

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC

IN GIVING, **WE RECEIVE**

CATHOLICS BRING SHELTER, SERVICES
TO THOSE ON THE MARGINS



JANUARY — FEBRUARY 2019
VOL. 35 | NO. 1

A Portfolio of Protection

The Knights of Columbus offers a full-line of quality, flexible products backed by our top-rated financial strength* to help protect your Catholic family.

Permanent Life Insurance

Our signature product. Insure your life for life.

Term Life Insurance

Affordable protection for temporary needs.

Retirement Annuities

Retirement income you can count on. Guaranteed.

Long-Term Care Insurance

Protect your assets. Get quality care. Prepare for the future.

Disability Income Insurance

Receive an income even when you can't work.



Chris Stark, FICF
General Agent
 Cell: 979-218-3664
 Office: 817-439-9292
 chris.stark@kofc.org
 KofCInsuranceFW.com



Andrew Tice, FIC
 Cell: 972-333-7462
 andrew.tice@kofc.org



Terry Peffers, FIC
 Cell: 817-690-7924
 robert.peffers@kofc.org



Bob Hoholick, LUTCF
 Cell: 214-455-5256
 robert.hoholick@kofc.org



Luis Hernandez
 Cell: 817-975-4220
 luis.hernandez@kofc.org



Michael Bryant
 Cell: 940-282-8074
 michaelbryant@kofc.org



Arthur Kelly
 Cell: 469-951-7398
 arthur.kelly@kofc.org



Randy Brock, FSCP
 Cell: 940-886-8417
 randall.brock@kofc.org



Eddy Patterson, FIC
 Cell: 817-776-0555
 eddy.patterson@kofc.org



Stephen Kouba, FIC
 Cell: 817-727-5872
 stephen.kouba@kofc.org



Gregory Brown
 Cell: 940-247-1721
 gregory.brown@kofc.org



Knights of Columbus
INSURANCE
 YOUR SHIELD FOR LIFE

LIFE INSURANCE • DISABILITY INCOME INSURANCE • LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE • RETIREMENT ANNUITIES

IN THIS ISSUE

January - February 2019

9 SCHOOL STANDOUTS

An amazing athlete, a teaching dynamo, and campus upgrades warrant a look.

16 DOING TIME

Ministering to prisoners is a full-time assignment for Father Richard Collins.

18 GIFT OF SELF

The true meaning of stewardship and why it matters.

24 FAITH AND HEALING

Abundant, unexpected answers to prayers for healing a young girl.

38 GOOD NEWSMAKER

Why does Heather Reynolds fight poverty, and where is her next battle?

50 MASS 101

This new Q&A feature explains how the Mass began, why we attend, and more.

FOLLOW US ONLINE

Visit NorthTexasCatholic.org for photo galleries, videos, the digital version of the magazine, and web-only articles.

HAVE A STORY IDEA?

Share it with us! Help us make sure your parish community is seen in the *NTC* online, in print, or on our quickly-growing social media accounts. Submit your ideas and briefs to: NTC@fwdioc.org.



26

COVER STORY

Parishioners who lend a hand to individuals without shelter find they are helped as well.



32 THE CASE FOR LIFE



42 CHRISTMAS FEASTS



PUBLISHER BISHOP MICHAEL OLSON

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR PAT SVACINA

EDITOR JUAN GUAJARDO

ASSOCIATE EDITOR SUSAN MOSES

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT ROSA ROSALES

WEB DESIGNER CHRIS KASTNER

CIRCULATION CRISSY GROSSLEY

INTERN MICHELLE MCDANIEL

CONTRIBUTORS MICHELE BAKER | JENARA KOCKS-BURGESS
KEVIN BARTRAM | JERRY CIRCELLI
SANDRA ENGELLAND | JOAN GILLEN
RODGER MALLISON | VIOLETA ROCHA
ALEX ROSALES | MARTY SABOTA
JAYME SHEDENHELM | MATTHEW SMITH
MARY LOU SEEWOSTER | BEN TORRES

TRANSLATOR YOLANDA NEWCOMB

REGULAR COLUMNISTS MARLON DE LA TORRE | JEFF HEDGLEN
ALI HOFFMAN | DAVID MILLS
MARY MORRELL | CALLIE NOWLIN
JOEL DE LOERA | FR. MAURICE MOON

Editorial Office: 800 West Loop 820 S., Fort Worth, Texas 76108, 817-945-9424.

NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC Magazine (USPS 751-370) (ISSN 0899-7020) is published bi-monthly by the Most Rev. Michael F. Olson, Bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth. For those who are not registered parishioners in the Diocese of Fort Worth, subscription rates are \$18 for one year, \$35 for two years, \$50 for three years. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Worth, TX. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to North Texas Catholic, 800 W. Loop 820 S., Fort Worth, Texas 76108.

The appearance of advertising in these pages does not imply endorsement of businesses, services, or products. Readers must exercise prudence in responding to advertising in all media.

For address changes, please contact Crissy Grossley, 817-945-9465.

Lifting Darkness

Although marketers, commercials, and big business make it seem otherwise, the Christmas season isn't "the most wonderful time of the year," for everyone.

Many are missing a loved one at their dinner table or around the Christmas tree this year. Some are struggling to make ends meet. Others are burdened with physical or emotional pain. A few are completely alone when these feast days arrive. And still others are fighting to keep their faith, flickering in the midst of worries and bad news.

When we step back to look at the world around us, we see many other people across the globe also suffering.

To these men and women, God reassuringly says, "I am with you." It's an echo of a message He gave us more than 2,000 years ago when an angel reassured shepherds in the dead of night with the words, "do not be afraid."

In the face of darkness in the world, He stands by those words, which can be summed into one word: Love. We celebrate this Word made Flesh in a few days — a reminder of the Father's love and limitless mercy on us. A sign that He doesn't just watch but shoulders the suffering with us, thereby granting it tremendous graces.

You might think, "That's nice. But it doesn't feel okay. I still hurt." To which God again says, "I am with you." God is there even in our pain, just as Jesus was there in the midst of the martyrdom of countless innocent baby boys by Herod. From His first moments of earthly life, Jesus mourned with us.

The Good News of our faith is that suffering doesn't mean God isn't there. Suffering, if anything, means God is even closer. God is the joy and harmony of the crèche, but He's the sacrifice of the cross, too. Suffering happened at the cross, but it was present at the crèche.

St. Teresa of Calcutta put it best: "When you feel miserable inside, look at the cross and you will know what is happening. Suffering, pain, sorrow, humiliation, feelings of loneliness are nothing but the kiss of Jesus, a sign that you have come so close that He can kiss you."

This Christmas season, we all do well to imitate Jesus and be present to someone who is suffering, thereby partaking in the true spirit of Christmas: love.

For the Kingdom,

Editor



Conference affirms dignity of Catholics with special needs

FORT WORTH — Before a crowd of catechists, parents, mental health professionals, directors of religious education, and parish leaders, Jason Whitehead, diocesan director of faith formation, read aloud from a pastoral document published last year by the U.S. Catholic bishops.

“The Church continues to affirm the dignity of every human being,” the opening sentence of the *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* reads. It continues with, “Likewise, the Church recognizes that every parish community includes members with disabilities and earnestly desires their active participation.”

It’s an apt reminder of the Catholic’s call to include everyone in the celebrations of the life of the Church, Whitehead told the approximately 35 people who attended the Oct. 27 Annual Special Needs Workshop at the Catholic Center.

The above applies to all, Whitehead said, yet it’s not common knowledge throughout the diocese.

“I’ve often heard from people that they don’t see anyone with special needs in their parish,” said Whitehead, whose son is autistic.

“I say it’s because we were in hiding. That was my reaction to a number of parishes in this diocese that, when I tried to attend Mass or just go into the chapel with my son, who hadn’t yet learned how to behave in church, I was either explicitly or implicitly uninvited.”

Annemarie Bohn, a mother of disabled children, agreed.

“Disorders run so across the spectrum that it’s hard to know sometimes,” Bohn said. “But you can’t typically see depression and other things. The challenge is to work to better educate the entire parish and diocese.”

— Matthew Smith

Scotland Catholics dedicate memorial for the unborn

SCOTLAND — Parishioners of St. Boniface in Scotland, 19 miles south of Wichita Falls, hope a memorial for the unborn in front of their parish will remind people to pray for the children who have lost their lives to abortions, and for their mothers.

“Since Jan. 22, 1973, when *Roe v. Wade* was passed, I’ve been praying. Millions have died. It just breaks my heart,” Rita Schreiber, a longtime parishioner said. “They’re all in heaven, and I think they’re watching over us and praying for us.”

On Oct. 21, as part of Respect Life Month, St. Boniface parishioners gathered for a blessing of the memorial after Mass.

Father Michael Moloney, pastor of St. Boniface and St. Mary

Parish in Windthorst, said it was his parishioners’ idea to fund and install the memorial.

Schreiber has been involved in the Respect Life movement since the late 1970s.

Schreiber and others have continued their pro-life efforts by volunteering at The Center in Wichita Falls, a nonprofit that provides free medical services and pregnancy testing to women in crisis pregnancies.

Schreiber and others volunteer at The Center on Thursdays.

“It’s my favorite day of the week. And it is my passion, and I hope, before I pass, [*Roe v. Wade*] will be overturned,” she said. “Until then, I’ll keep working and praying.”

— Jenara Kocks Burgess



Bishop Michael Olson lights the first candle of the Advent wreath at St. John Parish in Strawn. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Bishop's visit brings blessed beginning to Advent season

STRAWN — Bishop Michael Olson celebrated the Church's New Year — the first Sunday in Advent — with a Saturday Vigil Mass at St. John Parish in Strawn. Sunday morning, parishioners at St. Rita Parish in Ranger, St. Francis Xavier Parish in Eastland, and Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco appreciated that Mass was celebrated by the diocese's shepherd and concelebrated by their parochial administrator, Father Vijaya Mareedu, SAC.

Reflecting on the day's readings, Bishop Olson encouraged the congregation to be attentive and not distracted by the calamities and disasters that happen around the world, the personal problems we have, and sin. Vigilance shouldn't fill us with dread, but with hopeful expectation. "Be

deliberate and ready, not for disaster, but for Jesus who gave His life for us, who gave us eternal life, to come and welcome us into His Kingdom," he said.

After his episcopal ordination on January 29, 2014, the prelate celebrated his first Mass as bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth at St. John Parish. The congregation was pleased to welcome him back.

"This was a wonderful way to start

Advent," said St. John parishioner Sandra Bearden. "It added extra grandeur to the season."

Fr. Mareedu said the bishop's visit meant a lot to the congregations and reinforced unity in the diocese. "It was a reminder that he is with us," said the priest, who became parochial administrator of the four parishes on July 1.



Immaculate Conception students fill boxes with joy

DENTON — For the second year, students at Immaculate Conception Catholic School in Denton conducted some research: how much joy could they squeeze into a shoebox?

The pre-K through eighth-grade students gathered small toys, school supplies, hygiene items, and candy and packed them into shoeboxes for Cross Catholic Outreach's Boxes of Joy program. The boxes are distributed to children in Central America, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.

Elaine Schad, principal, explained that last year the school looked for a service project to help children affected by the devastation of Hurricane Maria. Boxes of Joy fit the bill. Also, the project gave each student a first-hand opportunity to make a positive difference

for a child living in poverty.

Student Philana Koto said she "felt really grateful that we get to do something. Kids our age don't really feel like we can help because of our age. We can't drive. We can't vote. This is our chance for all of us to do something that matters."

Principal Schad observed that collecting items was "extremely impactful" for the students, as it "put together the blessings we have here versus the stark reality that children there may have nothing for Christmas."

Students gathered more joy than would fit in their boxes, so the bounty will be shared locally with Catholic Charities Fort Worth, Loreto House, and the Denton County Homeless Veteran Outreach Program.

Youth leader Renée O'Malley helps Camelia Modesto, 15, and Celine Consuelo, 15, with their cardboard shelter at Our Lady Queen of Peace parish in Wichita Falls (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



'Night in a Box' gives insights into homelessness

WICHITA FALLS — Heat, cold, hunger, and uncertainty were some of the challenges teenagers from Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish youth group faced as they lived in cardboard boxes and tents outside their Wichita Falls church for one night, in a gesture of solidarity with the homeless.

"I can't fully understand the lives of those who are homeless, but this project definitely opened my eyes to only some of the obstacles they face on a day-to-day basis," said Isabella Anderson, a junior at Wichita Falls High School.

Renée O'Malley, youth ministry coordinator at Our Lady Queen of Peace, said the Night in a Box event is designed to bring awareness of the homeless to the teens.

"They sacrifice one night without the comforts of home, like their warm beds, a table to eat their meal, and the safety of having a roof over their heads, and doors that lock,"

she said.

O'Malley noted that there were male volunteers who took shifts to watch over the group as they slept to keep them safe.

Six teens participated in the event that started on Saturday about 3 p.m. with construction of their cardboard shelters and ended about 8:30 a.m. Sunday.

"The hardest part of this experience for me was knowing that so many people live that way of life every single day," Anderson said. "None of us slept well that night; it was cold out, the grass was wet, bugs were everywhere, and we were hungry. I could barely last the night, and the fact that some have to deal with this every day — plus in way worse situations — saddened me. Nothing really helped me through it, but it made me want to learn more ways about how I could help."

— *Jenara Kocks Burgess*

Homeschoolers compete in robotics competition

ARLINGTON — Middle and high school students mount their homemade robots onto wooden boards suspended from the floor. At the buzz of the gymnasium's timer, the robots begin to simulate "cleaning the ocean" by scooping water bottles out of a nearby container.

The TEACH (Texas Association of Catholic Homeschoolers) Robotics team competed in Cowtown BEST (Boosting Engineering, Science, and Technology) Robotics competition, a nonprofit organization which holds engineering-based tournaments for middle and high schoolers.

The team met at high school senior Isabel

Cobb's house to work on the robot for roughly 11 hours a week, but a few weeks before the presentation, they would work about 40 hours a week.

Through robotics, students such as Cobb have the opportunity to experiment with the STEM field. Working in robotics inspired Cobb to consider engineering in future pursuits.

"I was like, 'that's so cool, I want to do that,' so I applied to engineering schools, and I want to be a mechanical engineer. I never would have found out about it without going through the BEST program," Cobb said.

— *Michelle McDaniel*



For full versions of these stories plus more photos, visit NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news



Kindergarten teacher Angelica Azpeitia gives a high five at All Saints Catholic School. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Bilingual education boosts confidence, capabilities for All Saints students

FORT WORTH — Isabella and Mia Rodriguez are learning at a young age that being bilingual makes it easier to help others.

Mom Leticia Rodriguez said her daughters can help their grandmother when they go to stores.

“I see them now helping people talk to my mother who is not bilingual,” Rodriguez said. “They’ll start translating for her when she asks, ‘What are they saying?’”

Isabella, a second grader, and Mia, a kindergartner, are gaining a strong education in both Spanish and English thanks to the dual language program at All Saints Catholic School.

Now in its fourth year, the program includes classrooms from pre-kindergarten three-year-olds through second grade. Each year, school officials will add a new grade

level, all the way up to eighth grade, said Dr. Arica Prado, the school’s principal.

All Saints began implementing the program in the 2015-16 school year with pre-K three- and four-year-olds as part of the Two-Way Immersion Network for Catholic Schools (TWIN-CS), which is led by educators at Boston College and currently includes 20 Catholic schools around the nation.

Rodriguez said she is bilingual, but her husband’s first language is English, so that was their focus at home.

“I’m really pleased that they’re able to pray in both languages,” Rodriguez said. “I hear them sing songs in Spanish, pray in Spanish, and [pray] the Rosary in Spanish.”

— Sandra Engelland

Official Assignments

BY BISHOP MICHAEL F. OLSON

REV. JUJUVARAPU BOSE, HGN

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed Parochial Vicar at Sacred Heart Parish in Seymour, effective Dec. 4, 2018.

REV. MARIANNA FRANCIS CHINTHAMALLA, HGN

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed Parochial Vicar at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine, effective Dec. 4, 2018.

REV. ANGEL INFANTE HERNANDEZ, TOR
Parochial Vicar at All Saints Parish in Fort Worth, has been assigned Parochial Administrator of the parish, effective Nov. 12, 2018.

REV. JIM NGO HOANG KHOI, CRM

Returning to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed Pastor at Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in Wichita Falls, effective Dec. 2, 2018.

REV. JOSEPH CAO XUAN THANH, CRM

Pastor at Immaculate Conception Parish in Wichita Falls, has been recalled by his CRM religious order community, effective Dec. 2, 2018.

In Memoriam

MONSIGNOR JOSEPH SCHUMACHER

November 1, 2018



Monsignor Joseph A. Schumacher, 86, a longtime priest who retired in 2006, served as pastor of St. Matthew Parish in Arlington, St. Michael Parish in Bedford, and Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton, among others.

Full obituaries are available at NorthTexasCatholic.org.



For the full version of this article plus more photos, visit NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news



NTCRodger Mallison

MIND, BODY, AND SOUL

Notre Dame teacher combines passions for fitness, faith, and family in life's work

By Jenara Kocks-Burgess

As parents walk their children to the entrance of Notre Dame Catholic School in Wichita Falls at 7:30 a.m., they are greeted by name by fellow students.

They probably don't notice that their beloved physical education teacher Mary Cluley whispered the parents' and students' names to the student greeter just moments before.

"Good morning! How are you today!" she calls out, her voice like a cheerful chime, as the arriving students enter through the heavy black wooden door Cluley is holding open for them.

Some might wonder why a PE teacher is a greeter at a school,

but they wouldn't if they knew Mrs. Cluley.

The student greeters are participating in the school's "Knighly Greeter," program, which Cluley initiated this year. Notre Dame Assistant Principal Rachel Gutsell said "Knighly Greeters" is only one of the many programs Cluley has brought to Notre Dame in the 24 years she's taught PE at the school.

Other programs include Movement with Moms, Playing with Pops, Gigglin' and Groovin' with Grandparents, Golden Shoe — which all incorporate family participation — and cooperative events with the community such as DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), TxDOT's Bike Rodeo bicycle safety program, and even a health fair at the school put on by local Midwestern State University that brings in MSU athletes to work with the kids. She also has continued the tradition of Safety Patrol, during which fifth graders walk younger children safely to their parents' cars at the end of the day.

"She facilitates these programs in addition to being a full time PE teacher," Gutsell said.

Cluley said of her efforts: "I try to teach [students] social skills which will help them to succeed in life, whatever their profession is. I tell them that social skills, basically, are just following God's

Catholic School Highlights

Catholic Schools Week is January 27 - February 2.

