion that followed addressed some of the concerns that are often connected to the topic of immigration. Referring to recent Pew Research Center statistics, CCFW’s Xergio Chacin noted that the number of unauthorized immigrants in the United States has stabilized, with the numbers of immigrants from Mexico declining since 2009.

Moreover, “something that we don’t often hear about is the fact that our immigrant populations come into a community, bringing enormous diversity and richness, and they’re working, they’re stimulating the economy, bringing tax dollars and revitalizing neighborhoods,” he added.

The panel discussion was moderated by Tarrant County College professor Frances De Leon and included Dr. Jesus Velasco, Professor of Latin American Political Science at Tarleton State University; Chacin, Director of Immigration Services at CCFW; Rosario Villalpando, President of the Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos; and



Heather Reynolds speaks about immigration before the panel discussion jointly hosted by CCFW and Fort Worth Opera. (NTC photo / Adrean Indolos)

Dr. Cecilia Silva, Professor of Bilingual and Multicultural Education at Texas Christian University.

Panelists shared information about the implications of immigration within the labor force and discussed the positive impact of immigrant children and their families within the education system.

For more information, visit [CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org](http://CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org) and [FWOpera.org](http://FWOpera.org).



## Diocese-wide events

For more information on these and other diocesan events, see the events calendar at [fwdioc.org/public-calendar](http://fwdioc.org/public-calendar)

### Martin Luther King Jr. Mass

**Date:** January 14, 2017  
**Time:** 5:00 p.m.  
**Place:** Our Mother of Mercy, Fort Worth

### Annual Respect Life Mass

**Date:** January 23, 2017  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Place:** St. Patrick Cathedral, Fort Worth

### RCIA Diocesan Formation Day

**Date:** January 28, 2017  
**Time:** 8:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.  
**Place:** St. Patrick Cathedral Pastoral Center

### World Day of Consecrated Life

**Date:** February 3, 2017  
**Time:** 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
**Place:** St. Patrick Cathedral, Fort Worth

# Lighter & Brighter



Iraqis return to their village near Mosul, after it was liberated from Islamic State militants Oct. 21. (CNS photo/Thaier Al-Sudani, Reuters)



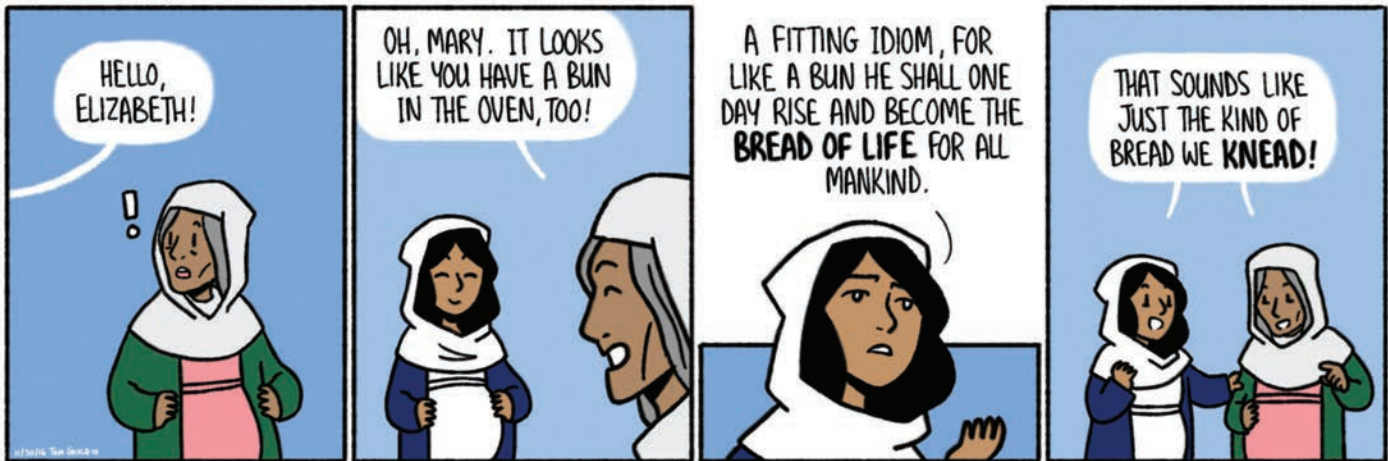
Alondra Diaz, 16, takes part in an early morning Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel in Flagstaff Ariz., on Dec. 12. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)



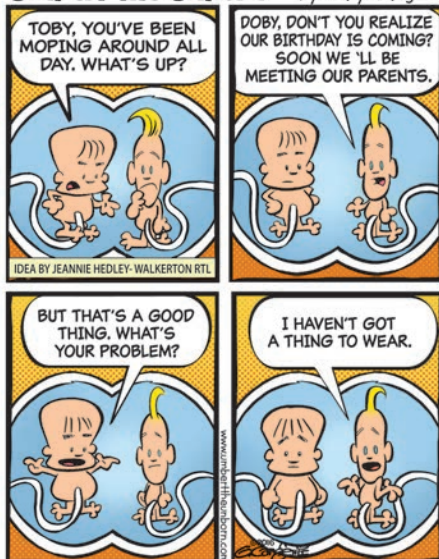
Workers decorate the Christmas tree in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Nov. 30. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