These pages feature just a few of the marvelous people and places among the 20 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Continued on Page 10

From Page 9

command to love one another as He has loved us — and to live with joy.”

On a recent November day, her joy for her vocation seemed evident as she prepared to teach two-hand touch football to her afternoon classes of second- through fifth-graders and talked of her “intense love” for that game. But she interrupted herself to talk about a moment earlier in the day. She recalled she was on recess duty and asked some second-graders if they would give up a swing so that another classmate who was looking left out could use one.

“All three girls gave up their swings. It made me so happy,” she said with a huge smile on her face.

Cluley also took time to tell their teacher, who commended them for their virtuous behavior.

“Mary [Cluley] is constantly teaching and training the students in the importance of doing the right thing,” said Teresa Brady, a fourth grade teacher who has known Cluley for 13 years. “She emphasizes the virtues to the students and encourages them to grow in serving others.”

Cluley also helps facilitate the school’s virtue program, which starts each day with an explanation of the week’s virtue. In the first week of November, the particular virtue was “trustworthiness” with the verse, “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works,” from *Titus 2:7*.

It’s a verse that fits Cluley in her vocation — one that her parents instilled.

“My parents, Bob and Millie, were devout Catholics who served others in every capacity throughout their lives,” she said. “After my mother passed away, my dad spent two years of his life in Lourdes, France, lifting sick people in and out of the healing waters at Our Lady of Lourdes.”

“I remember delivering food baskets with my dad when it was very cold outside in the frigid Ohio winter. My parents taught me by their lives,” she added.

Cluley grew up in Columbus, Ohio, attending Catholic school from first through 12th grade. She was very active in sports and cheerleading all through her school days.

She graduated from the College of Charleston in South Carolina.

Later, when she, her husband, and three children lived in Wichita Falls, Cluley

said she fell in love with the family atmosphere of Notre Dame. She was a stay-at-home mom who volunteered at the school frequently.

After a year, the principal asked her to consider taking a physical education teacher position at the elementary school.

“I thought about it and prayed about it, and the thought that kept coming to my mind is how much I loved being up here at Notre Dame for anything. I just felt a special love when I walked in the building,” she said. “So, I enrolled at MSU and the journey of 52 college hours began, with my three children!”

The summer before she began teaching, she checked out every book she could find about teaching PE.

“And the first day of school came, and I knew it was for me the first minute I was there,” Cluley explained.

She continued learning as a teacher. Her coworkers talked about her dedication to learning new ways of teaching PE, and her forward-thinking approach to finding classroom ideas through social media, in

addition to teacher organizations.

“I will say to anyone I meet that I have never seen nor heard of a PE teacher who approaches her job with such a professional attitude, always seeking out new ideas and staying up-to-date on the latest trends in physical education,” said Michael Edghill, principal of Notre Dame. “Mrs. Cluley really does reflect so much of the spirit of Notre Dame.”

“My philosophy in PE is simple,” she said, “Helping young people enjoy physical activity now so that they can enjoy physical activity for the rest of their lives! I expose children to a wide variety of activities.”

Matt Ledesma, a 2004 graduate of Notre Dame High School, now serves as the school’s director of Institutional Advancement. He was Cluley’s student when he was in elementary school.

“Mrs. Cluley is the model of Catholic school educator. Her dedication to forming our students in mind, body, and soul is unmatched. Generations of students would tell you how much Mrs. Cluley played a positive role in their young lives,” he said. 🇺🇸

Mary Cluley goes beyond PE, encouraging students “to love each other and point out the good in each one.” (NTC/Rodger Mallison)





ALL AROUND AMAZING



All-American defensive end prevails with Catholic education

By Susan Moses

Football practice was long over. At Nolan Catholic High School, head coach David Beaudin thought he was alone. When he heard music coming from the locker room, he assumed the cleaning crew was at work. But who had stacked the chairs, swept, and mopped? NaNa Osafo-Mensah, Nolan’s star defensive end, who has racked up 27 offers to play at Division I universities.

Like Beaudin, Osafo-Mensah mistakenly assumed he was alone at the Fort Worth school. If the athlete hadn’t cranked his music, he would have accomplished his plan — to anonymously serve his team by scrubbing the locker room.

Although cleaning the facility surprised Beaudin, the gesture wasn’t out of character. Three years earlier, when

Beaudin arrived on the Nolan campus for his first day, Osafo-Mensah greeted him in the parking lot and proceeded to carry boxes to the coach’s new office.

This year, the athlete was selected as a national football All-American, was named a semifinalist for the Butkus Award® honoring the nation’s top high school linebacker, and has signed to play football for the University of Notre Dame. But that’s not what makes him special, according to his coaches and teachers.

Beaudin said Osafo-Mensah is a role model, “showing that you can be the very best player on your team and still be the hardest worker, and still be one of the most caring and loving individuals. Those things don’t have to be mutually exclusive.”

The son of immigrants from Ghana,

Continued on Page 12



At the Oct. 26 home game against Midland Christian School, Nolan Catholic High School defensive end NaNa Osafo-Mensah (*above*) talks with teammates on the bench and (*below*) poses with his friend Matthew Lewis, 11.

The Vikings beat the Mustangs 42-13 and finished the regular season with a 9-1 record. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



From Page 11

the basketball and football stand-out inherited his parents' passion for education and determination to overcome obstacles.

The football team captain's work ethic was put to the test this summer. In May, he decided to graduate a semester early from Nolan, which would enable him to enroll at Notre Dame in January and attend spring training. So, during the summer, on top of football practice, he put in an enormous amount of work to obtain enough credits to graduate in December. As usual, he earned As in his advanced academic classes.

His summer studies demonstrated his self-motivation, discipline, initiative, and time management skills, according to Brynn Lonquist, a science teacher who taught Osafo-Mensah at Nolan and St. Andrew Catholic School. "He's driven," she explained. "When he sets a goal, he does his best to achieve it, even if that means being in the weight room at 5 a.m."

Despite his academic and athletic success, Osafo-Mensah appreciates humility, a value imparted through Catholic education.

"Just because you are good at something doesn't mean you should show it off and brag about it and try to dominate everybody. . . . You want to win and help your team out the most, but when you are off the court, use your talents to help out other people," he said.

This fall, the football team captain did just that with fellow members of the National Honor Society. They volunteered with Miracle League in Arlington, which helps children with disabilities play baseball. The 6-foot-4-inch, 225-pound defensive end made a big impression

on the children, especially a youngster and his brother who were "awestruck" to meet him, according to Nolan English teacher Donna Brown.

Brown remembered, "NaNa partnered with the little boy on the field and I could see how much it touched his heart to be with this boy. After the game, NaNa talked with the parents, posed for pictures with the boys, and even signed the little boy's shirt for him. He really made their day, which made his day and impressed me to no end. The joy on all of their faces is not something I will soon forget — that's who NaNa is."

Experiences like that have helped determine the dreams of the young man. His primary goal is to play for the NFL, but he realizes he needs "backup dreams." And studying business management in college will help him accomplish one of them — to expand the opportunities for youth with disabilities to play recreational sports.

Despite a concern about cold Indiana winters, Osafo-Mensah selected Notre Dame because it's not just a football school, but offers "pride in academics, pride in family . . . it emphasizes everything, including being able to be a Catholic student."

He said, "Being Catholic is always a thing I really take a lot of pride in. . . . I always knew that whatever school I go to, I could still worship my faith and still stay close to God, but I felt like since Notre Dame is a Catholic school, I could grow even stronger in my faith."

Osafo-Mensah admitted graduating early from Nolan is bittersweet. He hopes his teammates and classmates will remember his example of "always work[ing] for what you really want. . . . Nothing you want will ever come easy." 🇺🇸

A birds-eye view of the Nolan campus.
(NTC/Rodger Mallison)



NOLAN EXPANDS

the **EXPERIENCE**

School breaks ground to transform educational and spiritual understanding with new learning spaces, chapel, and entrance

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Nolan Catholic High School is launching a \$40-million capital campaign and expansion that will transform the way young people learn at the coeducational, college preparatory campus in east Fort Worth. Elements of the multi-faceted project include new security doors at the school's front entrance, upgrades to the auditorium, two courtyards to encourage outdoor instruction, construction of an Integrated Design, Engineering, and Art (IDEA) building, and a new chapel with seating for 2,000 worshippers.

Work on the front entrance and courtyards began December 13 with a groundbreaking ceremony. Construction of the IDEA building — which will house a new weight room and concession stand — will follow in January.

Plans began after the diocese hired an outside firm to conduct a security audit of the entire school

system. The report indicated changes were needed at the high school.

“Older schools, like Nolan, were not built with security in mind. Unfortunately, we have to think that way now,” explained Jennifer Pelletier, diocesan school superintendent.

Considering the impact improving one area of the school would have on the entire campus, administrators interviewed architects and chose GFF — a company experienced with school design — to develop a master plan.

“They were pretty clear on using existing landscape and the beautiful elements of brick, wood, and glass that will stand the test of time,” the superintendent added.

But before making any decisions, the building committee reflected on the overall vision of the diocese and its schools.

Continued on Page 14



The north courtyard will include a water feature, planting beds, and a location for outdoor learning.



From Page 13

“We went back to where we always go — the bishop’s words,” Pelletier said, referring to Bishop Michael Olson’s 2016 convocation address stating that Catholic education opens the door to truth, beauty, and goodness. “Safety is the primary lens because it needs to be, but just as important is beauty.”

The planned construction of an IDEA building, a large, sacred, worship space, and landscaped plazas that can double as outdoor classrooms, will complement the classical education Nolan Catholic offers.

“We want students to understand and respond to what is beautiful,” the superintendent emphasized. “We want to advance the idea of being outside to see the beauty of God’s creation.”

The IDEA building will take the typical Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) curriculum one step further.

“We’re calling it the IDEA building because the arts and engineering will be in the same place,” Pelletier continued. “It’s also about the beauty and creativity behind science and engineering.”

Contractors will replace floors throughout the campus and the aging auditorium will receive a complete facelift with new seats, stage, and lighting.

The expansion is an opportunity to celebrate Nolan’s 66-year history and its partnership with Catholic elementary schools. A large

statue of Our Lady of Victory — recognizing the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur who helped start Nolan — is slated for the center of the circle drive. Campus hallways will showcase different statues, artwork, or floor inlays reflective and representative of each partner school.

“As students walk down the hallways, they’ll see statues of St. Andrew, St. Maria Goretti, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, or a model of the Holy Family,” said Leah Rios, Nolan’s president and former principal. “Each elementary school will be represented with some form of artwork in the building”

Feedback from the school community is positive.

“Our parents are very excited and pleased the expansion benefits all students — not just one sector,” the president said. “And the students are excited they will experience this while they’re on campus. It’s not something that will happen in 10 years.”

After the first stage is complete, work will begin on classrooms, the library, and the master plan’s primary focus — a new chapel. Building the chapel will involve participation from the entire diocese, but how that will materialize is still uncertain.

The proposed worship space is planned for the east side of Nolan where the diocesan tribunal offices

are currently located.

“We want students to truly be able to adore Christ and participate in the Mass without fighting distractions,” Pelletier explained. “It’s very difficult, at one of Nolan’s weekly Masses, to try and put

Wait! There’s more!

Check out NorthTexasCatholic.org for

PHOTO GALLERIES

- NaNa Osafo-Mensah on the gridiron
- A day with Mary Cluley
- Nolan Catholic groundbreaking

Complete list of upcoming Open Houses for Catholic Schools in the diocese



Improvements to the front entrance and auditorium are among the first renovations that will benefit students and visitors.

Renovations and new facilities at the Nolan Catholic campus include:

- New security doors at the school's front entrance,
- Upgrades to the auditorium
- Two courtyards to encourage outdoor instruction
- Construction of an Integrated Design, Engineering, and Art (IDEA) building
- New chapel with seating for 2,000 worshippers

yourself [spiritually] in a sacred place that's really a gym. You can't fight looking at the basketball goal. It's there."

Churches should be aesthetically beautiful, she suggested.

"They complement the beauty of the sacrifice of the Mass. It allows your mind to relax into the miracle."

A capital campaign to fund the improvements and expansion will kick off in the spring with \$21 million of the projected \$40 needed for construction already raised. The diocese sold property in the area and "the bishop generously gave us the money to use towards this," Pelletier said appreciatively.

"Education is a priority for him whether it involves seminarians, the schools, or catechesis," she stated. "Nolan and the other schools are the best way to evangelize. We don't just serve Catholics. Our schools exist for anyone who wants a great education."

With seed money in the coffer, other donors were eager to contribute.

"They started contacting us to see what we were doing and wanted to be part of it," the superintendent continued. "It's gone really quickly and well." ✚

GOLDEN WORLD TOURS/PILGRIMAGES-2019

-OBERAMMERGAU'S PASSION PLAY - (SEPT 2020)

Attend Passion Play performance - every 10 years. Includes: afternoon Rhine cruise, Heidelberg, Neuschwanstein Castle, Ettal Abbey, Munich, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Lucerne, Altotting Lake Maggiore, Italy - **Limited space- \$2,999. Call for details**

-SPRINGBREAK-MARCH 8-17-FRANCE CHATEAUX

Holland, Belgium, Normandy Beaches, Mt/St. Michel .. **\$2,299**
Loire Valley Chateaux+Paris. **End -2 nt Ext.Paris:add.\$299**

-HOLYLAND/JORDAN (PETRA)-OCT 7-18.....\$2,699

Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Cana, Nazareth, Galilee + Mt. Nebo..

-THAILAND - OCT 21-29 - Bangkok, River Kwai..\$2,399

Palaces, Changmai (Elephants). **Phuket Ext 3 nts fm. \$499**

AFFORDABLE ITALY- OCT 30 - NOV 7 - \$1,999

Milan, Padua, Venice, Florence, Assisi, Rome. **Add Pompeii, Naples, San Giovanni- St Pio to above, return Nov 9.. \$2,199**

2 night Rome Ext. - (Nov 7 & 8 - return Nov 9) **add \$299**

Prices per pax dbl. occ. incl. DFW air/taxes, 1st class hotels, breakfast/dinner, escorted. Terms, conditions/registration call **TEL: 972-934-9635 - Email: michael.menof@cnhintl.com**

CELEBRITY CRUISES - 2019

Affordable 5 star cruising - great prices, food - sailing on "CELEBRITY REFLECTION" - "SOLSTICE" - "EQUINOX"

-BALTIC CRUISE - includes pre & post exts. - June 23-July 10
12 day cruise +4 days land Germany, Holland, France - (17 nights)

St Petersburg, Russia, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Tallinn ... **fm \$3,799**

-ALASKA CRUISE - Aug 30 - Sept 6 - Inside Passage, Glaciers,

Tracy Arm Fjord, Juneau, Ketchikan & Skagway, etc . **from \$1,699**

-NEW YEAR CRUISE - Dec 28 -Jan 4 (2020) -West Caribbean,

Key West, Costa Maya, Cozumel, Grand Cayman **from \$1,799**

All prices per person dbl occ., cruise/taxes, air/taxes DFW, escorted.

Call for terms, conditions, registration, etc - subject to availability.

TEL: - 972-934-9635 Email michael.menof@cnhintl.com

Saint Francis Village

A Gated Community on the shores of Lake Benbrook

Come share our little bit of heaven

***A Strong Catholic Community With Independent Living**

*** Daily Mass**

***Activities, crafts and hobbies**

4070 St. Francis Village Rd.

Crowley, Tx 76036

Phone 817-292-5786

Visit our village or

visit our websites @



www.saintfrancisvillage.com

www.stfrancisvillagecatholicchapel.com

Ad Sponsored by
St. Francis Village Catholic Chapel Parish

Mercy UNCHAINED

“I was in prison and you visited me.”
- Matthew 25:36

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen



When Father Richard Collins walks into one of the county, state, or federal prisons served by the Diocese of Fort Worth, he doesn't worry about the welcome he'll receive. Walking down the cell-lined hallways dressed in his clerics, the priest hears inmates call out to him.

“They want to talk,” he said, describing the warm greeting his arrival generates. “They may not be Catholic, or even religious, but the men want an opportunity to talk.”

The chaplain senses an atmosphere of respect as he weaves his way through the prison population.

“Inmates realize we're volunteers, taking time out of our lives to help them,” Fr. Collins observed. “There's an understanding. I've never had a bad experience.”

Appointed by Bishop Michael Olson in December 2017, the former pastor is the first priest in the diocese assigned exclusively to prison ministry. The role of sacramental minister was developed in

response to a growing need for a more visible Catholic presence in the prison system.

“It's made a big difference for the inmates when it comes to the Holy Eucharist and confession,” said Deacon Jim Bindel, who assists Fr. Collins when he celebrates Mass at the James V. Allred State Prison in Iowa Park. “They didn't have much of an opportunity for Mass before.”

Father Khoi Tran, parochial administrator at St. Jude Thaddeus in Burkburnett, Christ the King in Iowa Park, and St. Paul in Electra, would visit the men at Allred occasionally.

“But he couldn't go out there as much as the two of them working together can,” the deacon pointed out.

Allred, the second largest maximum-security facility in the state, is home to 3,629 inmates. Their offenses range from capital murder to burglary and aggravated assault. Many sentences are lengthy.

Fr. Collins never asks an inmate about his crime or sentence. Some will spend the rest of their life behind bars. Others are in

the process of being paroled.

Whatever the situation, the priest helps the incarcerated experience God's love, mercy, and forgiveness.

According to a 2012 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, prison chaplains consider religious counseling, and other religion-based programming, an important aspect of rehabilitation.

“Conversion is the message of the Gospel,” the priest explained. “It's a ministry Christ taught when He said, ‘I was imprisoned and you visited me.’ So there's a need for this ministry and making the Mass and confession available is part of that.”

Approximately 60 to 100 men attend Mass at Allred on a regular basis. Participants are vetted by prison officials and identify as baptized Catholics.

“Religious church services are optional so the people who come want to be there,” Fr. Collins continued. “They're trying to have a closer experience of God in their life and want to change.”

Allred is one of five state and federal



Some of the clergy who regularly conduct prison ministry include, from left, Father Richard Collins, Deacon Don Warner, Deacon José Aragón, Deacon Terry Howard, Deacon Eldon Gray, and Deacon Myles Miller, Jr. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

facilities in the diocese where the chaplain celebrates Mass on a regular basis. He doesn't visit the Women's Federal Prison (another priest serves the unit) and he frequents the Tarrant County Jail to offer pastoral care but not Mass. That task belongs to local parish priests.

"It helps in the sense we all work together providing services to the incarcerated," said the prison chaplain, who interacts with more than 100 inmates a week. "Before I started this position, some units did not have a Catholic presence on a regular basis. Now the Church is more visible and present."

At the Denton County Jail, the chaplain arrives to see prisoners who request a priest. The meetings are held in a visitation room behind glass and come with restrictions.

Volunteers, including ministers, are not allowed to carry messages, contact the inmate's family, or make death notifications. That job belongs to the staff chaplain.

"I just pray with them, listen to them,

and offer pastoral care," said Fr. Collins, who completed four hours of state-mandated training that prepared him to deal with offenders, guards, and staff. "This is a challenging time of the year because they're not with their families. I try to be supportive."

The incarcerated look forward to visits from clergy and other volunteers, according to Deacon Bruce Corbett.

"They trust Fr. Collins," said the deacon, who sometimes assists the priest at John R. Lindsey State Jail in Jacksboro when he's not at St. Vincent de Paul Parish. "His presence makes a big difference. It gives them the opportunity for Reconciliation because they trust him. And they get Mass. For a long time, that wasn't happening."

Residents of the medium security prison participate in the Mass as lectors and offer prayer intentions. That would surprise some people who think of the incarcerated as thugs with hardened personalities.

"Oftentimes they think of them as

having one eye and a hunchback," the deacon explained, speaking rhetorically. "But they are respectful and Fr. Collins does a wonderful job."

Dcn. Bindel witnesses similar deference from the inmates. Relatively new to prison ministry, the deacon admits feeling intimidated when the prison doors locked behind him for the first time.

"Then you meet the gentlemen, talk to them, and realize they're wonderful guys," he recounted. "They appreciate us and the priests being there."

One of the men he's gotten to know is being paroled after serving a 20-year sentence. The inmate never missed a Catholic service when it was available.

"From what I noticed, he appreciated that God hasn't given up on him and neither have we," Dcn. Bindel added.

That's the type of story that energizes him.

"I'm probably the newest one out there but it's been a blessing to me. Anytime you minister to somebody, they are ministering to you so much more." ✚

GIFT OF SELF

The true meaning of stewardship and why it matters

People often think stewardship is a buzzword or fad. Or a shameless plug for money. Or a “program.” But it’s none of those — it’s a way of collaborating with God! Diana Liska, director of stewardship for the Diocese of Fort Worth, recently joined the *NTC* for a conversation on why stewardship is a key part of our Catholic faith and a way of life for us disciples.

What is stewardship as defined by our Church and our faith?

“Stewardship, in the easiest definition, is gift of self. It’s giving back to God what He gave us, which is everything.

“It’s a lifestyle based on gratitude for all that God has given us and then generously sharing those gifts with the understanding that we are stewards of these. We’re not meant to hoard them and keep them but to share them with others and be a conduit of God’s graces.

“So stewardship really at the heart is just a life of gratitude. Not taking anything for granted, not having this mentality of ‘poor me.’ But really understanding, ‘Why God, have You given me all of this? What can I do in little ways to repay you or to thank you for this?’ And so it’s a mind shift, which ultimately creates a culture shift in the parish when you view the world in a different way.”

How do you help foster stewardship in our diocese?

“I help parishes start stewardship

committees and help create a culture of stewardship as a way of life. The committee is a group that intentionally looks at the parish through the lens of stewardship and at ways we can better help parishioners live out their discipleship.”

Liska says there are currently 11 parishes with active stewardship committees with another on the way.

What does stewardship at the parish level look like?

Liska says it’s more than just doing a commitment card weekend or an annual ministry fair or starting a stewardship committee. “It’s more than that. It’s how are we welcoming someone from the second they walk in? What are we doing with new members? How are we reaching out to the poor? How are we inviting back those who have fallen away from the Church?”

“[Stewardship] is an ongoing journey. It’s an ongoing daily decision. Intentional focus at a parish has to happen. And so, sometimes we can easily get caught up on the criteria of stewardship. The, ‘Let’s do time, talent, treasure weekend. Now let’s do this ministry fair.’ But we have to ask: why are we doing it? I think we have to keep always going back to that ‘why’ in stewardship. Because there’s also a lot of people that serve in parishes, but why are they serving? It really comes down to are we using our gifts and are we serving others to glorify God?”

What are some of the things parishes with stewardship committees have been doing?

“Some of the biggest [contributions] are perpetual Adoration. What St. Peter the Apostle Parish and Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls have done came from stewardship.

“And stewardship, without it being rooted in your relationship with God, is just working and being busy to be busy. So having that prayer opportunity and having parishioners yearning for that says a lot about a community because they’re a prayerful community who have a relationship with God and they want Him.”

What is the difference between discipleship and stewardship?

“Stewardship is the way we live out our discipleship, it is how we collaborate with God. God has given each of us unique talents, experiences, and skills, and it is our duty to use them to build up the Kingdom of God here on earth.

“But I think sometimes we get confused when we hear evangelization, discipleship, stewardship, and how they work together.

“Discipleship is saying ‘yes’ to God. Like, ‘Okay God, I’m gonna follow You and Your commandments and do what You want me to do.’ Then He says, ‘Okay, great, awesome, now get to work.’ And that’s stewardship. That’s the time and the talent piece... we’re giving back, we’re

“Be aware of your gifts. Pray every morning, ‘God, You have put me here, You have given me specific gifts that only I have... help me use them today.’”

saying thanks, we’re trusting God that He’s gonna take care of us as disciples, and so therefore we’re able to be generous.

“Then because of our love for Him, we naturally evangelize. We naturally have joy, and teach others, and share our faith with others. So, evangelization really is a fruit of stewardship.”

What role does hospitality play in our faith life and in stewardship?

“So hospitality is the first pillar of stewardship. Those pillars progress from hospitality, prayer, formation, and service.

“But without hospitality, the other three are never going to come. Prayer is the most important, but if we’re not hospitable and welcoming people in, they’re never going to come back. We’re never going to be able to form them, and they’re probably not going to serve. So hospitality is such a good starting point because it makes people want to come back to learn more about Christ and build a relationship with Him through prayer.

“I joke around in my parishes that people always say, ‘Oh, we don’t have the budget for that.

Continued on Page 23

NTC/Juan Guajardo



— Diana Liska
Director of Stewardship

BE GRATEFUL ▶

Doing a “gratitude Rosary” can help us become better stewards, Liska says.

Learn more about stewardship at [Advancement Foundation.org/stewardship](http://AdvancementFoundation.org/stewardship)



GIVING BACK in 2019

Throughout the year the parishes in our diocese take up special collections to support the work of Christ locally, nationally, and abroad. Here's a look how you can help in 2019.

- National collection
- 100 percent of funds stay within diocese
- 50 percent of funds stay within diocese
- 25 percent of funds stay within diocese

In 2018, you donated **\$127,082** to this fund.

January
26-27



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS TUITION ASSISTANCE FUND

One hundred percent of the funds raised through this special collection are used for tuition assistance through the Bishop's Scholars Program and directly help all our diocesan Catholic schools.

February
2-3



CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA

Proceeds from this collection support pastoral projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. By contributing to this fund, we actively participate in the work of solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the hemisphere.

March
9-10



BLACK AND INDIAN MISSION

Starting in 1884, the national Black and Indian Mission collection provides grants to dioceses across the country to operate schools, parishes, and provide other missionary services in native American, Alaska Native, and Black Catholic communities.

March
30-31



CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

This collection helps CRS carry out their international relief and resettlement efforts for victims of persecution, war, and natural disasters, as well as development projects to improve living conditions for the poor; and much more.

NTC/Juan Guajardo



April
19



HOLY LAND (GOOD FRIDAY)

This pontifical collection supports the work of the Franciscans working in the Holy Land, helping them minister to Christians in a land filled with a majority Islamic and Jewish population.

April
27-28



CATHOLIC HOME MISSIONS APPEAL

This collection primarily supports home mission dioceses, that is, those 84 dioceses in the U.S. that are unable to offer their people the basic pastoral ministries of word, worship, and service without outside help.

May
11-12



GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

The expense for seminarian formation is formidable and continues to rise, as does our need for priests skilled in many areas; 100 percent of funds raised on Good Shepherd Sunday remain in our diocese to help fund seminarian education.

◀ In 2018, you donated **\$361,861** to this fund.

June
1-2



CATHOLIC COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

The Catholic Communication Campaign helps spread the Gospel locally and nationally. Half of all donations collected in our diocese stay here to support local communications and the *North Texas Catholic*.

June
29-30



PETER'S PENCE COLLECTION

The collection provides the Holy Father with the financial means to respond to those who are suffering as a result of war, oppression, natural disaster, and disease.

July
13-14



SOLIDARITY FUND FOR THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

Despite the hurdles of severe poverty and social unrest, the Church in Africa has tripled in size in the last 30 years. This collection funds pastoral, evangelization, and outreach projects on the continent.

“Our faith teaches us to be generous. God is so good to us. There are so many different miracles we’ve experienced throughout our lives, many different blessings. The least we can do is give back monetarily to the Church.”

— **Maria Soto**
Business Manager
St. Matthew Parish in Arlington

August
3-4



PRIEST CARE FUND

Your generous gifts help pay for medical and long-term care over and above what is covered by our priests’ insurance and resources. Every dollar raised for this fund is retained and utilized by the diocese to care for our retired and infirm priests.

◀ In 2018, you donated **\$198,021** to this fund.

Continued on Page 22

A WORD ON COLLECTIONS

The parish pays for its needs, the needs of the poor in the community, and the needs of the community of believers through the monetary offerings of its parishioners during the collection. Yes, you read that right — even *our* needs are met through the generosity of our fellow parishioners.

As Soto explained: “We benefit from donating because we are among those taking advantage of the resources the parishes provide.”

And she should know. Last fiscal year, St. Matthew Parish had emergency repairs totaling \$70,000 and was

only able to afford them thanks to the generosity of its parishioners.

But why is something as earthly as money taken up during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? Because the donation of money is also a sacrifice! It's our gift to God and to our community! Because of this intent, the offering becomes sacred rather than mundane. At the time of the preparation of the gifts, the offering is presented as one of the gifts to be taken to the altar, where it is typically placed in front.

Secondary collections, which are usually for specific causes (like the ones shown here), are taken up later in the Mass. ✚



Aug. 31-
Sept. 1



CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

This collection funds tuition assistance for CUA, which educates hundreds of priests and religious each year and proudly calls more than 12,000 of them alumni.

October
19-20



WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

World Mission Sunday brings all Catholics of the world into one community of faith. This collection helps support the life-giving presence of the Church among the poor and marginalized in more than 1,111 mission dioceses.

November
9-10



ARCHDIOCESE FOR MILITARY SERVICES

The AMS provides the same pastoral care and services as any other Catholic diocese to faithful serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, enrolled in U.S. military academies, undergoing treatment at any Veterans Affairs Medical Centers, and working in civilian jobs.

November
23-24



CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The CCHD is the national anti-poverty program of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, working to break the cycle of poverty by providing a hand up, not a hand out.

December
14-15



NATIONAL COLLECTION FOR RETIRED RELIGIOUS

This supports hundreds of religious communities in the U.S. needing help to meet retirement and healthcare needs. Locally, this collection benefits the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur.

▲ In 2018, you supported three local ministries through this collection: **\$100,000** went to Catholic Charities Fort Worth; **\$5,000** went to the St. Vincent de Paul Society; and **\$5,500** went to Seymour Ministerial Alliance, a collaboration of various faith congregations.

◀ In 2017, you donated **\$160,683** to this collection. Nationwide, the collection raised just over \$28 million. Of that, \$25 million was disbursed to 360 religious communities.

From Page 19

We can't do this. We can't do that.' But a smile is free.

"Hospitality is definitely the most inexpensive yet effective means of evangelization, of building community, engagement, and bringing people back to a parish."

How can we start living stewardship in our day-to-day?

"I say start with 10 minutes of daily prayer. Just start. Make a commitment to start your day by thanking God if you're not already doing that.

"Another is to start a gratitude Rosary. Nowadays, I think it's so easy — especially on social media — to see what everyone else has. And so it can be difficult to really live that life of gratitude, when you're thinking, 'That person has a new car.'

"So the gratitude Rosary is taking a rosary and on every single bead just saying one thing you're thankful to God for. So first starting with the people in your lives, then moving onto things, experiences, or whatever. But you start realizing how blessed you really are. You

get through a Rosary and it's like, 'Okay, what am I complaining about?'

"It's a good way to get out of yourself and to think about what your true gifts are — especially for someone who struggles with gratitude or jealousy.

"And then just intentionally being aware of what's going on around you. God lives in the present moment, right now. So really making an intentional effort to be present in the moments of your life. To see your kids laughing and playing with them. Because that's how we start really seeing how God works in our lives. So it's a great starting point when it comes to stewardship."

How else can we show gratitude toward God in our lives?

"Be aware of your gifts. Pray every morning, 'God, You have put me here, You have given me specific gifts that only I have... help me use them today, provide opportunities, provide ways and means..."

"Just remember to include God. Talk to God the minute you wake up, and ask Him to be your leader for the day, your guide." ✚



TOP NOTCH STEWARDS

The Diocese of Fort Worth and St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington were recently recognized for their outstanding stewardship and philanthropy efforts.

At its annual conference in Nashville Oct. 30, the International Catholic Stewardship Council presented the diocese with the Awards for Excellence for Total Diocesan Stewardship Effort and Total Planned Giving.

St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington was one of only six parishes that won an award, earning an honorable mention for Parish Annual Stewardship/Renewal Commitment Materials.

Save on Medicare Supplement Insurance **BUY DIRECT/NO AGENT**



How Much
Will You Save

ctms

CatholicMedicareSupp.com
1-844-633-6565

Sponsored by
CATHOLIC LIFE INSURANCE

Now you can apply for Medicare Supplement Insurance online at any time - NO WAITING.

Compare rates instantly online **NOW** at catholicmedicare supp.com or call 1-844-633-6565.

This product is available online or by telephone only!

- Shop & apply online
- Multiple plans to meet your budget
- Use your same doctors*
- You could have coverage in minutes
- All plans GUARANTEED RENEWABLE**

If you think you are paying too much for your Medicare Supplement Insurance, we dare you to compare.

Go to catholicmedicare supp.com or call 1-844-633-6565.

Catholic Life Insurance is neither connected with or endorsed by the US government or the federal Medicare program.

This is a solicitation for insurance and you may be contacted by the company. Products, rates, and services may not be available in all states.

*You may use your same doctors as long as they accept Medicare. **Your certificate cannot be canceled. It will be renewed as long as the premiums are paid on time and the information on your application does not contain a material misrepresentation.

MSAD 05/18 TX

This advertisement applies to form series MSDTC 4-18 (or state-specific variation thereof).



Carl and Heather Storrie at home with their children Elizabeth (standing), Charlie, and Amelia. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

“Nothing Left but Prayer”

How God worked through a community of prayer to heal a girl’s health emergency and her grandfather’s faith impasse

By Mary Lou Seewoester

Carl and Heather Storrie, members of Holy Redeemer Parish in Aledo, believe in the power of prayer. They also believe in miracles — the miracles of physical healing, of unsurpassed community support, and of conversion.

Last June, their five-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, was in intensive care at Cook Children’s Medical Center in Fort Worth. She was in severe pain and could not turn her head or move her right

arm. They waited for her symptoms to worsen. That’s expected when Acute Flaccid Myelitis (AFM), a rare polio-like childhood disease, attacks the spinal cord. Elizabeth’s illness started with what looked like a cold, but within a few weeks, her symptoms suddenly and drastically worsened.

Based on the extent of inflammation in her spinal cord, doctors prepared the Storries for a likely outcome of permanent paralysis and needing a ventilator to breathe.

“You get the virus. It attacks your spinal cord. Then you wait for it to plateau ... to see where it levels out with side effects,”

Heather Storrie explained. “There is no cure or treatment for AFM.”

But Elizabeth never developed the expected side effects. She was in ICU for just three days before moving to Cook Children’s Rehabilitation Clinic for a month of physical therapy. Today, Elizabeth can run and play and lift her right arm up to her shoulder. The Storries attribute Elizabeth’s healing to the power of prayer.

Dr. Diane Arnaout, Elizabeth’s pediatrician, said “the inflammation was all the way from the bottom of her brain to the bottom of her spinal cord ... I was waiting for the rest of her body to respond to the inflammation that we saw on the MRI.”

While a team of seven doctors watched, waited, and offered supportive care such as IV fluids and oxygen, the Storries and their faith community prayed.

Carl and Heather prayed daily with Elizabeth. She received the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. The Holy Redeemer Moms Group prayed with Heather in the hospital chapel and the following day, men from Teams of Our Lady, a marriage ministry, prayed with Carl.

The request for prayer came via email chains, Facebook posts, and during Mass. People from other parishes and in other countries prayed for Elizabeth.

By her second day in the ICU, Elizabeth’s neurologist was “shocked” that she didn’t need a ventilator, Heather said.

“She probably has 5,000 people praying for her,” Heather told the doctor. “I believe in the power of prayer.”

Heather added, “We stunned a ton of doctors and I was OK with that.”

“I don’t typically use the word miracle because that’s not something that’s of my world as a doctor and as a scientist,” Dr. Arnaout said. “But I think her recovery has been miraculous.”

Along with prayer, the Storrie’s family and faith community served their day-to-day needs. Heather’s friend and Holy Redeemer Parishioner Angela Wynn said “a huge web of people came forward to pray and to serve.”

Volunteers brought meals for the Storrie’s two younger children, Charlie and Amelia, who were being cared for at home by

Carl’s mother. They also brought meals to Carl and Heather at the hospital, and again later when Elizabeth returned home. There was help with childcare, offers to do laundry and mow the lawn, a birthday party for Charlie, and a party for Elizabeth who turned five while in the hospital.

Heather said the outpouring of help “wasn’t just about Elizabeth and our family. This was about a community coming together... there were other families at the hospital who didn’t have that support and to me that spoke to the strength of God

bringing the community together.”

The Storries shared not only the food they received but also their faith and compassion with other families at the hospital.

“Because [the community] served us, we were able to serve other families in the hospital,” Heather said.

Elizabeth’s healing impacted many who prayed or served the Storries. Many said it was a blessing to help and to pray.

Others said they’ve never prayed as hard as they did for Elizabeth. Dr. Arnaout said she was personally

inspired by the love and faith that “lifted Elizabeth spiritually and emotionally.”

But the impact of Elizabeth’s healing on Marty Larkin, Heather’s father, was a miracle of conversion. When he heard Elizabeth’s prognosis, he “broke down and cried.”