## TOMICS by Tom Gould

Luke 1:39-40



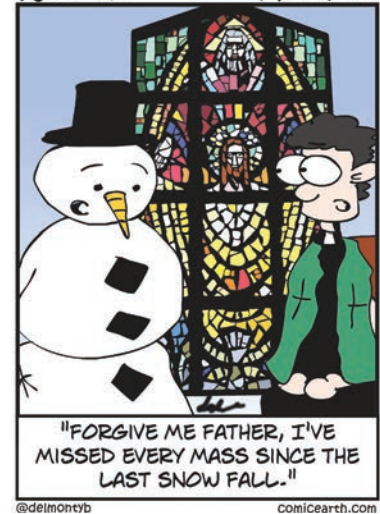
## Umbert the Unborn by Gary Cangemi



## The FLOCK by Jean Denton



## Comic Retreat By: Brian Montfort



# Your Holy Advocates

BY CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

## St. Basil the Great



**Illustrious doctor and champion of the Church**

*Feast: Jan 2*

Born in Caesarea, capital of Cappadocia (central Turkey), Basil studied rhetoric there and in Constantinople and Athens. He was

baptized about 358 and ordained in 365. After being chosen bishop of Caesarea in 370, he championed the faith defined at the Council of Nicaea and refuted the Arian heresy. Many of his homilies and treatises are extant, and the monastic Rule of St. Basil is still observed in the Oriental church. He is revered as a doctor of the Church.

## St. Josephine Bakhita

**Modern-day African saint and daughter of God**

*Feast: Feb. 8*

As a child this first Sudanese saint was kidnapped by Arab slave traders. She endured years of cruelty before being sold to an Italian consul who planned to free her. He took her to Italy, where she worked as a nanny for another family. In 1889 she won her freedom in court. She was baptized Josephine, entered the Canossian Sisters, and served her order in Italy for more than 50 years as a cook, seamstress, and doorkeeper.



### To Report Misconduct

If you or someone you know is a victim of sexual misconduct by anyone who serves the Church, you may

- Call the victim assistance coordinator at (817) 602-5119.
- Or call the Victim Assistance Hotline (817) 945-9345 and leave a message.

### To Report Abuse

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## EL LLAMADO A RESPETAR LA VIDA es responsabilidad de todos

**L**a Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe celebra la aparición de la Virgen María, con Jesús en su vientre, a San Juan Diego en 1531 en las Américas. Uno de los Evangelios para esta fecha incluye la narración de Lucas de la visita de María a Elizabeth; el evento en el que Juan el Bautista, aún no nacido, salta de gozo en el vientre de su madre al llegar Jesús, aún por nacer, presente con su Madre. El mensaje de Guadalupe a Juan Diego es simple y relevante para cada uno de los que vivimos ahora, “Yo soy tu Madre”. En este mensaje y aparición, también celebramos la llegada del Evangelio y el inicio de la evangelización en América.

Es providencial que la primera evangelizadora en América es la Madre de Dios junto con Jesús no nacido, porque las madres y sus hijos por nacer son muy vulnerables a la dominante ética del mal, hecha ley en 1973 por la decisión de la Suprema Corte, conocida como Roe vs. Wade. Esta ética falsa eleva un empobrecido sentido de la libertad humana sobre el fundamento de la dignidad humana de toda persona creada en la imagen y semejanza de Dios. Las madres y sus hijos no nacidos nos hablan proféticamente hoy, a cada uno de nosotros, del Evangelio de la Vida. La protección de las vidas de los no nacidos es esencial a la formación en la fe y moral de nuestra gente católica.

Anteriormente, se intentó promover esta misión por medio de una oficina separada en la diócesis y financiada exclusivamente por un banquete anual, que ha probado ser inadecuado para para este propósito.

Esta situación, y la gran importancia de la misión me han incitado, después de consultar con los involucrados en los ministerios de Formación Religiosa y Respeto a la Vida, a iniciar los siguientes cambios, para integrar totalmente el respeto por la vida humana en el alcance y la formación de nuestra gente en la fe y moral. Los servicios proporcionados hasta ahora por la Oficina de Respeto a la Vida se integrarán más directamente en todos los ministerios de la Iglesia, con una mejor administración de los recursos.

Primero, Juventud por la Vida, que era un proyecto separado, ahora será supervisado y dirigido por la oficina diocesana de la Pastoral Juvenil. Esto hace de la educación, conciencia, y acción, por lo que se refiere al respeto por la vida, parte crucial e integral de la formación de fe de nuestros jóvenes. Dicha acción y formación incluirá más promoción y participación en la Marcha anual por la Vida, la implementación de 40 Días por la Vida, y en los Retiros por la Vida en nuestros ministerios diocesanos y parroquiales con los jóvenes.

Segundo, se animará a cada parroquia a desarrollar, mediante administración, un vibrante programa de Respeto a la Vida para concientizar y llegar a las mujeres vulnerables al aborto. Cada programa de educación religiosa debería incluir la dignidad de la criatura por nacer, como parte de la formación de la auténtica enseñanza social de la Iglesia.

Tercero, la administración y supervisión del Proyecto Gabriel se pasará a la dirección de Caridades Católicas de Fort Worth. El Proyecto

Gabriel ayudará a las madres solteras con recursos materiales y espirituales y con los servicios necesarios para proveer para sus niños —ambos, los vivos y los que están por nacer. Esto coloca al Proyecto Gabriel bajo el competente y entrenado personal de Caridades Católicas Fort Worth para cuidar mejor de las afligidas madres solteras.