Then he did something he never thought he would do. Larkin, who had been an atheist most of his adult life, walked into the hospital chapel and prayed.

“I offered up any pain or infirmity on myself to make her well,” he said. “There was nothing the doctors could do. There was nothing left but prayer.”

“I walked in the door of that hospital an atheist,” he said. “And I walked out a believer ... I believe God is with me and I made Him a promise: I’ll never deny you again.”

As Elizabeth continues to recover at home, the Storries hope to give back to their community and to families at Cook Children’s.

“I always felt that God has another plan through this,” Heather said. “We want to take fruits that we’ve gained from this experience and give them to others.” 🍌



Elizabeth holds a gift from one of the thousands of people praying for her. Her family credits prayer and the Anointing of the Sick for her recovery. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

LIFE ON THE margins

In giving shelter and services to the homeless,
parishioners may receive even more

By Susan Moses

St. Andrew was a realist. Tasked with feeding a crowd of thousands, the apostle said to Jesus, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?” (*John 6:9*)

Fast forward 2,000 years to a different problem that seems equally insurmountable. About 3,000 individuals experience homelessness on an average night in the Diocese of Fort Worth. But hundreds of Catholic “lads” are stepping forward to offer what they have: homemade brisket. Sewing skills. A listening ear.

By sharing their blessings, these parishioners ease the difficulties of life for those without permanent shelter. But in God’s economy, those who give often receive much more.

CHRIST BEFORE US

It’s 4:30 p.m. on a Monday afternoon, and more than 40 people have lined up outside the annex of St. Patrick Cathedral for Christ Before Us, the homeless outreach service that the parish initiated almost three years ago. Before the doors open at 5, the line doubles in size as individuals

and small groups amble to the downtown building. Some push strollers or carts, others carry a backpack or have a dog in tow.

Inside, volunteers are bustling — preparing snacks, assembling hygiene kits, and organizing donations of clothing and blankets. For two hours, their guests will receive shelter, supplies, and solace.

Mark Smith, a U.S. Army veteran, was a guest at the annex in its early days. Now, he’s a volunteer, riding his bicycle from Arlington to greet guests at the front door. The lanky Desert Storm soldier has converted to Catholicism and joined the parish and the Knights of Columbus.

In the corner of the main room, volunteer Delia Yzaguirre, sitting in a chair, would be easy to overlook if it weren’t for her large fluorescent yellow sign saying, “Can I mend something 4U?”

After Yzaguirre’s first volunteer session doing general service at Christ Before Us, the wheels started spinning in her mind. The 20-year St. Patrick parishioner asked herself, “Can I do more? What talent can I give?” Her ability to mend backpacks, jackets, pants, and shirts is in high demand during her twice-monthly visits.

She finds her service rewarding, explaining, “This population doesn’t have much. What they do carry with them may

be all that they have in the world. It may have sentimental meaning for them. If I can mend it, it will last a lot longer.”

In addition to mending, Christ Before Us offers haircuts and health screenings on certain Mondays. The homeless outreach goes beyond physical needs, too. Guests may check out books from a small library. Coloring sheets provide a means for creative expression. A few join a volunteer in a small room to pray the Rosary.

But the biggest human need is often human interaction. Aaron Aguilar, the volunteer coordinator of Christ Before Us, encourages the roughly 60 volunteers to “come sit down, engage, respond, and listen” to the guests, some of whom visit regularly, for three months or longer.

Aguilar said, “How many times during the day are [homeless individuals] never looked in the eye. They’re avoided, no contact, forgotten in different ways. Let’s not forget about that. So if you feel comfortable, please, sit and listen. They appreciate so much being asked, ‘How was your day? How are things going?’”

“We’re not just a food line, a soup kitchen. There’s some true caring in the interaction,” he explained.

Three years ago, the church bulletin

Continued on Page 28



**Cathedral
Annex**
249 W. 13th Street

Guests wait for the doors to open at the Christ Before Us street outreach ministry at St. Patrick Cathedral Annex on Nov. 26. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

From Page 26

notified parishioner Karen Simpson about the initial Christ Before Us planning meeting. She attended with some trepidation. Interacting with homeless individuals was “way out of my comfort zone, but now I look forward to it,” she admitted, as she gave guests the bags to hold hygiene items they selected.

As she has come to know those on the fringes of society, Simpson has realized that “we are all God’s children, regardless of the circumstances.”

Aguilar said St. Patrick Cathedral generously supports Christ Before Us with parishioners’ time and with donations of snacks, hygiene items, and other material goods.

One parishioner, whose schedule wouldn’t allow her to attend on Monday nights, has made about 70 quilts from old blue jeans backed with a fleece throw blanket. “Her mother taught her to sew, and this honors the skill she learned from her mother and enables her to give,” explained Aguilar, who said he has seen homeless men sleeping under those quilts in recessed doorways on the streets of downtown.

Christ Before Us is a collaboration between St. Patrick Cathedral and Catholic Charities Fort Worth Street Outreach Services (SOS). An important purpose of the open annex each Monday is to provide a reliable downtown location for individuals living on the street to meet with a member of the SOS team, who has expertise in case management, advocacy, and community resources.

IN THEIR WORLD

The SOS team bridges the chasm between the sheltered and unsheltered worlds. Their normal day in the office is anything but, as they enter into the homes of their clients: under highways, in remote campsites, and other locations frequented by the homeless.

Ebony Tatum, one of the five-member SOS team, explained her business plan. “I meet the person where they are at, follow where they are going, and stay with them where they are at.”

When she has successfully placed a client in housing, she continues to help them adapt to the routines of apartment living, like paying bills and cleaning.

The first step towards permanent shelter often involves tracking down documents so the homeless can obtain a valid identification card — a must for acquiring housing or a job.

“Without an ID, without a cell phone, you are nothing,” summarized Davin, a guest at Christ Before Us. Everything, including his glasses, was stolen from him as he slept under a tree in a Wal-Mart parking lot.

On a cool morning in November, Tatum and her colleague Nathan Crites-Herren check on Nandora under an overpass in Kennedale. She is almost giddy with excitement. First, a Boy Scout troop recently provided a new tent for her and her husband. Then, Ebony confirmed that they are near the top of the list for available apartments because Nandora served in the Air Force.

Like many of the homeless, Nandora has established a community. Her role? The mother hen. She urged a newbie to talk with Crites-Herren and reminded Tatum to check on some neighboring campers a hundred yards north.

In the woods off Mansfield Highway,

Continued on Page 30



Outreach worker Ebony Tatum talks with Todd at his camp in southeast Fort Worth as she and workers from Catholic Charities’ Street Outreach Services help homeless people in the North Texas area Nov. 7. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



Delia Yzaguirre makes sewing repairs on garments and backpacks at the Christ Before Us street outreach ministry Nov. 26. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



The Beginnings of Room in the Inn

On a cold night in 1985, several homeless people were spending the night in the parking lot of Holy Name Catholic Church in Nashville, Tenn., after authorities had dismantled their camp on the banks of a nearby river. Father Charles Strobel opened the doors of the cafeteria, invited them in, and promised them breakfast the

next morning.

After a month of providing shelter, Fr. Strobel realized more help was needed. He enlisted four more Nashville churches to provide shelter during the five coldest months of the year, and now almost 200 Nashville congregations have followed his lead.

About 35 cities across the nation have adopted a program based on Room in the Inn for churches to partner with local social service

agencies to provide shelter, an evening meal, and fellowship.

Broadway Baptist Church collaborated with St. Stephen Presbyterian Church to bring the ministry to Fort Worth in December 2007. They modified the program to provide shelter during the two hottest and three coldest months of the year. Currently about 20 churches in Fort Worth open their doors and make Room in the Inn.

From Page 28

another community is more permanent. Tatum and Crites-Herren approached the shelters made from scrap wood, tarps, and storage containers, asking permission to draw near. A fire of trash burns to repel mosquitos and provide a bit of heat.

Why don't these people seek refuge at a homeless shelter? The reasons are varied. Cramped conditions; concerns about contagious illnesses; fear their possessions will be stolen; aversion to standing in line hours before the doors open; separation from their partner or dog. Two men mentioned they earn a little cash by cleaning up parking lots after the restaurants close, which the shelter's restrictive hours wouldn't accommodate.

OUT OF THE COLD IN DENTON

Before a church provides shelter for homeless individuals the first time, coordinators often spend months considering the logistics of transporting, feeding, and housing. At Immaculate Conception Parish it took one day.

On a cold December night in Denton, Immaculate Conception parishioners Betty Kay and Sara Carey asked Monsignor Charles King if he would open the church for the homeless on a night when snow and ice was forecast.

"He said it was the right thing to do," Kay recalled. "We opened the next night and we've been opened ever since in various locations."

Since that 2009 night, their ministry has grown into the Monsignor King Outreach Center, a freestanding center that can accommodate 91 men, women, and children. Operated collaboratively by several churches, organizations, and businesses, they provide dinner, breakfast, and a bed on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays when temperatures dip below freezing or above 100 degrees.

ROOM IN THE INN

Ten fortunate men won't sleep in a shelter, makeshift camp, or on the streets during Friday nights this winter. They will find Room in the Inn at four Catholic parishes

Ben and volunteer Sylvia Mendez share a laugh after dinner during Room in the Inn at St. Peter the Apostle Parish Dec. 7. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



in Tarrant County. About 20 congregations in Fort Worth participate in the national program.

On those evenings, churches open their doors to volunteers and homeless guests. Together they sit down to a home-cooked meal, served on a real plate with silverware and table linens. Some guests may linger at the table to continue the conversation, while others may watch a movie or play a game with their hosts.

After a quiet night of slumber, the guests eat breakfast and are driven to DRC, a day shelter and homeless resource facility that selects and screens the homeless men who participate.

St. John the Apostle Parish began hosting Room in the Inn by accident. About nine years ago, a Methodist church next door asked them to cover a night when a last-minute conflict prevented them from hosting, explained Colleen Cargile,

Three insights into individuals experiencing homelessness

Before writing this article, my conversations with individuals experiencing homelessness were limited to a few words through a car window or a “hello” in passing.

In researching life on the margins and those who help them, I had conversations with many people and gained several insights, which are a surface-level understanding for those who spend time with homeless individuals, but nonetheless impactful for me, who has always experienced life with a roof over my head. Here are the top three:

1. Each individual has a unique story under the blanket label of homeless. I met a man who “screwed up” when he was young and can’t find a steady job after serving 30 years in prison. “I don’t want disability, I don’t want charity. I just want to work. I want to be a man,” he told me tearfully.

I spoke with Brigitte, a 21-year-old who lost her mother when she was seven and grew up with 15 foster families. A man who moved to Fort Worth with the promise of a job, which fell through. A woman who lost her job within days of fleeing domestic abuse. A veteran with PTSD who is having difficulty adapting to civilian life. Individuals suffering from mental illness or

director of social ministries at the North Richland Hills parish.

“The teachers [at St. John the Apostle Catholic School] stepped up to host and they loved it,” she said. Enthusiastic about the program, the parish overcame the logistical hurdles and became a host church six years ago.

With their experience, they have coached other parishes interested in Room in the Inn. St. Peter the Apostle and Holy Family

addiction. A man who went bankrupt paying his fiancée’s medical bills before she died of cancer. A low-wage earner working full time. Each person has his own particular story.

2. Physical possessions may be limited to what’s on their back, but many carried remarkable stores of hope and faith. Nandora, whose Bible was close at hand, views her second bout of homelessness as an opportunity to minister to the homeless. Davin, who became homeless in July, is overwhelmed by the generosity of those who bring him a meal. They

Parishes, with extra help from St. Andrew Parish, began welcoming guests last summer.

At 2:00 p.m. on Dec. 7, a “whole army” of volunteers descended on St. Peter the Apostle School to transform classrooms into bedrooms and cook for the guests at the west Fort Worth parish, described Elvia Acevedo, one of three parish coordinators for Room in the Inn.

The men who attended appreciated slow-cooked brisket and beans; a safe, clean, and spacious place to sleep; and interaction with people who are welcoming and interested in their lives.

Bruce Frankel, the executive director of DRC, said the sincere fellowship between the men and the hosts can motivate the guests to redouble their efforts to obtain permanent housing.

For the volunteers, the benefits may be even greater.

Through one-on-one encounters with the homeless, Frankel explained, “congregants realize that the homeless are just like me, just like my neighbors, just like my family. It’s just by the grace of God that they haven’t experienced [homelessness].”

Conversation breaks down the stigma of homelessness and the

don’t possess much, but many expressed a profound appreciation to God and the community for what blessings they have.

3. They often share what little they own. At Christ Before Us, I witnessed Shay, who is expecting a baby in May, give her second sleeping bag to someone without one. Kirk, who has been homeless since 2012, split the \$10 that someone gave him earlier with another person. And Todd, who lives with his wife in a makeshift shelter fashioned from pallets and tarps, gave his new sleeping bag to someone camping deeper in the woods.

barriers between the two disparate worlds. When faith-based individuals understand homelessness, they become advocates and help address the problems, according to Frankel.

Room in the Inn is changing parishioners at Holy Family. Deacon Mike Mocek observed, “In a small way it’s transformational. Maybe more than a small way.”

The deacon of 15 years clarified, “We’ve deacon to realize that through hosting 10 men, five or six times a year, we’re not solving the homeless problem. It gives a little dignity and respect and comfort for those 10 who are here, but even more important than that — it’s helping us as members of this parish become more aware and more sensitive and more tuned in to the plight of people who are in homeless situations.”

After six years of facilitating Room in the Inn at St. John the Apostle, Cargile said that “Friday afternoon, it’s work. Saturday morning, it’s worth it. I love the program. It’s a privileged opportunity to connect with someone living on the margins.”

Those connections have changed the way Cargile sees the homeless. “Everyone is somebody’s someone. Now they are someone to me.” 🇺🇸



IMAGE AND LIKENESS

Once a one-cell embryo smaller than the point of a needle, this eight month-old-baby girl has become a bundle of energy. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

The CASE for LIFE



PART I

My journey to uncover the inherent value of unborn human life

By Juan Guajardo

There's a scene in the recent *Gosnell* movie that sticks out.

The movie centers on the 2013 trial of abortionist Kermit Gosnell, who was ultimately convicted of three counts of murdering babies alive and the involuntary manslaughter of a patient who died of a drug overdose during the 2009 abortion of her 19-week-old baby. As a result, much of the film takes place in the courtroom.

In the scene, aggressive defense attorney Mike Cohan, played by the film's director Nick Searcy, cross-examines abortionist Dr. North (Janine Turner), brought in by the prosecution to show how far Gosnell has transgressed accepted medical norms — even in an industry dedicated to death.

Dr. North, pretty, sophisticated, and well-spoken, is pushed to share increasingly uncomfortable details about her work. She describes how potassium chloride is delivered into the hearts of fetuses to ensure demise, before using forceps to dismember and extract them from the womb — in contrast to Gosnell's abortion method of delivering viable babies alive then snipping their spinal cords with scissors. The stark

reality of late-term dilation and evacuation abortions is brought to life for the viewer, without showing it on screen. The movie's directors call it “theater of the mind.”

Pressed by Cohan about what she would do if she ever botched an abortion and delivered a live baby, Dr. North pauses before replying, “administer comfort care” until the infant eventually dies. (The age of the babies in the film was around 24-25 weeks — able to survive outside the womb given the appropriate medical care.)

Through the series of questions, Cohan seemingly attempts to soften the jury to believe that there's not much difference between aborting in or out of the womb — that it's arbitrary, really. The implication being that Gosnell really didn't do something *that* bad and as such didn't deserve to be found guilty of murder.

It's a significant moment — not because of the grisliness of abortion, which is largely out of the mind's eye up until then — but because it makes the viewer ask, “Are abortion and feticide inherently the same? Or are they morally different despite a legal designation (in some cases) based upon a matter of inches (*in utero* or *ex utero*)?”

The natural follow up, then, is “Does the fetus hold the same moral worth as the newborn? Why or why not?”

It's a huge question, for if the answer reveals that the unborn baby is equivalent to the infant, then abortion is morally equivalent to infanticide (murder) and our nation is guilty of a leviathan-sized sin. The sin extends beyond abortion to destructive embryonic research and the frozen preservation of countless embryos at in-vitro fertilization clinics. It extends to fetal rights, too.

However, if the fetus holds a lesser moral worth than the newborn, then the pro-life side is guilty of injustice on a massive scale by preventing women from seeking their rightful abortions.

Either way, the repercussions are tremendous. It's a moral question that society must genuinely analyze, as more than 59 million babies have been aborted in the U.S. since its legalization in 1973. It's fair to want a concrete answer to the question, free of rationalization, politicizing, and extremist arguments.

Many of us have an opinion on the subject, with observations and facts to

Continued on Page 34

From Page 33

back it up. Many of us have an opinion formed through hearsay and the chatter of social media. Many of us stand with the Church's teaching condemning abortion in all instances. But many (51 percent of Catholics, if Pew Research Center is to be believed¹) think the Church wrong on the matter and say abortion should be legal in all instances. In that light, it's almost no surprise that 24 percent of abortion patients in 2014 were Catholic.²

Whatever the case, truth stands on shaky ground without its fullness, which is ministered by knowledge and reason — objective and irrefutable. It does us well to test our opinion with the weight of facts.

That's what this series is about. In a similar vein to what atheist-turned-Christian Lee Strobel did in his search to find the truth about Christ's resurrection, I take you on my journey to the heart of the matter. This journey began more than 10 years ago as a former pro-choicer. We'll explore some of the evidence — documentary, historical, scientific, psychological, and circumstantial — that figured into my verdict.

This is the Case for Life. Review it with an open mind, a prayerful heart, and come to your own conclusion

THE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

My search for the truth started in a college classroom. I still remember my biology professor changing gears to the topic of contraception during a lecture on early human development.

"I don't know about you," he said, taking a few steps toward his audience. "But I would want my daughter to be able to resort to the morning-after pill and not have her life derailed by a pregnancy."

The comment startled me. While, I was pro-choice at the time, it stirred something within me. Perhaps, it was a pang of conscience as I still held onto some vestiges of the Catholic faith I would later return to.

Plan B (still fairly novel at the time), was touted by my professor as an "emergency contraceptive." Also known as the morning-after pill, it acts via two pathways — one of which prevents fertilization, but the other of which stops the

embryo from implanting in the woman's uterine wall, essentially leaving it to die. That second method caught my attention. Based upon what we had learned minutes before, that action seemed to belie Plan B's label as an "emergency contraceptive." Even to me, a student in Biology 101, it didn't make sense — it seemed this drug was leaning into abortifacient territory. If it was abortifacient, suddenly a young woman's decision is much weightier.