Al empezar el 2017, aprovechemos la oportunidad de traer a nuestra propia conciencia mediante la oración, el estudio y el servicio, la inclusión de los más vulnerables a la vida que compartimos con nuestra comunidad y sociedad. Hagamos un esfuerzo sincero de abandonar el individualismo egoísta, y pongamos las necesidades de nuestra casa común antes que nuestros propios privados y exclusivos deseos. Esta es una nueva manera de proclamar el Evangelio de la Vida en las sombras de la Cultura de la Muerte.



+ Michael F. Olson

# EL SERMÓN DEL MONTE

La única realidad penetrante y permanente de este año nuevo para nosotros católicos será el Evangelio según San Mateo. Por la gran mayoría de los domingos lo vamos a escuchar en la misa. Es el evangelio que tiene como su tema central a Jesús, igualmente divino y humano. En ello lo vemos actuando como nuestro legislador y también nuestro modelo en el cumplimiento de la ley.

Por cinco domingos consecutivos, desde el final de enero, la selección evangélica será extraída del Sermón del Monte, capítulos 5 – 7, de este evangelio. Con toda razón se describe este discurso como la carta magna de la vida cristiana. Pues no es un sermón propio, sino una catequesis tomada de los dichos de Jesús y formada por el redactor Mateo para perfilar la vida cristiana. Mateo imagina a Jesús entregando la enseñanza desde las alturas, clásicamente el lugar de los dioses. Está proclamando que por fin ha llegado la revelación definitiva de la voluntad divina.

Los primeros tres capítulos de Mateo cuentan los orígenes de Jesús. El cuarto capítulo trata de Jesús iniciando su ministerio con el lema: “Arrepiéntanse; el Reino de Dios está cerca”. El Sermón del Monte explica lo que tenemos que hacer para llevar a cabo este mandato.

¿Quiénes somos? El capítulo cinco del evangelio describe a Jesús separando a sus discípulos de la muchedumbre para darles una instrucción particular. Como cristianos católicos deberíamos pensar en nosotros como integrantes de este grupito privilegiado. En tiempo nos haremos en nuevos Moisés transmitiendo el mensaje del Señor a la gente que anhela directivas de lo alto para satisfacer sus deseos más profundos.

## LAS BIENAVENTURANZAS

Jesús comienza su discurso con las bienaventuranzas. Comprenden el esquema de una vida realmente feliz. Aunque en la primera mirada no parezca así, tenemos que meditar en lo que Jesús está ofreciendo. Está

*Jesús nos dice  
que somos “la sal  
de la tierra” y “la  
luz del mundo.”*

proponiendo un nuevo orden donde reinan la justicia y la paz en lugar de la codicia y el abuso que se ven con demasiada frecuencia ahora. Jesús nombra nueve modos que conforman el nuevo orden. Todos sus discípulos tienen cada uno de los nueve aunque algunos destacan un modo mientras otros destacan otro. Es posible reducir los nueve en dos grupos: las bienaventuranzas de cómo ser y las de cómo actuar.

En primer lugar tenemos que ser como los pobres del espíritu. Seamos indigentes o seamos adinerados, como pobres del espíritu no contaremos con nuestras pertenencias sino viviremos pendientes de Dios. Si somos ricos, compartiremos nuestros recursos felizmente con los demás. Si somos pobres, recibiremos lo que se nos dará, con agradecimiento.

En segundo lugar tenemos que buscar la justicia en todo lo que digamos y hagamos. La justicia nos exige disciplinar los deseos para que los demás sean apoyados. Jesús nos dice que somos “la sal de la tierra” y “la luz del mundo”. Actuamos como la sal cuando nos mezclamos con los desafortunados dándoles el apoyo necesario para prosperar en un mundo contrario. Brillamos como la luz cuando demostramos que el camino a la felicidad no pasa por la dominación sino por la colaboración.

## LA NUEVA LEY Y EL PADRE NUESTRO

Entonces Jesús se muestra como el hijo verdadero de Dios por modificar seis preceptos de la Ley. Su propósito en cada caso es redirigir la moralidad, de cumplir mandamientos externos a reformar las intenciones del corazón. Como sus discípulos tenemos que liberarnos de deseos lujuriosos, odiosos, y violentos. Hemos de hacernos perfectos como Dios Padre que ama a los malvados tanto como a los justos.

Para ejemplificar lo que quiere decir, Jesús comenta en los tres actos universales de la piedad: la ayuda a los pobres, la oración, y el ayuno. No debemos hacerlos para llamar la atención a nosotros mismos, sino por amor a Dios. Jesús se da cuenta que este programa de la perfección constituye un reto insuperable. No nos sería posible sin auxilio. Por eso nos enseña la oración que invoca la gracia de Dios Padre. Se dice que el “Padre Nuestro” queda al mero centro del Sermón del Monte para mostrar su importancia en la vida del cristiano.

## LA REGLA DE ORO Y LA CONCLUSIÓN

La parte final del Sermón del Monte es un compendio de parábolas, consejos, y exhortaciones con que Jesús ilustra lo que ha enseñado. Según ellas tenemos que ver sólo lo que es sano para que no se corrompa nuestro interior con deseos perniciosos. No deberíamos preocuparnos de nada; sólo tenemos que confiar en Dios. Sobre todo tenemos que ser dirigidos por una regla tanto práctica como sencilla: que tratemos a los demás como querríamos que nos traten a nosotros.

Al final del sermón el evangelista Mateo escribe: “...la gente estaba admirada de cómo (Jesús) enseñaba...” Evidentemente ellos oyeron de lo que Jesús habló a sus discípulos. ¿Cómo podían no hacerle caso? Pues Jesús en este sermón ha resumido la sabiduría de las edades. Ha dicho todo lo necesario para una vida digna y un futuro glorioso.



Una mujer joven lleva un crucifijo durante una misa fronteriza internacional en Arizona. La iglesia en Estados Unidos se está preparando para un V Encuentro que busca identificar e involucrar a los católicos de la zona.  
(Foto CNS/Nancy Wiechec)

# UN MOMENTO TRASCENDENTE

La iglesia se está preparando para el Encuentro de 2018 en la diócesis de El Paso. Aunque su sabor es hispano, su impacto promete cruzar límites culturales, raciales y lingüísticos.





...ar e involucrar a más de 20.000 líderes hispanos católicos emergentes.

# O CAL

...s de Fort Worth.  
...s, raciales, y lingüísticos.

**Por Mark Pattison  
Catholic News Service**

*Nota del editor: Este artículo fue actualizado con los informes del personal de North Texas Catholic.*

**U**n “momento de gracia”. Una “experiencia trascendental”. Una “oportunidad privilegiada”.

Así es como los líderes católicos describen el quinto Encuentro Nacional del Ministerio Hispano/Latino que se realizará en septiembre del 2018 en Fort Worth.

La Iglesia Católica, a nivel nacional y local, ya se está preparando para este esfuerzo masivo que se espera que identifique a más de 20,000 nuevos líderes hispanos católicos de todo el país y que involucre a más de un millón de católicos de todos los sectores.

Este esfuerzo recibió el endoso personal del Obispo de Fort Worth, Michael F. Olson, durante la asamblea general de otoño de los Obispos de los Estados Unidos celebrada el 15 de noviembre, fecha en que se lanza esta iniciativa.

“Es de suma importancia que se fomente la formación continua y el desarrollo del liderazgo dentro de las comunidades católicas hispanas y latinas”, dijo el Obispo Olson. “El V Encuentro es una oportunidad privilegiada para prepararnos a todos nosotros como discípulos misioneros

dispuestos a servir a toda la Iglesia y para que la Iglesia afirme y reciba los dones que los hispanos y latinos aportan a la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos por muchas generaciones”.

El tema del quinto Encuentro o “V Encuentro”, como se le llama de manera abreviada, es “Los discípulos misioneros: Testigos del amor de Dios”, según el Obispo Auxiliar Nelson J. Pérez de Rockville Centre, Nueva York, Presidente del Subcomité de Obispos de Asuntos Hispanos.

“Es una gran oportunidad para que la Iglesia llegue a nuestros hermanos y hermanas hispanas y de llevarles el mensaje de Cristo de amor y esperanza”, continuó diciendo. “Es un tiempo de escuchar, un tiempo de desarrollar relaciones significativas, un tiempo de aprender y de producir frutos abundantes y un tiempo de regocijarse en el amor de Dios”.

**La población  
hispana dentro  
de la Iglesia dice**

**‘Necesitamos  
aún su apoyo;**

**sin embargo,  
estamos**

**también listos  
y preparados**

**para ayudar,**

**¿En dónde nos  
necesitan?’**

### **¿QUÉ ES EL V ENCUENTRO ?**

El V Encuentro es un proceso de cuatro años de reflexión y acción que llama a todos los católicos de los Estados Unidos a un período de formación, consulta, actividad misionera, desarrollo de liderazgo e identificación de las “mejores prácticas” de ministerio.

A partir de lo que su Santidad Papa Francisco ha señalado, el objetivo del V Encuentro es lograr dos cosas: discernir formas en las que la

Iglesia en los Estados Unidos pueda responder mejor a las necesidades de la creciente población hispana e impartir

**CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 42**

las herramientas necesarias a los católicos hispanos para ser discípulos misioneros de la Iglesia en sus respectivas comunidades.

“Esto es llevar el mensaje y tono del Papa Francisco para llegar hasta más allá de la propia comunidad y ser una presencia acogedora para los demás”, dijo Joel Rodríguez, Director del Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

“Es conversión”, continuó diciendo el señor Rodríguez. “La Biblia, desde el libro de Génesis hasta el del Apocalipsis, nos señala a un solo Dios, Jesucristo, y el Encuentro nos señala sólo hacia Él. Es un llamado al discipulado para que compartamos y anunciemos la Buena Nueva”.

#### UN CATALIZADOR

El Encuentro comenzó en 1972, luego que los Obispos de los Estados Unidos vieron el rápido crecimiento de los hispanos en la Iglesia. En cierto sentido, explicó el señor Rodríguez, el primer Encuentro fue una llamada de los hispanos a la Iglesia para “que les prestaran atención y se dieran cuenta de ellos” en un momento en que la apertura pastoral hacia los latinos en los Estados Unidos era mínima.

Desde entonces, cuatro Encuentros han llevado a una serie de cambios, incluyendo la creación de la Secretaría de Asuntos Hispanos de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos, un plan pastoral nacional para el Ministerio Hispano y un creciente respeto y apreciación de la diversidad cultural de la Iglesia.

“En ese entonces, en el 1972, eso era lo que los hispanos necesitaban”, dijo el señor Rodríguez. “Ahora, más de 40 años más tarde, la población hispana dentro de la Iglesia dice ‘Necesitamos aún su apoyo; sin embargo, estamos también listos y preparados para ayudar, ¿En dónde nos necesitan?’”

“No es simplemente pedir ayuda, es también decir ‘Hey, estamos aquí. Nos hemos educado. Estamos preparados. Estamos catequizados. Estamos aquí para ayudar a la Iglesia’”.