As a curious journalism student with a heart for science, I was compelled to find the truth. The answer, I knew, would be predicated on whether the embryo is human or not.

With thousands of scientific and medical journals, textbooks, and studies at my disposal, I needed to narrow down where to start.

So as any good journalist would do when unpacking a complicated story, I went back to the beginning: the basic building block of life, the cell.

Knowledge of the cell — and hence of the beginning of life — eluded us for millennia. Even brilliant Aristotle got it wrong, claiming living organisms spontaneously generated.

It escaped us down the centuries, too. Dr. William Harvey, who made pivotal contributions to science in the 17th century, got closer with his theory of *omne vivum ex ovo* (all life originates from an egg), but still missed.

It wasn't until Matthias Schleiden and Theodor Schwann developed cell theory in 1839 that we started getting somewhere.

The discovery that all living organisms are composed of one or more cells set the stage for scientists to understand that human life operates on a *continuum* — changing forms during its development, but never its nature.

Building upon that, biologists found that the single-celled zygote or embryo (the cell resulting from fertilization of an ovum by a sperm cell) was more than just a growing cell. It's a living and independent being. It's the first cell of a new individual.³

The embryo, biologists determined, met all the qualifications

of life established by centuries of scientific research. As a result, medical associations, journals, and professionals set the moment of conception as the point that human life begins. By 1859, this broadly-accepted knowledge led the American Medical Association to strongly oppose abortion, stating that human life is begun at conception. Ditto for the American College of Pediatrics, which still holds that position.

In the journal *ABAC Quarterly*, Professor Emeritus of Human Embryology Dr. C. Ward Kischer for the University of Arizona College of Medicine, put it thus: "Every human embryologist, worldwide, states that

the life of the new individual human being begins at fertilization (conception)... As far as human 'life' *per se*, it is, for the most part, uncontroversial among the scientific and philosophical community that life begins at the moment when the genetic information contained in the sperm and ovum combine to form a genetically unique cell."⁴

In other words, even though the embryo's humble appearance disguises the complexity of the processes underneath, it's an objective reality that from the moment of conception, life is in motion. The tiny zygote — smaller than the head of a needle and wholly unfamiliar to us — is already genetically distinct from her father and mother, possessing its

TERMINOLOGY

CONCEPTION — the moment of fertilization of an ovum by a sperm cell. Synonymous with fertilization.

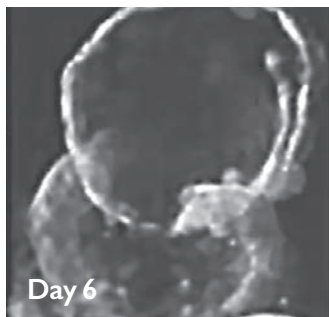
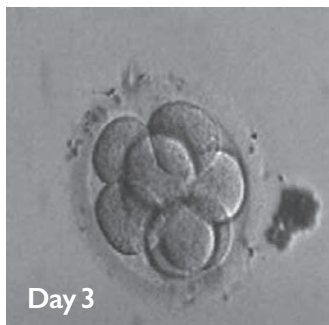
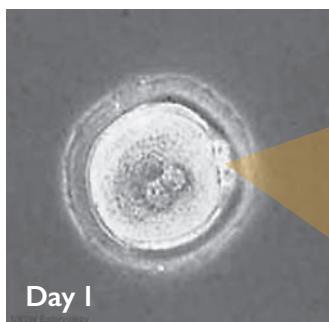
ZYGOTE — the fertilized egg. Synonymous with one-cell embryo.

EMBRYO — the developmental stage from conception to the end of the eighth week of pregnancy.

FETUS — the developing human from the ninth week of gestation to birth.

ORGANISM — the living being (animal or plant) that represents the sum total of all its organ systems working together to sustain life.

LOOKING CLOSER



EARLY START

Though diminutive, life is moving quickly at this early stage. The one-cell embryo (top left) has rapidly divided into many cells by **DAY 3**.

By **DAY 6**, it becomes a blastocyst, a spherical and hollow structure one-cell thick ready to implant in the uterus. Give it a little time and it will develop layers that set the stage for organ development.

Fast-forward to **DAY 21** and the embryo's little heart has started to beat.

WHO WE ONCE WERE

Father Tad Pacholczyk, of the National Catholic Bioethics Council, says whenever we look at a micrograph of an embryo, we do well to ponder: "Isn't that exactly what a young human is supposed to look like?... We have to make an explicit mental effort to avoid the critical mistake of disconnecting from who we once were ourselves as embryos."

own DNA, the golden record, if you will, that dictates and coordinates all our life processes.

In fact, the one-cell embryo already contains the genes that will determine the individual's growth and appearance, including traits such as hair color, eye and skin color, height, and whether she will get her father's nose.

HUMAN CELL(S) OR HUMAN BEING?

Even so, I found that a cursory glance on forums across the internet revealed our first rebuttal: People insisting the growing embryo is "just a mass of tissue" or a "pile of cells." Many of my classmates held the same opinion. Whenever disagreement arose, they blamed differences in ideological or religious beliefs. It seemed as if the claim to humanity was almost a subjective determination.

To be fair, I could relate. After all, it takes some immense mental calisthenics to imagine a tiny zygote becoming the recognizable fetus we see in ultrasounds around the 20th week of gestation. For the first couple of weeks, the embryo lacks the recognizable features many of us attribute to human life: hands, feet, a beating heart, etc. It's tempting to think the embryo only becomes human after a certain point — it's just so different.

So despite the research pointing to conception as the starting point of human life, I still had my doubts. I wanted

something airtight. Would science provide that?

Once again, I found that science answers *unequivocally*: The embryo *is* and *has* been a human life since conception.

Why? First, we must define what a living thing is and then determine if our one-celled embryo meets that definition.

At its most basic, a living being is an *organism*. Medical and scientific texts define an organism as a living thing displaying all the characteristics of life (nutrition, respiration, movement, growth, homeostasis, and more) and carrying those out through means of interdependent parts or organs. For example, plants, animals, and even fungi are organisms.

Embryology shows us that from conception onward the embryo already meets both parts of that definition.

Though tiny, the one-cell embryo possesses interdependent parts. Within the first 24 hours of its existence, it "consists of elements (from both maternal and paternal origin) which function independently in a coordinated manner..." the American College of Pediatrics states. It has multiple cellular "organs" working in unison.

It also acts uniquely — in the manner of an organism to be precise, carrying out the activities of life in a way no other human cell (or group of human cells) could ever dare to match.⁵ In fact, within minutes of fertilization, the one-celled embryo has begun the delicate work of replicating its DNA in preparation for cell division — cell division that will lead to new organs, blood vessels, limbs, a brain, etc. Simultaneously, the embryo is also protecting itself from polyspermy (fertilization by more than one sperm cell), a recipe for embryonic death.

"From this definition, the single-celled embryo is not just a cell, but an organism, a living being, a human being," the American College of Pediatrics sums up.

Continued on Page 36

From Page 35

It started becoming clear to me, then, that we're not just talking about a random mass of cells. The embryo, even this early in development, is at the organismal level — the *human organismal level*. To be certain, this is a growing human child, not just a “pile of cells” in the woman's uterus.

I had been duped by my forgetfulness of the fact that human life operates on a continuum, *merely changing form but never its nature*. And this irrevocable, objective evidence had reminded me.

Want more evidence of the young embryo's humanity? Give it time. Within 36 hours after conception, the embryo has multiplied rapidly, consisting of more than 100 cells.⁶

By about Day 6 or 7, it is settling into the safety of the uterine lining — the first contact between mother and child.⁷ By Day 10, the tiny being has triggered a cascade of physiological reactions that let her mother know something is *different*. “I'm here,” it seems to tell her.

Give her eight more days and her tiny heart will be pumping blood. After six weeks, the embryo looks a lot more like us and can technically be called a fetus. By day 56, all her organs are present and she can even feel pain.⁸ At nine weeks, the baby has mastered the somersault, kick, and backflip.

Note that this is all happening within the first trimester.

Give the embryo a mere 24 weeks and it can live outside the womb, independent of the mother. The earliest a baby was born and lived? Twenty-one weeks, four days. That baby, born in San Antonio in 2014, is now a healthy toddler.⁹

Facts are stubborn things. And I was ready to grant what Father Tad Pacholczyk, director of education at the esteemed National Catholic Bioethics Center, so succinctly explains: “Science, quite apart from religious dogma, affirms that human embryos are human beings... Science, quite apart from religious dogma, affirms that every person walking around in the world was once an embryo. This absolute scientific dogma admits of no exceptions.”¹⁰

Science had spoken clearly of humanity's inception, but the question of moral worth still lacked an answer. For that, I had to consult evidence of another sort. 🇺🇸

EDITOR'S NOTE: Look for *Part II — Personhood* in your next issue of the *NTC*, due in homes February 20-22, 2019.

LOOKING IN

A 24-week-old baby rests in mother's womb in this photograph by respected photographer Lennart Nilsson.



REFERENCES

- 1 Hartig, Hannah. “Nearly six-in-ten Americans say abortion should be legal in all or most cases.” Pew Research Center, 2018.
- 2 “Induced Abortion in the United States.” Guttmacher Institute, 2018.
- 3 Marieb, Elaine, and Hoehn, Katja. *Human Anatomy and Physiology*. 8th Edition, 2012.
- 4 Kischer, CW. “The corruption of the science of human embryology.” *ABAC Quarterly*, Fall 2002.
- 5 Condic, ML. “A Scientific View of When Life Begins” *On Point*, June 2014.
- 6 Marieb, Elaine, and Hoehn, Katja. *Human Anatomy and Physiology*. 8th Edition, 2012.

7 Hamberger, Lars, and Nilsson, Lennart. *A Child is Born*. 4th Edition.

8 Hensley, Jeff, et al. *The Zero People*. Servant Books, 1983.

9 Kaashif, A., Frey, C, et al. “Two-year neurodevelopmental outcome of an infant born at 21 weeks 4 days gestation.” *Pediatrics*, December 2017.

10 Pacholczyk, T. “Embryology or theology?” *Making Sense of Bioethics*, February 2006.

PHOTOS

Day 1 through Day 6 photos on Page 35 courtesy UNSW Embryology. Day 21 photo courtesy Lennart Nilsson.



◀ Melisa Mendez, left, and Francine Speer of Catholic Charities Fort Worth are shown inside the living room of Melisa's flood damaged home in Arlington in November. (NTC/Ben Torres)

CCFW Provides Recovery Assistance to Flood Victims

Melisa Mendez, 32, was feeling optimistic about her family's future. The mother of six children — ranging in age from four to 18 — had just made the decision to return to school.

By living frugally and by working nights as a driver for a ridesharing service, she planned to obtain the education that would mean a better life for all of them.

Those dreams seemed to wash away in the flash floods that hit her modest home in Everman, a suburb located south of Fort Worth, on the evening of September 21. When six inches of rain fell within one hour that day, approximately 64 houses in Everman

and 70 residences in the nearby Forest Hill area sustained serious damage. Water levels reached as high as six feet within homes, many of which were not covered by flood insurance. Families were displaced, their lives and routines shockingly disrupted.

In the midst of such devastation and trauma, staff members and volunteers with Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) immediately arrived on the scene, working with other crisis response organizations and ministries to stabilize and assist survivors. While agency representatives met with residents, assessing the situation and helping to meet immediate needs for housing, food, water, cleaning supplies, and clothing, volunteers


worked door to door, ripping wet carpet and drywall out of homes.

Francine Speer, parish services manager for CCFW, has been on-site in the impacted neighborhoods since the disaster.

“Catholic Charities works to offer both emergency and long-term recovery assistance in these situations,” Speer explained. “We believe in ending poverty, so when we respond to an emergency, we focus upon how far we can take that person, that family. We don't want to just help them to fix their house. We also want to leverage community resources and get them back on their feet.”

Mendez said that she is “beyond grateful” for the work of CCFW in helping to provide her family with air mattresses, shoes and clothing, food, and other supplies in the aftermath of the storm. Because she did not qualify for a disaster loan or assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), she is still struggling to replace furniture, flooring, drywall, and kitchen cabinets in her home.

“Catholic Charities is the only open door we have left right now,” she said. “Francine is continuing to work with us, to help us. Thanks to Catholic Charities, I know we will get through this.”

To offer donations or volunteer assistance to flood victims, contact Francine Speer at (817) 289-0454 or at fspeer@ccdofw.org. 





Fight *POVERTY.* Fight *HARDER.*

For 13 years, Heather Reynolds spearheaded CCFW's goal to end poverty in Fort Worth, one family at a time. Now, she's taking it national.

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

People living on the fringes of society fill the lobby of Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) every time the doors open.

Tired refugees, homeless veterans, and struggling families come to the agency's Thornhill Drive campus seeking food, shelter, or the resources to merely exist.

"We see it every day at Catholic Charities — the toxic stress that poverty brings," said Heather Reynolds, the organization's CEO since 2005. "It robs families of their dignity and potential that we take for granted."

But seven years ago, the consequences of poverty became personal for the career social worker. That's when Reynolds and her husband, John, traveled to Taiwan to meet their new daughter, Olive. The high school sweethearts always considered adoption part of their future.

After spending time with the 10-month-old baby at her foster home, the couple decided to meet Olive's birth mother, grandfather, and aunt at the adoption center. Reynolds called the encounter one of the most important moments of her life.

"I knew I wanted to meet and thank them for choosing life," she explained.

While the Chinese family showered the Texans with gifts for the baby and treated them to pineapple baked goods — a cultural symbol of hospitality — Olive's birth mother spoke to the new parents in English. Knowing the child would go to an American family, the 16-year-old learned the language to communicate, in her own words, the hopes and dreams she had for her daughter.

"She wanted her to be loved, to learn to read, and be who she was intended to be," Reynolds said, recalling the heartfelt conversation. "What I realized in that moment was how much the birth mother loved her."

Already struggling financially, the family confided that raising the baby wasn't an option because they were too poor.

"So, in the poverty of this little girl's family, I became a mother," she observed, acknowledging the weight of their sacrifice.

Today, Olive is a happy, healthy seven-year-old looking forward to another move and new adventure. After a successful 17-year tenure at CCFW, Reynolds and her family are moving to South Bend, Indiana where she will become the managing director of the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO) at the University of Notre

Dame. In that position, the dedicated administrator will help design and evaluate the impact of anti-poverty programs in the U.S.

For the past five years, LEO has partnered with CCFW to study the agency's thriving Stay the Course program. The mentoring project offers low-income community college students a promising future by helping them manage family and financial obstacles that cause many to drop out of school.

"We cared about that because in order to get people out of poverty, they need a living wage," Reynolds explained. "In order to get a living wage, they need a skill and the best place to learn that skill is a community college."

What started as a 17-person CCFW program grew to 400 participants during the Notre Dame study and will grow to serve 3,400 students over the coming years.

"We were able to take an idea, study it, scale it, and get students to these middle-skill positions that employers need so much in this area," the 38-year-old TCU graduate continued. "That's been my proudest moment — giving people a life outside of poverty."

Growing up in a stable home with loving parents, Reynolds never worried about her own safety or security. Lessons in what it meant to be poor, hungry, and homeless came during her years at Mount St. Mary Academy, an all-girls Catholic high school, operated by the Sisters of Mercy in Little Rock, Arkansas.



NTC/Juan Guajardo

“For 17 years I've gotten to walk through the doors of a place where I get to make a difference with some of the most talented, compassionate people on earth.”

She credits two teachers for shaping her views on social justice. Sister Terry, RSM, spent much of her life outside the classroom working with the homeless.

"The stories she would tell about loving people were so inspirational to me," recalled Reynolds, who considers the sister one of her heroes. "Her insight on how to love the people who are sometimes ignored by society was really formative in my life."

Another educator, Mary Logan, taught

historical events in a way that instilled an understanding of social justice. She also led study abroad experiences so students could visit places like Beijing, China and Eastern Europe.

"Seeing the effects of a communistic culture and the dreariness that came with it was moving to me," Reynolds recounted. "Visiting Auschwitz was life changing. I saw

Continued on Page 40



Heather Reynolds is congratulated with a hug by former board member Teresa Montes during a farewell event on Dec. 10. (NTC/Ben Torres)

From Page 39

how culturally, across the world, people could be devalued.”

Mount St. Mary girls spent part of the day working as community volunteers and “I got excited about that space of time,” the alumna added. After changing her major several times at TCU, Reynolds decided a career in social work was the best way to indulge her passion for volunteering. She joined CCFW as a 22-year-old intern studying for her master’s degree and, three years later, was tapped to assist the organization’s CEO, Karen Spicer. When Spicer died a few weeks later in 2005, Reynolds was named interim director and, eventually, director. At the age of 25, she became responsible for the agency’s \$8 million budget and 150 employees.

Undaunted by the magnitude of the job, the young, determined leader surrounded herself with experienced co-workers.

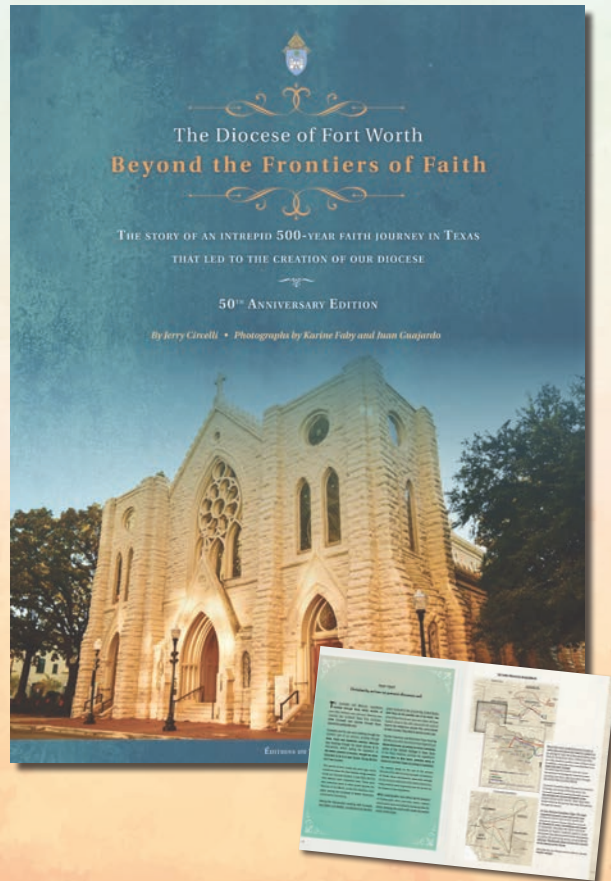
“I had to do that. When you become a CEO, if you are going to have any degree of success, you have to surround yourself with people who know more than you and are better equipped in some areas,” Reynolds pointed out. “I’ve never been afraid to have strong, amazing people around me. That’s what allowed this organization to grow.”