#### EL PROCESO Y LOS OBJETIVOS

Los obispos esperan que más de un millón de católicos participen en la actividad misionera y consulta en los próximos dos años. El V Encuentro será la culminación de los encuentros parroquiales, diocesanos y regionales, que comienzan en enero y continuarán hasta junio del 2018.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 43



Vea al Obispo Olson hablar sobre el V Encuentro en: **NorthTexasCatholic.org**. Solo haga clic en 'Español'.

# EN CAMINO AL ENCUENTRO

## Discípulos Radicales

**A**l culminar este año de la misericordia, muchos caminamos esta jornada de esperanza y fuimos transformados durante esta peregrinación. Los apóstoles en su caminar con Jesús pudieron físicamente presenciar Su misericordia incondicional. Fueron muchos y distintos los caminos que tomaron aquéllos que querían escuchar de labios de Jesús palabras de aliento y esperanza. Estas lecciones provocaron en aquellos corazones sedientos una transformación, causando en sus vidas una conversión volviéndolos en discípulos del Maestro.

Hoy, tú y yo somos llamados a ser discípulos; aunque distantes de aquel tiempo, estamos unidos por el mismo amor a Jesús. Antes de continuar hablando de discípulos, tenemos que entender esta palabra, la cual se origina del latín *discipulus* que viene a significar, según la Real Academia Española, “Persona que aprende una doctrina, ciencia o arte bajo la dirección de un maestro”. Así que, en nuestro caso, somos “alumnos” del Maestro por excelencia. Como todo buen alumno, somos transformados en la medida que vamos aprendiendo las lecciones de la Buena Nueva, la cual causa un cambio radical (total o completo) en nosotros, manifestándose por medio de nuestras acciones, palabras y trato a las personas. De esta manera podemos lograr imitar a nuestro Maestro, “Pues el que dice que permanece en Él, debe andar como Él anduvo” (1 Juan 2:6)

Podemos entender entonces que para ser discípulos radicales de Jesús, tenemos que sufrir una transformación total en nuestras vidas para así poder ser misioneros que proclamamos Su evangelio como Él nos encomendó, “Por tanto, vayan y hagan discípulos en todas las naciones, y bautícenlos en el nombre del Padre, y del Hijo, y del Espíritu Santo” (Mateo 28:19). Así que, sigamos a Jesús como discípulos (alumnos, seguidores) experimentando una conversión radical (total o completa) en cumplimiento de Su voluntad. El V Encuentro nos invita a ser discípulos, invitándonos a vivir un ENCUENTRO con Jesús para así ser transformados y “Andar como Él Anduvo”

¡Adelante, hagamos camino!

## Joel Rodriguez

Director del Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis de Fort Worth

Los encuentros parroquiales se realizarán en todo el país en mayo y junio en unas 5,000 parroquias. Hasta la fecha, 10 parroquias de nuestra diócesis están participando, según Joel Rodríguez, pero él espera que el número de parroquias que participan aumente en los próximos meses, a medida que se celebren más reuniones locales.

Los encuentros diocesanos están programados para el otoño del 2017 con la expectativa de que más de 150 diócesis del país tomen parte y que alrededor de 200,000 personas participen.

Se espera que el Encuentro de la Diócesis de Fort Worth se celebre en octubre del 2017 y que, a nivel local, atraiga a más de 1,000 católicos.

“Será un día muy bendecido de crecimiento espiritual”, dijo el señor Rodríguez. “Una gran cantidad de formación tendrá lugar en ese día”.

Los encuentros regionales están programados de marzo a junio del 2018 y se esperan que participen 10,000 delegados; las regiones están designadas conforme a las regiones episcopales de los Obispos de los Estados Unidos. La asamblea general de los católicos del Norte de Texas se celebrará en San Antonio.

Luego de los encuentros regionales viene el V Encuentro, que se llevará a cabo del 20-23 de septiembre del 2018 en el Hotel Gaylord Texan en Grapevine. “Después de esta reunión nacional,

nuestra Iglesia local tendrá una comprensión más profunda de su misión y la evangelización”, dijo Juan Rendon, Director Diocesano de la Formación de Diáconos Permanentes.

No obstante, éste no es el final, pues se hará un documento de trabajo por escrito una vez que concluya el V Encuentro con el fin de implementar sus resultados.

El Obispo Nelson Pérez mencionó que se esperan los siguientes resultados del V Encuentro:

- la identificación de las mejores prácticas e iniciativas pastorales al desarrollar los recursos en las parroquias, las diócesis, escuelas y organizaciones nacionales
- un aumento en el número de vocaciones al sacerdocio, la vida religiosa y el diaconado permanente
- un aumento en el porcentaje de estudiantes hispanos en las escuelas católicas de un 15.5 por ciento actualmente a un 20 por ciento
- la identificación de, por lo menos, 20,000 nuevos líderes listos para la formación continua y el ministerio en la Iglesia
- un mayor sentido de pertenencia y corresponsabilidad entre los hispanos

#### LA ESPERANZA POR LA UNIDAD

El señor Rodríguez dijo que el Encuentro va más allá del tema general de la evangelización.

“El ‘gran y magnífico movimiento’ del Encuentro contribuye a unir a las diferentes culturas, generaciones y personas de diversos orígenes étnicos como una sola Iglesia”, dijo.

“Este movimiento está abierto para todo el mundo”, continuó diciendo. “El Encuentro está abierto también para las personas que no son hispanas porque se trata de una integración plena y total. Se podría decir que el sabor del Encuentro es hispano. Pero eso no quiere decir que no esté abierto para todos”.

Por eso, el señor Rodríguez, que trabaja en estrecha colaboración con el Obispo Olson, otros líderes de ministerio, delegados parroquiales y sacerdotes, para llevar el esfuerzo local a buen término, anima a todas las parroquias a participar.

“Esto no es un movimiento de segregación, sino que es un movimiento de integración”, dijo el señor Rodríguez. “Así que, si se anuncia en su parroquia y quiere saber más sobre el Encuentro, las puertas están abiertas”.

◀ Una mujer reza durante la Misa de Jueves Santo en la iglesia de la Inmaculada Concepción en Denton. (Foto NTC / Adrean Indolos)



¿Quiere aprender más sobre el encuentro o involucrarse? Información llegará pronto en **fwdioc.org**.



# UN MINISTERIO GRANDE

LOS MINISTERIOS DE RESPETO A LA VIDA SE DESCENTRALIZAN PARA ESTIMULAR LA PARTICIPACIÓN PARROQUIAL

Por Susan Moses

“Pro-Vida no es un departamento aparte en la diócesis. Debería ser parte de cada departamento y cada parroquia”, dijo Michael Demma, director de Respeto a la Vida en la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

Por varios meses, los ministerios de esta oficina han sido revisados y muchos servicios han sido transferidos al cuidado de otros departamentos. Infundiendo la enseñanza Pro-Vida en toda la educación, enfocando la santidad de la vida a nivel parroquial, y cambiando la coordinación de algunos servicios, la diócesis espera fortalecer los corazones hacia la dignidad de toda vida humana.

## JUVENTUD Y EDUCACIÓN

El año pasado, el liderazgo del programa Juventud por la Vida se transfirió a la oficina diocesana de la Pastoral Juvenil. Muchas actividades de Juventud por la Vida incluyen Retiro por la Vida, Marcha por la Vida—peregrinaje a Washington, D.C.—reuniones Pro-Vida en Austin, Entrenamiento Pro-Vida en el verano, y reuniones locales que promueven la castidad y la santidad de la vida.

“La juventud es el arma secreta en la batalla para proteger toda la vida. Hemos visto un incremento en la sensibilización de los jóvenes hacia cuestiones pro-vida, y un crecimiento importante en asociaciones pro-vida en la escuelas católicas. La cuestión del aborto está culturalmente dividida cerca de 50/50, pero la juventud es nuestra esperanza, una firme esperanza”, dijo Demma.

La educación en todos los niveles incluirá más enseñanza acerca de asuntos pro-vida, según Demma. “Para restaurar el fundamento de la dignidad de la vida humana, debemos empezar temprano en la catequesis de nuestros niños. La dignidad debe estar firmemente establecida en cada modo de enseñanza que exponemos a nuestros niños, a nuestros jóvenes adultos y a nosotros mismos. Debemos reforzar el concepto de dignidad en nuestras escuelas

“Respeto a la Vida es un ministerio grande y necesario, pero necesita más que los tres que estamos en la oficina”.

católicas, en nuestra educación religiosa, en nuestros programas para jóvenes, en nuestra preparación matrimonial, y desde el púlpito”.

## EL PROYECTO GABRIEL

El proyecto Gabriel ayuda a las mujeres en crisis de embarazo asignándoles un capacitado Ángel Gabriel, quien apoyará espiritual y emocionalmente a la mamá durante, y después, del embarazo, y la ayudará a encontrar recursos vitales para ella y el bebé.

De acuerdo a Demma, el proyecto Gabriel se alinea bien con el servicio de recursos de Caridades Católicas. A partir del 1º. de febrero, los Ángeles Gabriel servirán de enlace para que las madres y padres aprovechen los recursos médicos, económicos y materiales de Caridades Católicas. Los Ángeles continuarán acompañando a las mujeres con apoyo y amistad.

Angela Walters, coordinadora diocesana del Proyecto Gabriel, explicó que “Caridades Católicas ayuda a la Mamá Gabriel (cliente en crisis de embarazo) con recursos y manejo de su caso por largo tiempo, para que esta mamá vaya trabajando hacia su meta, y eventualmente, se haga cargo de su familia sin la ayuda de programas externos”.

Aproximadamente 25 parroquias tienen Ángeles Gabriel, y 12 parroquias tienen coordinadores parroquiales para este proyecto. Walters dijo, “Día a día hacemos crecer el ministerio al recibir más y más madres que llegan enviadas por los hospitales, de los centros de recursos para embarazadas, o porque alguien les habló de este Proyecto. Como más mamás vienen a nosotros, más ángeles capacitados necesitamos.”

Demma planea que cada parroquia tenga un coordinador del Proyecto Gabriel y que cada deanato tenga una Casa Gabriel para almacenar artículos para bebé y espacio para juntas y clases de crianza.

## OTROS MINISTERIOS PRO-VIDA

No tendremos más el Banquete Pro-vida del Obispo, ya que la oficina de Respeto a la Vida determinó que, aunque promueve camaradería, no es un modo efectivo de ayudar a los individuos en crisis de embarazo. “Tenemos otros eventos que afirman a la comunidad pro-vida e incluyen a la familia, como la Misa anual de Respeto a la Vida, Cadenas de Vida, el Rosario la tarde del Viernes Santo, y 40 Días por la Vida”, explicó Demma.

La oficina de Respeto a la Vida continuará su apoyo a los Ministerios de Raquel, que ofrecen retiros que promueven sanación después del aborto. Además, como el suicidio asistido por médicos es ahora legal en seis estados, la oficina de Respeto a la Vida planea dedicar algunos recursos a los asuntos del final de la vida.