And grow it has. Recognized nationally for its innovative strategies and holistic approach to case management, CCFW now assists tens of thousands of people each year in a 28-county area with help from 400 employees and a \$45 million budget. A successful \$16 million capital campaign in 2010 helped build the Fischer Family Campus which houses the agency’s offices, a food bank building, and foster care facility. During the 2014 border crisis, the organization sheltered unaccompanied minors and last year aided families after Hurricane Harvey.

For 13 years, Reynolds spearheaded the non-profit’s goal to end poverty one family at a time. That mission will not only continue but improve, she promised.

“This organization has never been about me. I’ve just been entrusted with it for a bit of time,” the CEO emphasized. “For 17 years I’ve gotten to walk through the doors of a place where I get to make a difference with some of the most talented, compassionate people on earth. I’m going to miss that.” 🇹🇽

We’ve Come So Far In Faith!



Read the fascinating history of the Diocese of Fort Worth in this richly illustrated book with pull-out objects.

To buy your copy, contact Rosa Rosales at 817-945-9424 or RRosales@fwdioc.org.

SHOP WHERE YOU CAN SEE AND TOUCH WHAT YOU BUY.

WE HAVE MANY BEAUTIFUL GIFTS FOR PERSONAL AND SACRAMENTAL OCCASIONS.



WE ALSO ACCEPT ORDERS ONLINE AT WWW.STELLAMARISBOOKS.COM
St. Anthony’s Church Supplies - 5312 Trail Lake Dr.
Fort Worth 76133 - 817 924 7221
Located in the Wedgewood Village Shopping Center



Finding God Amid Pain

FINDING GOD DURING TRAGEDY:

“God is always there, but sometimes we are too involved to see it,” Becca said about the loss of their child, Carter, at 39.5 weeks gestation. “At that moment, time stood still. Nothing else mattered. Jordan and I were able to see crystal clear God was there in that room with us; though devastated we had a veil of peace over us. He gave us many signs, He was there for us.”

HOW ADVERSITY STRENGTHENED THEIR MARRIAGE:

Jordan said, “The loss of our son, Carter, was the most devastating thing that had ever happened to us. But, it was also something that brought our family closer than we had ever been. Becca and I knew that we had a conscious decision to make. We could let the loss of our son cause a wedge between the two of us and our personal relationship with Jesus Christ... or we could dig deeper into our faith and trust that He had a plan for us. I am 100 percent confident that without our faith, we would have been lost.”

RAISING A STEPDAUGHTER:

Becca said Jordan’s daughter, Kylie, is “more than a blessing to have in my life.” According to Becca, even before their marriage, “Kylie’s mom welcomed me with open arms and we instantly created a village. We all, including Kylie’s stepdad, saw the value in working together, and there are many times we have to put our differences aside to do what’s in the best interest for Kylie. There is a lot of giving and very little taking and a lot of compromising.” 🇹🇽



THEY ARE: Becca and Jordan Brown, with Kylie (right) and Parker. They have been married for four years and are parishioners at Most Blessed Sacrament in Arlington. (NTC/Ben Torres)

LECTIO DIVINA

Jesus, Joseph, and Mary set the example of prayerful family life for us. On the Feast of the Holy Innocents, consider praying this blessing over your children:

DAILY BLESSING OF A CHILD

Parent makes sign of the cross on child's forehead or heart and says:

"May God bless you.
May God keep you safe.
God be with you.
God be in your heart.
May God bless and protect you!"



CHRISTMAS begins with Advent

How to live liturgically this Christmas season

One of the reasons I love the liturgical calendar is because it's a constant source of inspiration and collective prayer with the Church before God.

It's a dynamic opportunity to engage with the living Word of God. We know that when the Word of God goes forth, it goes forth in power and grace, and it does not return to Him without fruit.

As a convert, transitioning from the hustle and bustle of Christmas in December to a time of quiet and introspection during Advent was jarring — it felt like a vacuum. This was a fact I was reminded of when a recent convert said to me that “Christmas seemed so somber to him now” and that he missed “the joy of Christmas as a Protestant.” I remember my first Advent as a Catholic as being a bit unsettling, and there was a nervousness to the quiet. I had stopped the commotion of my past life, but what was I supposed to fill the void with? It took time to understand how to live Advent and Christmas as two distinct seasons.

WHAT IS ADVENT, REALLY?

In order to not be exhausted by the time December 24 comes around for the start of the liturgical season of Christmas, it requires some discipline to resist the festivities during the Advent season. In Advent, we prepare for the coming of Christ.

While others are singing Christmas carols in early December, we try to remember the time before Christ was born.

Just as the Israelites awaited their Messiah, so too during Advent we wait for Christ to come, and for a whole season after we celebrate not only His arrival, but His remaining with us. An Advent that is filled with preparation with no fulfillment, that is filled with waiting and no one to come, is not only a practice in futility but also of despair. We are a people of hope only because we know in faith that our hope will be fulfilled.

HOW TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT CHRISTMAS

There are many traditions that we can do within the home with or without children.

For Advent, you can have an Advent wreath, lighting the candles each week. You can also decorate with greenery during this liturgical season; put up the Christmas tree but don't adorn it yet. All of this prepares our houses and hearts for the joy of the coming of Jesus.

Then, beginning on Christmas Eve adorn the tree with lights and ornaments, playing the Christmas music we've awaited eagerly for a month to listen to. Despite the world around us telling us that the celebration is over, we continue remembering the glory of the gospel and the joy of the incarnation — we celebrate

the fulfillment of our hope.

Just like in Lent, when we fast in preparation for the feasting of the Easter season, we are called to fast in Advent and to prepare for the coming of the King who not only comes but also remains, for He is truly Emmanuel, “God with us.” This is why we celebrate.



Callie Nowlin

From antiquity, the faithful have attested that this celebration cannot be contained in one day with the Feast of the Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord. The joy of His coming and the fulfillment of His Word

overflows this day into a week and then another six more!

This time of feasting is particularly emphasized during the Octave of Christmas, culminating with the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, on January 1, which incidentally, is a Holy Day of Obligation as well.

Join us for this series on the Octave of Christmas, wherein we will listen to the Word of the Lord and contemplate the mysteries of our faith, that we may consider how we can celebrate more deeply the Christmas season as Catholics.

Callie Nowlin, MTS, is a convert turned Director of Religious Education, catechist, and blogger with a passion for Scripture and helping others on their journey toward Christ.

THE STEPS

Start by using the steps below to reflect on the corresponding Scripture verses. Then read Callie's meditations, reflecting on them slowly.



LECTIO

First read the passage, noting phrases that move your heart.



MEDITATIO

Secondly, ponder these words and ask God in prayer, "What do you desire that I hear in this?"



ORATIO

Third, speak back to the Lord as your heart is moved.




CONTEMPLATIO

Finally, be still trusting in His presence. Simply rest in the Word of God.

THE REFLECTIONS

Into Your Hands, O Lord

First Reading for Dec. 26, 2018
Feast of St. Stephen, First Martyr

 Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59

Just yesterday we celebrated the Lord God Almighty being born of a woman and becoming fully man. The King of Kings has come to His people! And today we find the feast of the first martyr, who died because he refused to deny the King of Kings.

I always have found the juxtaposition of these two feasts to be sobering, if not troubling. However, the Church Fathers were fully aware of the proximity of these two feasts in the development of the Octave of Christmas. There is a distinct

purpose.

And these feasts have remained unaltered precisely because the Church, as a mother, wants to remind her children that calling Jesus the King of Kings and Lord of Lords comes not with the scandal of sin but with the risk of bodily death. But she also assures us that this risk of death is not the end.

We remember our older brother in the faith, the first martyr of the faith to follow after the Lord Jesus uttered with His last breath, "Into your hands, I commend my spirit." Just hours after we sing "Hark the Herald Angels Sing, glory to the newborn king," we arise from our rest and celebrate not the faith or courage of a single man.

Holy Innocence

Gospel for Dec. 28, 2018
Feast of the Holy Innocents

In the scene before the Gospel reading, the magi had approached Herod asking where was "the newborn king of the Jews?" (*Matthew 2:2*)

The magi had expected to find the newborn king in the palace as an heir apparent. Instead, King Herod was greatly troubled by this and immediately began conspiring to eliminate this threat to his power. The magi were warned in a dream and left Israel without revealing where the infant Jesus was being protected.

King Herod searched for "the child" among children, destroying all, hoping one among them was the newborn King. Herod ordered a massacre of all boys under the age of two in order to seek the life of one hidden in a manger. In so doing, these children took the place of Jesus before the sword of Herod. They took the place of Him who would take our place in the debt of sin.

We call these martyrs the "Holy Innocents." The atrocity of this massacre



The Obedience of Christ

Gospel for Dec. 30, 2018
Feast of the Holy Family

 Luke 2:41-52

Rather, we celebrate the eternal truth that to those who trust in Him with a radical fidelity, He is also found faithful. We celebrate that the Lord, too, wishes that we might bring glory to Him and be happy with Him in heaven.

Today, let us remember our older brother in the faith by praying for those who would persecute the faith and even harm the faithful so they may see fully the mercy and grace of God and respond to Him: “To You, Lord Jesus Christ, I commend my spirit.”

In today’s gospel we see the Holy Family living out their lives of holiness through obedience. They do this through obedience to God and through obedience to those to whom they have been entrusted.

As a family they lived together obedient to the law and traditions of worship, which included a yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover. This trip always meant they would return in a large caravan of extended family. As such, on their return trip Mary and Joseph had every reason to expect Jesus would be in His family’s midst. But when they had stopped for the night, Jesus was not with them for He had “remained behind in Jerusalem.”

After three days, they found Him at the temple; they were both relieved as well as confounded at what they discovered. “Son, why have you done this to us?” How can His disappearance be reconciled

with the life of obedience Jesus lived in union with them up to that point? Mary and Joseph realize Jesus is acting in obedience to His Heavenly Father in addition to His earthly parents.

Jesus had been entrusted to them as their child, and as such Jesus then returns to Nazareth where He “was obedient to His parents.” In fact, the only phrase that is used in Scriptures to describe what we call the “hidden years” of the life of Jesus (age twelve to thirty) was this expression of quiet obedience.

In the Holy Family we see an exemplar of Christian familial life, particularly in how they worship God as a family. Let us strive to imitate the Holy Family. Let us approach the Lord as one Catholic family in Mass. And, if you are blessed with the company of children this Sunday, this is a great time to gather for a meal and recite the *Prayer to the Holy Family* together.

 Matthew 2:13-18

highlights our shared end: death. Death, however, in unity with the mission and person of Christ, also brings us to life everlasting with the Father.

Today, let us earnestly pray for our children, for their protection and their growth in holiness. The Church has official blessings ready on behalf of her children, usually offered by deacons or priests. However, there is one that is written for parents to bestow over their own children (see P. 42). What a wonderful day to formally bless our children!

In the Arms of Mary

Gospel for January 1, 2019
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

 Luke 2:16-21

The shepherds heard the good news at the lips of angels about the arrival of the King of Kings. They ran in haste to find the infant. And upon finding the child Jesus, they knelt at the feet of Mary, adoring their King, for everything that the angels told them was true. This was the long-awaited Savior, born of the line of King David. This heralded King was found in the lap of his mother, Mary.

There they did homage to the one who was born to save them and all of Israel. They had been graced with things that prophets of old had dreamed to glimpse. They were witnesses to the reality that the Lord had come to save His people.

It is here that Jesus is found in the arms of Mary. So too today, Jesus is found, safely nestled in the tabernacle of our Catholic

churches. On that Christmas day, Mary the Mother of God, brought Jesus into the world. And today she again brings Him forth so that the shepherds may adore their King.

To celebrate this Holy Day, let us go along with the shepherds and seek Him. Rejoice, for we too have been told where to find Him!

He is most clearly found in the Eucharist and awaits us there in the tabernacle. Let us run to His feet in Mass and kneel before our King that we may gaze upon Him in the sanctuary.

May this encounter with the newborn Savior fill our hearts with joy and be a source of consolation and grace for years to come — just as our Blessed Mother kept all these things in her own heart. 🇺🇸



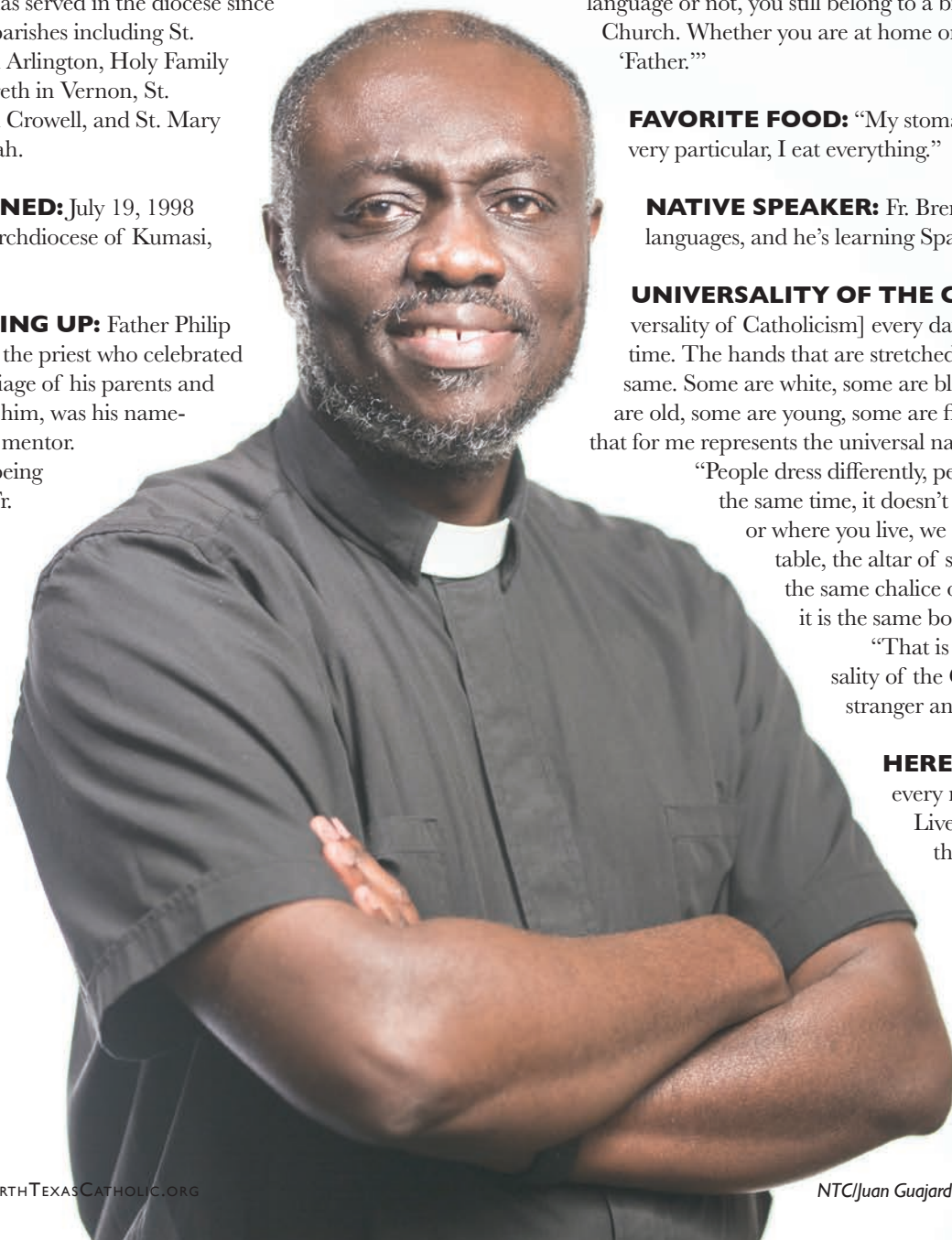
Universal Messenger

HE IS: Father Philip Brembah, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington.

He has served in the diocese since 2008 at parishes including St. Joseph in Arlington, Holy Family of Nazareth in Vernon, St. Joseph in Crowell, and St. Mary in Quannah.

ORDAINED: July 19, 1998 for the Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana.

GROWING UP: Father Philip Boateng, the priest who celebrated the marriage of his parents and baptized him, was his namesake and mentor. Despite being close to Fr. Boateng,



the younger Philip planned to be a soldier or study law or politics.

He reluctantly entered seminary for a discernment year, then he decided to stay.

BEST PART OF BEING A PRIEST: “Being close to Christ is number one. Recognizing that unworthy though I may be, I can still lead the people of God to celebrate the center of our lives, the Eucharist, and all the other sacraments.”

A BIGGER FAMILY: Being so far away from his four siblings and his mother in Ghana can be difficult, but by focusing on his mission, “there is so much joy. Whether they speak your language or not, you still belong to a bigger family, which is the Church. Whether you are at home or abroad, people still call you ‘Father.’”

FAVORITE FOOD: “My stomach is also Catholic. I’m not very particular, I eat everything.”

NATIVE SPEAKER: Fr. Brembah speaks at least seven languages, and he’s learning Spanish.

UNIVERSALITY OF THE CHURCH: “I see [the universality of Catholicism] every day, especially at communion time. The hands that are stretched towards you are not the same. Some are white, some are black, some are brown. Some are old, some are young, some are firm, some are feeble. And that for me represents the universal nature of the Church.

“People dress differently, people look different, but at the same time, it doesn’t matter where you come from or where you live, we all gather around the same table, the altar of sacrifice of the Lord and it is the same chalice of salvation that we lift, and it is the same body of Christ that we eat.

“That is the beauty of the universality of the Church. That you are not a stranger anywhere.”

HERE AND NOW: “I enjoy every moment the best way I can. Live in the moment and live the best that you can in the moment to be of service to others. Bring them closer to the reason why you said ‘yes’ to the Lord. It could be here, it could be back in Ghana, it could be anywhere else. It would be the same.” 🇺🇸

Sacrificing our Time for Good

In 1456, St. John of Capistrano, a Catholic priest, led an army of Hungarian Christians in Belgrade against Mohammed II and his Turkish fleet, who were on the verge of invading Vienna and Rome.