Según Demma, casi un tercio de las parroquias de la diócesis cuentan actualmente con un comité de Respeto a la Vida. Él planea trabajar con los párrocos y feligreses para establecer estos comités en cada iglesia.

“Respeto a la Vida es un ministerio grande y necesario, pero necesita más que los tres que estamos en la oficina”, dijo Demma. “Estamos haciendo estos cambios para fortalecer el programa y hacer que las parroquias se enfoquen en la cultura de la vida”.

# MADRE DE TODOS NOSOTROS

OBISPO MICHAEL OLSON Y CIENTOS DE FELIGRESES HONRAN A NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE

Por Susan Moses

¿“No estoy yo aquí, que soy tu madre”?

Casi 500 años después de que Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe se apareció a San Juan Diego, su pregunta aún resuena. El 12 de diciembre, en la parroquia del Inmaculado Corazón de María en Fort Worth, cientos contestaron, “Sí, Tú estás aquí”. Los feligreses se empezaron a reunir a las 3:00 a.m. el día de la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe para mostrar su honor y amor a la Virgen María.

“Esta es una de las más grandes celebraciones del año”, explicó Marcos Ortiz, un feligrés, que desde que era niño, ha asistido antes del alba a las festividades. “Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe llevó la fe católica a México, por eso la honramos y la amamos hoy, y todos los días”.

En el transcurso de pocos años, después de la aparición de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe a San Juan Diego en 1531, cerca de 8 millones de Aztecas se convirtieron al catolicismo.

Las iglesias por toda la diócesis y a través de los E. U. y México celebran su fiesta, el 12 de diciembre, con procesiones y liturgias especiales.

En el Inmaculado Corazón de María, el oscuro y quieto exterior fue conquistado por la vibrante decoración y la alegre música del interior. Montones de ramos florales de brillantes colores rodeaban el estandarte, de 25 pies, de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en el santuario, y muchas más flores adornaban los lados de una estatua de “La Morenita” en el vestíbulo.

La congregación cantaba y aplaudía junto con las bandas de música y los mariachis. Frecuentes gritos de “Viva Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe! Viva Cristo Rey!” se escuchaban por toda la iglesia.

Después de más de una hora de cantos, el Obispo Michael Olson se unió a los fieles para una Misa antes del amanecer. Los Matachines, con su brillante vestuario con conchas, lentejuelas, y plumas, empezaron



Matachines bailan durante una procesión especial para Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. (Foto NTC / Adrean Indolos)

la liturgia con el fuerte sonido de un gran caracol, seguido por un enérgico toque de tambores. Al ritmo de sus maracas y de los cascabeles en sus tobillos, los danzantes brincaban y se movían por los pasillos de la iglesia. Sus costumbres y danzas incorporan simbolismos Mexicanos, Aztecas, y Americanos.

En el Evangelio de la fiesta del día, del primer capítulo de San Lucas, María, embarazada, visita a su prima Isabel. Juan el Bautista, en el vientre de Isabel, salta de gozo. En su homilía, el Obispo Olson comparó esa visita a las visitas de María a San Juan Diego.

“Años más tarde, San Juan Diego también es visitado por la Virgen María que lleva a Cristo en su vientre. María, llevando a Jesús en su vientre, viene de nuevo a servir y a traer consuelo a Juan Diego. Ella hace eso, en parte, apareciendo como una indígena, con la tez del mismo color que Juan Diego y su familia.

“Ella le dice que es su madre. Juan Diego salta de gozo y, en vez de su miedo, recibe consuelo porque la salvación y la redención

llegan a él y a las Américas”, dijo el obispo.

Al escoger aparecerse a San Juan Diego, un campesino indígena de 57 años, sin riquezas ni influencias, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe demuestra que es una madre para todos.

Ortiz explicó, “Ella elige a Juan Diego, un hombre sencillo. Eso nos muestra que no importa quiénes somos, qué edad tenemos, o de qué color es nuestra piel, ella es nuestra madre”.

Según el Obispo Olson, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe aún nos llama a la conversión.

“Juan el Bautista, Juan Diego, y todos nosotros, hemos saltado de gozo a la llegada de Jesús con María.

“Juan el Bautista, Juan Diego, y todos nosotros pasamos de recibir esta buena noticia a aceptar nuestra vocación de hablar proféticamente.... Nosotros, que hemos recibido esta buena nueva, somos también llamados a ser profetas y declarar la llegada de Cristo en las personas de los pobres, en las personas de los inmigrantes, en las personas de los refugiados, y en la persona del niño por nacer”.

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## WYD REUNION

Four months after World Youth Day in Krakow, the pilgrims reunite at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller for an evening of reflection and socializing.



## 77 NATIVITY SCENES

A beloved tradition of displaying parishioners' Nativity scenes has returned to Christ the King Church in Iowa Park.



## A NEW SHEPHERD

Pope Francis on Dec. 13 named Bishop Edward Burns of Juneau, Alaska, to be shepherd of the Diocese of Dallas.



## LOVING CARE

Joan Hilleren and others are leading the charge to bring assistance and mentoring to pregnant teens in the Mid-Cities area.



Our website is updated daily with the latest news, features, and columns regarding your Catholic faith! Give us a visit!

*From Page 48*

in the sanctity of life and a personal history of complicated pregnancies keeps her motivated.

“When we were ready to start having a family, I knew I would probably miscarry because my cycles showed so much malfunction,” explained the cradle Catholic, who suffered from endometriosis, cysts, and low progesterone.

Surgery by her NaPro Technology doctor corrected the endometriosis and, after conceiving six months later, a course of prescribed progesterone supplements allowed Havrilla to carry her baby for a full 40 weeks.

Expecting a second baby, Havrilla asked a local healthcare provider to check her hormone levels because of the progesterone needed to maintain the first pregnancy.

“They literally told me I had never miscarried and they would let me miscarry this pregnancy as a diagnostic tool,” she recalled. “They considered my low progesterone levels, indicated by five years of charting cycles, irrelevant and refused to help me.”

Havrilla sought care from an understanding midwife who shipped her blood for diagnosis to the Pope Paul VI Institute.

“Not only did I need progesterone support, but my levels were so low I was starting to lose the pregnancy at 10 weeks,” said Havrilla who was quickly prescribed progesterone injections by Dr. Hilgers.

That’s when the business executive resolved to bring a NaPro Technology medical practice to Fort Worth for women who want to alleviate reproductive and other gynecological issues in a restorative, life affirming way.

Patients charting their cycles with the Creighton system provide valuable biomarkers to NaPro certified physicians who use the data to treat medical problems in a healthy way.

“If your daughter has endometriosis at age 15, we’re not going to put her on the pill. We’re going to help her understand her body so she doesn’t have to go through infertility in her 20s. It’s a natural procreative approach to working with the woman’s body,” Havrilla said, explaining the underlying philosophy. “Doctors don’t do tubal ligations, prescribe birth control pills, or do anything that circumvents or breaks a woman’s cycle.”

Millions of U.S. women have gynecological conditions.

“Many are only getting a quick fix with hormonal contraception,” she pointed out. “It doesn’t help unmask the underlying disease that leaves them suffering for years.”

With Bishop Olson’s blessing, co-founders Havrilla and Cox started the non-profit organization and assembled a team of advisors to help them build a medical clinic, fertility care center, and education resource at one site.

Havrilla's firm belief in the sanctity of life and a personal history of complicated pregnancies keeps her motivated.

“I don’t know medicine but what I do know is business,” the entrepreneur said confidently. “So Mandy and I found good leadership in areas we needed support in.”

Although the WholeLife Authentic Care center is designed as a non-profit, it will not require constant fundraising year after year. The \$1.3 million solicited from donors will cover equipment purchases and operating expenses during the clinic’s first three years.

“By year four we’re sustainable,” said Havrilla, who admits a learning curve is involved. “Medicine is complicated. There are a lot of insurers and we’ll have to understand how to work with them.”

A pool of 280 potential clients, who filled out information forms on the WholeLife Authentic Care website, demonstrates need.

“Most professionals have zero people waiting to see them when they open a business. I have 280 women who want to book an appointment because they want this kind of help,” she pointed out.

The WholeLife Authentic Care clinic, based in Fort Worth’s medical district, will maintain its non-profit status by offering charity assistance to uninsured and under-insured individuals. Havrilla expects to name a certified NaPro doctor for the practice in early 2017. A business manager, nurse, and other staff members are already identified.

In addition to Catholics practicing natural family planning, the NaPro Technology clinic will serve the needs of a second population — women who won’t use synthetic hormones, IUDs, or chemical contraception.

She’s taught non-Catholics, who approach health issues in a natural way, how to chart their cycles in the Creighton system.

“We’re reaching two markets,” Havrilla said. “We’re serving members of our faith and reaching outside of our faith to be an example to others.”

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# FOR FAMILY & FOR LIFE

Nicole Havrilla plans clinic to bring natural, pro-life solutions to women's fertility problems

Say the words “natural family planning” and most people think of a Church-approved way for Catholic couples to postpone or avoid pregnancy. That’s only partially true.

For young mothers like Nicole Havrilla, the scientifically-based Creighton Model FertilityCare™ system has health benefits beyond choosing the right time to have children.

Thanks to charting the Creighton system for years and curative measures made possible by Natural Procreative (NaPro) Technology, Havrilla and her husband, George, avoided the heartache of certain miscarriage. They have two healthy daughters born after full-term pregnancies. A third child is due in February.

“We have this cute little family because of Dr. (Tom) Hilgers,” beamed the business and marketing professional who credits the physician and the Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha, Nebraska for treating her reproductive issues in a way that’s healthy and morally acceptable. “There are 1,200 women charting the Creighton model system in the Metroplex who are fully aware of what their bodies are doing, but we have no doctors in Dallas/Fort Worth who will take a pro-life approach to help them.”

It’s a problem the Holy Family



parishioner hopes to remedy. A Creighton Model FertilityCare™ instructor for the past 11 years, Havrilla wants to open a NaPro Technology medical clinic in Fort Worth. The relatively new reproductive science works cooperatively with a woman’s menstrual cycle to evaluate and treat conditions like infertility, miscarriage, and irregular bleeding in a framework that adheres to pro-life principles. Similar clinics exist in Chicago, Denver, St. Louis, and Houston.

million needed for start-up costs associated with a medical practice. To date, special collections at area parishes, foundation grant money, pledges, and private donations have earned more than \$300,000 for the venture. A Knights of Columbus Council in Arlington will contribute an ultrasound machine.

Spearheading a fundraising campaign is challenging but Havrilla’s firm belief

◀ *Nicole Havrilla is spearheading an effort to bring a NaPro Technology Clinic to the DFW area.*

*(Photo courtesy Nicole Havrilla)*

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