John won the battle — but at the cost of his life. As he took care of the spiritual needs of the soldiers, he contracted the plague during this battle and died three months later in the Franciscan monastery of Ilok, in Croatia. He once said, “By the brightness of their holiness, clerics must bring light and serenity to all who gaze upon them. They have been placed there to care for others.” St. John of Capistrano was no hypocrite.

Like John who gave his life for his men in the battle of Belgrade, a young man discerning the priesthood must reflect on his own holiness of life and how he is using his time and gifts for others. Holiness of life is one sign of a religious vocation (e.g., chastity, humility, modesty, charity, fortitude). When a man practices these virtues, he edifies the faithful by his very life. “Let your light shine before others,” says Christ, “that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (*Matthew 5:16*). Although most men do not practice these virtues perfectly on Day 1 (that’s why we have the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist), in time these virtues begin to grow in them, helping them follow our Lord’s call to “deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me” (*Matthew 16:24*). A life of holiness, then, is important for any man discerning the priesthood, for it brings the peace and



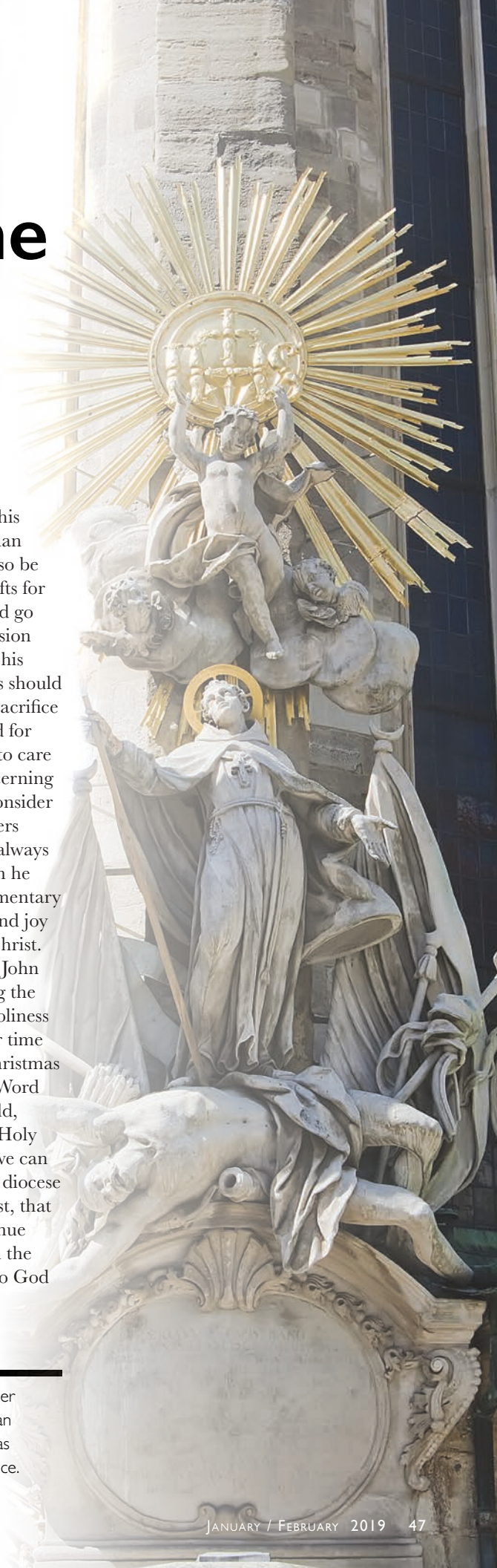
Fr. Maurice Moon

light of Christ to others.

As St. John of Capistrano lost his life taking care of his brothers, a man considering the priesthood must also be willing to offer his own time and gifts for others. Waking up early to pray and go to Mass, going to confession regularly, helping out at his parish — all these things should cost the young man, to sacrifice his time and gifts to God for others. Clerics are here to care for others, so a man discerning the priesthood should consider how he is caring for others right now in his daily life. It won’t always feel good (as it didn’t for John when he contracted the plague), but no momentary feeling will ever surpass the profound joy and peace of a life given to Jesus Christ.

None of us are called to be St. John of Capistrano, but those discerning the priesthood should consider their holiness of life and how they are using their time and gifts for others. During this Christmas season — where we reflect on the Word made flesh as God’s gift to the world, the Redeemer who comes to us in Holy Communion — a Mass intention we can have is for those young men in our diocese who are being called by Jesus Christ, that the grace of Jesus Christ will continue to strengthen them in virtue and in the desire to offer their time and gifts to God for others. ✦

Ordained to the priesthood in 2018, Father Maurice Moon serves as Chaplain at Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth and as Vocations Liaison with the Vocations Office.



His Majesty is Revealed in Poverty

It is rather startling to realize the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Savior of the World, the Word made Flesh, the very Son of God, was born and did not have His nursery all set up by His parents.

He did not even have a crib to be laid in. I know this is not new information, but it is still quite remarkable that the second person of the Holy Trinity had such a humble start to His life on earth.

Our typical paintings of this scene show it as well-lit in a sepia tone, with perfectly groomed animals, and a barn so clean you can almost smell the essential oils. But I imagine the reality was quite different. Anyone who has spent time in Lubbock knows when the wind blows a certain way you can whiff the “smell of money,” and they are not talking about ink and paper.

There is a stark contrast between how we imagined God’s advent on earth and the reality of the conditions He arrived in. And there’s something telling in that. He who is Majesty is revealed in poverty. He who is divinity is swaddled in humanity.

God loves every one of us the same, but He has always had a special heart for the poor. The Hebrew word for this group of people is Anawim. The Anawim are described as the poor of every sort: the vulnerable, the marginalized, and socio-economically oppressed, those of lowly status without earthly power. The word literally means those who are “bowed down.”

Jesus came into this world as a part of the Anawim. And He continues to have a heart for all those bowed down by the circumstances of their lives. Two thousand years after the Savior’s birth, some babies are born without cribs, without their Noah’s Ark-themed nursery, and all too often they are conceived and born to people so bowed down they do not

even think they can care for the child.

The simple reality is many families need help when a pregnancy is discovered and after the baby is born. For the past 25 years, the Diocese of Fort Worth has offered the Gabriel Project (now in partnership with Catholic Charities Fort Worth). This initiative is in 23 parishes throughout the diocese and currently serves over 200 families. Its volunteers help on many levels, from accompanying these families and providing rides to doctor’s appointments, to helping them get the home ready for the new addition to the family, to providing supplies like maternity clothes, diapers, and baby clothing.

Camp Fort Worth, a service ministry camp for teenagers, has contributed to Gabriel Project by making more than 300 baby cribs over the last 20 years to help these babies, who, like Jesus, were in need of a place to lay their heads. Along with these very practical needs, Gabriel Project volunteers also offer Christian friendship and spiritual guidance to the expecting mothers.

Our Savior coming in such modest circumstances is in its own way a message for us and an opportunity to continually come to the Christmas crèche throughout the year and serve children and families who are the modern day

Anawim. The Gabriel Project is a great place to start.

In addition to the Gabriel Project, other ways meet these needs. Many of us know single parents who can be helped in countless ways. Everything from helping with transportation, to mowing the lawn, to doing simple household maintenance. Even letting them know you are running to the store and offering to pick something up for them. Begin with prayer and then start small. Don’t come across like you’re the answer to all of their struggles. But with the guidance of the Holy Spirit you could be the answer to a prayer.

So, as we continue the Christmas season, take some time imagining Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in that stable and ask them to inspire you to answer the cry of the Anawim.

For more information about the Gabriel Project please visit fwdioc.org/crisis-pregnancy, or call Angela Walters at 817-789-0514. 🇹🇽



Jeff Hedglen

Jeff Hedglen is the Campus Minister at University of Texas at Arlington and the primary founder of Camp Fort Worth.



Parents and Schools Protect our Children

While our Church and schools are integral to the education and formation of children, parents and other family members play an irreplaceable educational role. We know that parents are the primary educators and formators of their children. Parents are especially positioned to understand their children's unique temperaments and personalities to help form them in virtues, equip them for life, and help prepare them for life's uncertain and sometimes dark periods.

One of the strengths of the *Protecting God's Children for Adults*[®] program is to focus on the awareness of child and youth behavior. All children and youth attending Catholic schools, or who are involved in youth programs through the Diocese of Fort Worth, receive age-appropriate safe environment training. It is essential that children are given tools by which they can protect themselves and parents and family members know the friends, activities, and organizations involved in their children's lives. Meeting all of your child's teachers, coaches, or adult leaders is important since those are the persons with whom your child spends a significant portion of his or her day.

It is only through consistent, loving, and



Richard Mathews

frequent conversations with our children that we can truly know what's going on in their lives and therefore not only protect them from danger, but also guide them in their decision-making of their moral and spiritual journey. It is never too early nor too late to begin speaking with children about sexual abuse and bullying. Discussing the rules and informal social norms about lunch time, school bathrooms, and locker/changing rooms is also important in setting expectations not only for their conduct, but in their understanding that if anything makes them uncomfortable it should be brought to your attention.

Additionally, young people need to be educated about the possible dangers of programs, technology, and electronic devices with internet access just like we would discuss the dangers and safety procedures of driving with teenagers getting their driver license. Those who would abuse children, seek to isolate children outside of the presence of others — whether through the internet or technology, or in a location where they are alone with a child.

Most importantly, children must know they can talk to parents, family members, teachers, and other trusted adults about anything. Patient, non judgmental, and

compassionate listening will increase communication, and better enable us to discern when our child may be in danger.

Parents, families, schools, and our Church share the common goal of helping lead our children on the path to a happier, holier life. This is best accomplished through steady guidance, a listening ear, and concrete wisdom.

Our focus must always be on increasing the awareness and vigilance of teachers, educators, administrators, staff, and volunteers in our schools and parishes. A key element is focusing on prevention and education through mandatory safe environment certification of all who serve in diocesan ministry. But the diocese goes beyond that by screening prospective employees and volunteers and requiring them to: submit an application with (non-family member) personal references who are contacted; pass criminal and sexual offender registry background checks; and sign and adhere to the Diocesan Code of Conduct and Behavior Standards. 🇺🇸

Richard Mathews is Director of Safe Environment for the Diocese of Fort Worth. A former prosecuting attorney, he also served as the General Counsel for the Boy Scouts of America and for Trail Life USA.



MASS 101

We discuss the Mass in the first of a new series tackling the why and how behind our faith



Marlon De La Torre is the Department Director of Catechesis and Evangelization for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In light of many faithful Catholics expressing a genuine thirst to learn more about their faith, Marlon De La Torre and the *NTC* present the new "Faith and Reason" column which is based around parishioners' questions.

Got questions about the faith? Send them to ntc@fwdioc.org and we might just pick it for the next "Faith and Reason." Don't forget to check out the corresponding Q&A videos on our Facebook and Twitter accounts.

And not to worry, Marlon's regular column is still online at NorthTexasCatholic.org.

There is a significant passage in St. John's Gospel (17:1-19) where Christ, after a discourse with His Apostles about His pending hour of death, lifts His eyes toward Heaven and proclaims a prayer of sacrifice before God, affirming His journey as the lamb who will be slain for the salvation of all humanity.

This public act of prayer in word and deed provides us with insight on the way we are called to worship and celebrate Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

Two simple yet profound terms typically associated with how we worship as Catholics are the Mass which means "to send" and refers to the celebration of the Eucharist established by Christ at the Last Supper. The liturgy

refers to the public work or way we come together as one community to worship Christ. Both the Mass and the liturgy direct us toward an active participation in the work of God by openly reaffirming the sacrificial life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The significance of the Mass is that it offers a renewal of what Christ did in sacrificing Himself for our sake, meaning the salvation of humanity. Thus, the principal premise of the Mass and our liturgical demeanor is directed toward Christ and nothing else.

Something all of us should consider in both our communal and prayerful participation in the Mass and liturgy is whether we desire an awakening of our faith in Christ and His Church.

During Mass why do we sit, kneel, stand, and cross ourselves with holy water?

The premise of those postures is really to put focus on the sacrifice of the Mass. So when we kneel we're giving glory and honor to Our Lord. When we genuflect we're actually assisting and assenting to the presence of Christ in the tabernacle and on the altar as well. And so when we make the sign of the cross, we're recognizing that we, as Christians, are coming into our liturgy to celebrate and commemorate the sacrifice of the Mass.

What about standing?

Standing is a posture that was implemented in the early Church before kneeling. It was a proper reverence, back from the time of St. Justin Martyr in 158 AD of recognizing the presence of Christ at the sacrifice.

Why does the priest wash his hands during Mass?

Because a priest acts in the person of Christ. It's important that when he handles the elements of bread and wine he purifies his hands, which is part of the old Jewish ritual of purification in preparation for the holy sacrifice or entering the Holy of Holies. So it's a sign of cleanliness, of cleansing, and of purification prior to handling the element in the Mass.

How did the ritual of the Mass originate?

If you go back to Old Testament times, we see the whole issue of the sacrifice or altar with Abraham and Melchizedek in *Genesis 14*, and then

we see that commemoration as well in *Exodus* with Moses and the high altar and the conversion of the Holy of Holies culminating with our Lord at the upper room at the celebration of the Last Supper which we find in *Matthew 26*.

Why does the priest kiss the altar during Mass?

The altar is the altar of sacrifice and it's the altar of remembrance. And so for the priest acting in the person of Christ he gives significance to the altar itself for what it is as a sacrifice, but also as a tomb that represents Christ on the cross, but also His death and His resurrection, hence the kiss on the altar.

Why is it necessary to go to Mass?

It's a great question. Christ instituted the Mass for remembrance or commemoration of His redeeming work on the cross. So we go to Mass to really celebrate not only His sacrifice and His life and death, but also to recall what He did for us not only on the cross, but through the Church. He established the Church in order for us to go and celebrate the beauty and the mystery of who He is. 🇺🇸



FOR FURTHER QUESTIONS

Didn't get enough? Find out more about this and other faith topics through the following:

- ▶ fwdioc.org/adult-faith-formation
- ▶ fwdioc.org/st-junipero-serra-institute

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To Report Misconduct:

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

- ▶ Call the Victim Assistance Hotline at 817-602-5119.
- ▶ Call the Director of Safe Environment at 817-945-9334 and leave a message.
- ▶ Call the Chancellor of the diocese at 817-945-9315.

To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

If you suspect abuse of a child, elder, or vulnerable adult, or abuse has been disclosed to you,

- ▶ Call the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (CPS) at 800-252-5400.
- ▶ Immediately report the alleged abuse to your supervisor, priest, or principal and submit the Confidential Notice of Concern with CPS report information, contact information on all concerned, description of abuse, dates if known, and how you learned of the abuse.

For More Information: To learn more about our abuse prevention policies and programs, please visit fwdioc.org/safe-environment





Luis Hernández, un agente de campo para los Caballeros de Colón de Fort Worth, en la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en Fort Worth, 18 de noviembre de 2018. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Apoyando a la **COMUNIDAD**

Caballeros de Colón fomentan unidad, brindando apoyo a la comunidad

Por Sandra Engelland

Guillermo “Willie” Muñoz no exagera cuando dice que los Caballeros de Colón “cambiaron mi vida por completo”.

Pensó por primera vez unirse a los Caballeros de Colón hace unos diez años cuando asistió a una Misa especial en la Parroquia de San Francisco de Asís en Grapevine y vio a los Caballeros con sus capas, capuchas y espadas. Muñoz preguntó cómo podía unirse a ellos y poco después se hizo miembro.

En ese momento, tenía un trabajo que le requería trabajar muchos fines de semana, por lo que no asistía a Misa cada semana. Debido a que uno de los requisitos para estar en los Caballeros es ser un católico practicante fiel, comenzó a ir a Misa todas las semanas.

Entonces, sus prioridades comenzaron a cambiar. Muñoz consiguió otro trabajo. Cuanto más se involucraba en la Iglesia y en los Caballeros, más crecía su fe.

Llegó a ser ministro de la Eucaristía y catequista. Actualmente está pasando por el largo proceso de confirmación en la Parroquia de San Miguel en Bedford para convertirse en diácono.

“Me queda un año y medio y todo comenzó con los Caballeros”, dijo Muñoz.

Al igual que Muñoz, Luis Hernández tuvo que cambiar sus prioridades para ser activo en la Iglesia al unirse a los Caballeros de Colón hace casi 20 años.

Cuando fue invitado por primera vez a unirse a los Caballeros, Hernández trabajaba en una tienda y tenía un horario que le impedía asistir a Misa y a las reuniones del consejo.

Hernández cambió de trabajo para tener libre los fines de semana

y se unió a los Caballeros en el 1999. Muñoz se unió en el 2009. Ambos hombres se convirtieron en Caballeros de Cuarto Grado, el nivel más alto, y han desempeñado diversos cargos de liderazgo en sus consejos y distritos.

Cada grado de los Caballeros ilustra uno de sus principios. Cuando un hombre se une a la organización ha de demostrar la virtud de la caridad para obtener el primer grado. Los grados segundo y tercero demuestran la unidad y la fraternidad. El cuarto grado se enfoca en el patriotismo para fomentar un énfasis externo en la Iglesia y en la comunidad.

A pesar de que Hernández creció en la Iglesia y había oído hablar de los Caballeros de Colón, él no conocía su misión.

“Sólo quería ser parte de algo”, dijo Hernández. “No sabía lo que hacían”.

Descubrió pronto que la caridad es la base de los Caballeros.

Los Caballeros están llamados a invertir su tiempo y sus recursos para ayudar a otros, ya sea para recaudar fondos para las necesidades existentes en las iglesias de la zona, para recolectar para los afectados por desastres naturales como el Huracán Harvey o para trabajar con las Olimpiadas Especiales y Hábitat para la Humanidad.

LA UNIDAD CON DIVERSIDAD

Los Caballeros de Colón viven las virtudes de la fraternidad y la unidad a través del acercamiento a la comunidad hispana.

El Caballero Supremo Carl A.

Anderson, líder de la organización, habló sobre la unidad en un panel durante el V Encuentro Nacional de Ministerio Hispano celebrado el 21 de septiembre en Grapevine.

“Creo que una de las misiones del Encuentro es decirles a los otros católicos de nuestro país que los católicos hispanos tienen muchos dones que ofrecer”, dijo

Anderson. “Y así, los Caballeros de Colón quieren ser los líderes que dicen: hay que abrir las puertas de nuestras parroquias, abrir las puertas de nuestras organizaciones e instituciones católicas y permitir que los católicos hispanos hagan este gran regalo a la comunidad”.

Anderson dijo que el primer consejo de habla hispana

comenzó en Los Ángeles en el 1927 y la organización tiene actualmente cientos de consejos de habla hispana y miles de miembros hispanos.

Cuando Anderson se convirtió en Caballero Supremo en el 2000, eligió a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe como patrona de la organización. Cada rosario de los Caballeros de Colón tiene la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

Hernández dijo que los Caballeros rezan el Rosario antes de casi todas las reuniones.

Muñoz dijo: “Al tener a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe demostramos el apoyo a los hispanos y a la diversidad cultural”.

Hernández dijo que los Caballeros de

Willie Muñoz no exagera cuando dice que los Caballeros de Colón “cambiaron mi vida por completo”.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 54

Los Caballeros de Colón en la procesión de entrada con el Obispo Olson en la Parroquia de St. Andrew en Fort Worth. (NTC/Jayme Shedenhelm)



DE LA PÁGINA 53

Colón tendrán en enero el primer equipo hispanohablante con grado de la Diócesis para admitir a nuevos miembros.

CONVERTIRSE EN UN MEJOR HOMBRE

Mientras que la organización continúa tratando de servir de nuevas maneras, el grupo continúa enfocándose en ayudar a las viudas y los huérfanos.

Los Caballeros de Colón fueron fundados en 1882 en New Haven, Connecticut, por el Padre Michael J. McGivney con un grupo de 20 hombres para atender a las familias de los miembros fallecidos.

Hernández dijo: “Fue un momento en que había tanto sentimiento anticatólico que era difícil encontrar trabajo. El trabajo que conseguían era por lo general de baja categoría y peligroso, y se enfrentaban a menudo con accidentes y enfermedades”.

Como no existían programas sociales nacionales en ese momento, muchas familias católicas a menudo se convertían en indigentes cuando el padre moría.

Los Caballeros de Colón todavía ofrecen seguros de vida, anualidades vitalicias, seguros de cuidado a largo plazo y seguros por discapacidad. Hernández es ahora un agente de campo para la Agencia de Fort Worth de los Caballeros de Colón.

Mientras que la caridad es el corazón de la organización, la fraternidad es su alma.

Muñoz dijo: “Todo lo que hacemos es labor caritativa para ayudar en todo el mundo. Al hacer eso, construimos la fraternidad”.

Hernández aprecia el enfoque de la organización en las familias mientras cría a sus tres hijos.

Tanto Muñoz como Hernández tienen hijos que, como adultos jóvenes, se unieron a los Caballeros de Colón.

Hernández agregó: “Si quieres convertirte en un mejor esposo, un mejor padre y un mejor católico, ésta es una gran organización que te ayudará a serlo”. 🇺🇸



Guillermo Muñoz, miembro de los Caballeros de Colón por casi diez años, en la Parroquia de San Miguel en Bedford. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

La profesora Angélica Azpeitia pone un letrero para indicar que ese día las lecciones serán en español para los estudiantes de kindergarten en la Escuela Católica de Todos los Santos. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



DOS es mejor que UNO

Clases de lenguaje dual con un nuevo giro

Por Sandra Engelland

Isabella y Mia Rodríguez están aprendiendo a temprana edad que ser bilingües les facilita ayudar a los demás.

Su mamá Leticia Rodríguez comentó que sus hijas pueden ayudar a su abuela cuando van a las tiendas.

“Las veo cómo ayudan a otras personas cuando hablan con mi madre,

que no es bilingüe”, agregó Rodríguez. “Ellas traducen cuando ella les pregunta, “¿Qué dicen ellos?””

Isabella, una estudiante de segundo grado, y Mia, que está en kindergarten, están obteniendo una sólida educación tanto en español como en inglés gracias al programa bilingüe de la escuela católica de Todos los Santos.

El programa, que lleva cuatro años, incluye las aulas de estudiantes desde el

pre-kinder hasta el segundo grado. Los funcionarios escolares agregarán un grado más cada año hasta llegar al octavo grado, dijo la Dra. Arica Prado, Directora de la escuela.

El Colegio de Todos los Santos comenzó a implementar el programa en el año escolar 2015-2016 con los niños de tres y cuatro años de Pre-kinder y Kindergarten como parte de la Red de Inmersión Bidireccional para Escuelas Católicas (TWIN-CS, por siglas en inglés), dirigida por educadores de Boston College e incluye actualmente 20 escuelas católicas en todo el país.

El programa de Todos los Santos incluye días alternos en los que los profesores y los alumnos hablan español o inglés, excepto en ciertas materias. Toda la instrucción se imparte en español los lunes, miércoles y viernes, incluidas las clases de religión, las ceremonias y las oraciones. El énfasis de la enseñanza es en

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 56

DE LA PÁGINA 55

inglés los martes y jueves.

Las excepciones son que las ciencias y los estudios sociales siempre se enseñan en español y las matemáticas siempre son en inglés. Las artes del lenguaje se enseñan en el idioma del hogar del estudiante desde el preescolar hasta el primer grado y su enseñanza es bilingüe a partir del segundo grado. Más de la mitad de los 141 estudiantes de la escuela están en el programa de lenguaje dual.

Una encuesta realizada en el 2013 con los padres de la escuela llevó a los educadores de Todos los Santos a considerar la educación bilingüe, dijo Prado.

“Tenemos dos grupos de familias que quieren español en el aula. Muchas son familias hispanas que son la tercera y cuarta generación aquí en los Estados Unidos, y también escuchamos a nuestras familias inmigrantes”, agregó.

Los estudiantes de familias inmigrantes aprendían el inglés rápidamente y querían dejar de hablar español en la casa. Los padres que hablan inglés la mayor parte del tiempo querían que sus hijos se sintieran cómodos en ambos idiomas.

Rodríguez dijo que ella es bilingüe y usa esa habilidad en su trabajo, pero que el primer idioma de su esposo es el inglés y por eso su enfoque en el hogar era hablar en ese idioma. Ahora pasa el tiempo ayudando a sus hijas tanto en español como en inglés. Ella aprecia especialmente los aspectos del programa relacionados con la fe.

“Estoy muy contenta de que sean capaces de orar en ambos idiomas”, dijo Rodríguez. “Las escucho cantar canciones en español, hacer sus rezos en español y rezar el Rosario en español”.

SER SERVIDORES Y LÍDERES

La profesora de kindergarten, Angélica Azpeitia, dijo que muchos de sus estudiantes sólo hablan en inglés, mientras que otros hablan principalmente en español. Ella empareja a los estudiantes de diferentes idiomas para que puedan aprender unos de otros.

“Es muy bello verlos ayudarse mutuamente y ver cómo los niños no

tienen miedo de decir una palabra mal”, dijo Azpeitia. “Realmente quieren intentarlo”.

A medida que los estudiantes crecen en su conocimiento del nuevo idioma, su confianza también crece.

“Algunos estudiantes han compartido lo orgullosos que están. Unos cuantos tienen abuelos que hablan español solamente”, dijo. “Cuando pueden decir algo en español y esos abuelos hacen una fiesta al ellos decir esas palabras, eso hace que los niños se sientan bien”.

Boston College ofrece una capacitación anual en el verano para educadores del programa de lenguaje dual y un mentor durante todo el año que visita la escuela cada semana para observar las clases, hacer comentarios y ayudar a manejar los desafíos que se puedan presentar.

La mentora de educación en los dos idiomas para Todos los Santos es Leticia Chávez, una ex maestra y educadora bilingüe del Distrito Escolar Independiente de Fort Worth.

Chávez dijo: “Lo que estaba fallando

en la antigua educación bilingüe era que no estábamos dejando que los estudiantes progresaran al hacer todo en el idioma del hogar y no se les introducía al nuevo idioma a tiempo para poder seguir adelante”.

Prado dijo que Todos los Santos atrae a nuevas familias debido al programa de lenguaje dual. Los estudiantes provienen de 28 códigos postales diferentes.

“Originalmente éramos una escuela de vecindario”, comentó Prado. “Ya no sólo somos una escuela de Northside, sino que las familias manejan desde diferentes sectores de todo el Condado de Tarrant”.

Los niños que están en el programa están adquiriendo valiosas habilidades para ser mejores ciudadanos del mundo, dijo Prado.

La señora Azpeitia estuvo de acuerdo. La alfabetización ofrece a los estudiantes una ventaja en la fuerza laboral y en la comunidad para “ser servidores y líderes”.

Aprender un idioma nuevo no es fácil, pero los beneficios valen la pena.

“Es un desafío, pero con Dios todo es posible”, dijo Azpeitia. 🇺🇸

Madison Mosqueda y Giovanni Gómez trabajan en un ejercicio de escritura para aprender las lecciones en español e inglés en un aula bilingüe en Todos Los Santos. (NTC/Jayme Shedenhelm)



Los Padres y las Escuelas Protegen a los Niños

Si bien nuestra Iglesia y nuestras escuelas son parte integral de la educación y formación de los niños, los padres y otros familiares desempeñan un papel educativo que es irremplazable.

Sabemos que los padres son los principales educadores y formadores de sus hijos. Los padres están especialmente posicionados para entender los temperamentos y personalidades únicos de sus hijos, ayudar a formarlos en las virtudes, equiparlos para la vida y ayudarlos a prepararse para los períodos inciertos y difíciles de la vida.

Una de las fortalezas del programa *Protecting God's Children for Adults*[®] es su enfoque en la concientización del comportamiento de los niños y los jóvenes. Todos los niños y jóvenes que asisten a las escuelas católicas o que participan en programas juveniles de la Diócesis de Fort Worth reciben capacitación adecuada para su edad sobre el ambiente seguro. Es muy importante que los niños reciban herramientas para protegerse a sí mismos y que los padres y miembros de la familia conozcan a los amigos, las actividades y las organizaciones que forman parte de la vida de sus hijos. Es importante conocer a todos los maestros, entrenadores deportivos o líderes adultos de sus hijos o hijas, ya que son las personas con las que ellos pasan una gran parte de su día.

Es solo a través de conversaciones constantes, amorosas y frecuentes con nuestros hijos que podemos realmente saber lo que está sucediendo en sus vidas y, por lo tanto, no sólo protegerlos del peligro, sino también guiarlos en la toma de decisiones de su viaje moral y espiritual por la vida. Nunca es demasiado temprano ni demasiado tarde para comenzar a hablar con los niños sobre el abuso sexual y la intimidación. Es sumamente importante discutir con los hijos las reglas y las normas sociales informales relacionadas con la hora del almuerzo, los baños escolares y las instalaciones deportivas para vestirse o cambiarse de ropa para establecer expectativas no sólo para su propio comportamiento, sino también para que comprendan que cualquier cosa que los haga sentir incómodos debe ser informada a los padres.

Además, los jóvenes deben ser educados sobre los posibles peligros de los programas, la tecnología y los dispositivos

electrónicos con acceso al Internet, del mismo modo que discutiríamos con los adolescentes los peligros y los procedimientos de seguridad al obtener su licencia de conducir. Quienes abusan de los niños buscan aislarlos fuera de la presencia de otros, ya sea a través del Internet o la tecnología, o en un lugar donde estén solos con un niño o niña.

Lo más importante es que los niños deben saber que pueden hablar con los padres, familiares, maestros y otros adultos de confianza sobre cualquier cosa. El escuchar pacientemente, sin prejuicios y de manera compasiva aumentará la comunicación y nos permitirá discernir mejor cuándo nuestro hijo o hija puede estar en peligro.

Los padres, las familias, las escuelas y nuestra Iglesia comparten el objetivo común de ayudar a guiar a nuestros hijos hacia una vida más feliz y más santa. Esto se logra mejor a través de una guía constante, un oído atento y una sabiduría concreta.

Nuestro enfoque debe ser siempre estar más atentos y vigilar a los maestros, educadores, administradores, personal y voluntarios en nuestras escuelas y parroquias. Un elemento clave es enfatizar la prevención y la educación a través de la certificación obligatoria de Ambiente Seguro para todos los que sirven en cualquier ministerio de la Diócesis.

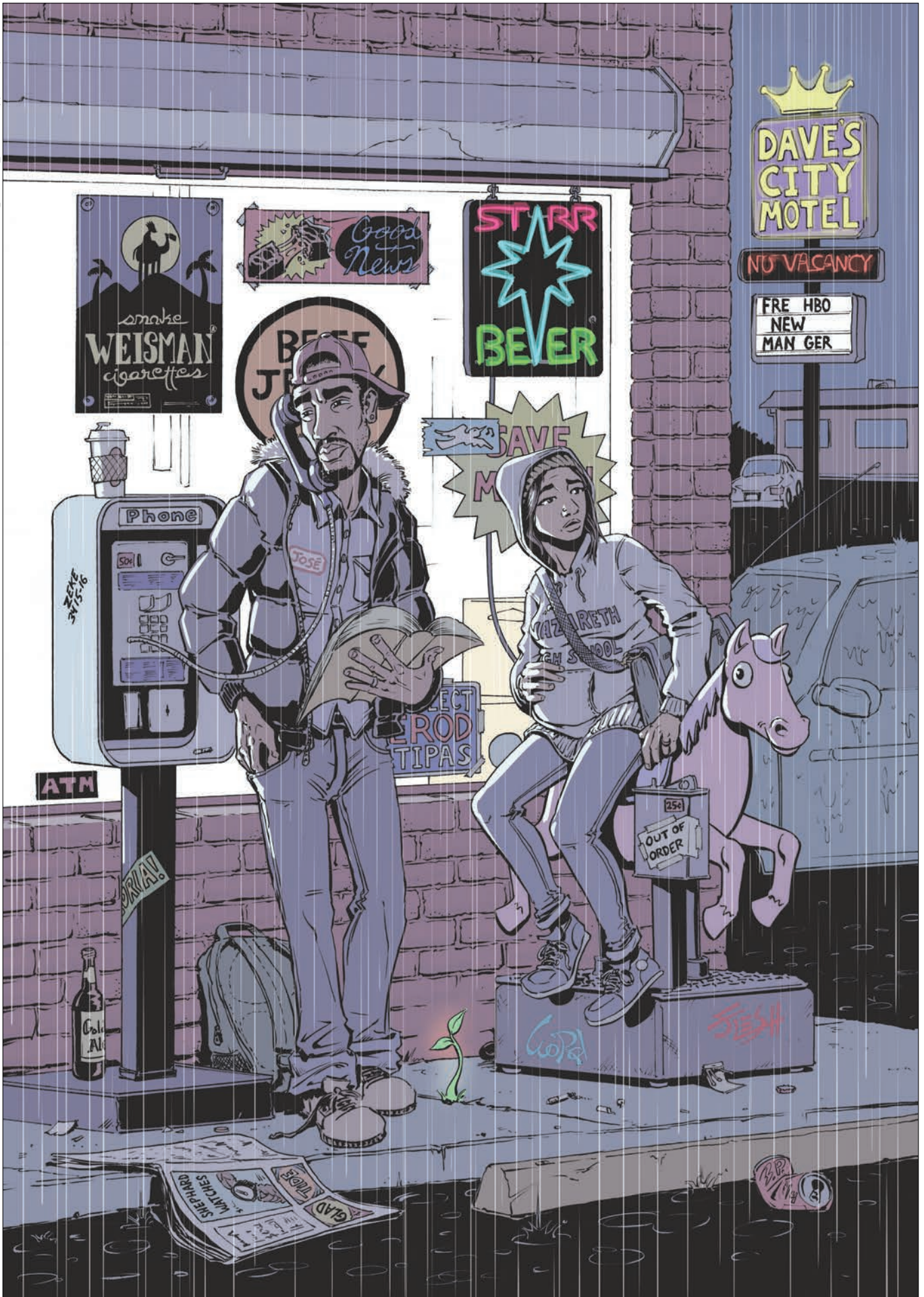
Todos los voluntarios y empleados de las escuelas católicas, incluso si están al día en su certificación de Ambiente Seguro, deben asistir a una de las nuevas sesiones de concientización en persona de *Protecting God's Children for Adults*[®] antes de agosto del 2019. Además, cada escuela tiene la discreción de requerir la asistencia a la nueva sesión aun antes de esta fecha.

Cada uno de nosotros, independientemente de nuestra vocación, es miembro del cuerpo de Cristo y tiene una parte importante en la tarea conjunta de proteger a los niños. 🇺🇸



Richard Mathews

Richard Mathews es el Director de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Trabajó en el pasado como fiscal y se desempeñó por varios años como abogado general de Boy Scouts of America y de Trail Life USA.



Mirar de Nuevo

Tomé una nueva mirada a través de los ojos de alguien más

Por Matthew Cadden-Hyde

Se me hace muy difícil creer que la Navidad ya casi está aquí; ha llegado demasiado repentinamente este año. El Adviento se ignora debido a las mil y una cosas a las que se escucha más que a los villancicos. Algo se ha perdido y ha sido difícil vislumbrar a Belén en el horizonte.

No obstante, en medio de esto, me ha ayudado una obra de arte del dibujante de cómics Everett Patterson. La pieza, titulada “José y María”, representa a María y José como una joven pareja hispana varada en el estacionamiento de un motel de mala muerte, y la luz despiadada de un cartel que dice “No hay vacantes” y que resplandece impasiblemente detrás de ellos. Su estrella es neón, sus halos son anuncios y las palabras de los profetas están garabateadas en el costado de un teléfono público.

Es una pieza fantástica, y se ha convertido en un icono para mí. Al contemplar la imagen, puedo descubrir una nueva

forma de ver la historia, especialmente cuando se une a la historia de “Cry of a Tiny Babe” (Llanto de un pequeño bebé) de Bruce Cockburn. Me recuerda que María y José eran personas reales, que soportaron peligros y dificultades, que la primera Navidad tuvo lugar en la carne y la sangre, la madera y la piedra, y no una realidad espiritual alternativa que no fuera tocada por el mundo que la rodeaba.

Me gusta pensar que, a la vuelta de la esquina, hay un tanque en el que los personajes de “Fairy tale of New York” (Cuento de Hada de Nueva York) se cantan unos a otros. Debo recordar que

la Navidad se abre paso en la historia y en nuestras vidas.

Sin embargo, tenemos que hacer espacio para eso. En su blog, Patterson señala que la perspectiva de la imagen está diseñada para hacernos ver la escena de forma remota, como si estuviéramos caminando por el otro lado de la calle, o pasando sentados cómodamente en nuestro automóvil. Vemos a José y María, atrapados afuera del motel bajo la lluvia torrencial, pero no nos incumbe. Seguimos caminando, conduciendo; somos cómplices de los dueños desdénosos de la posada.

Resulta fácil alejarse luego de la historia, olvidar que la encarnación no sucedió sólo hace 2,000 años en un remanso del Medio Oriente, sino que es una realidad presente y actual. Dios todavía está con nosotros; Jesús sigue siendo Emmanuel. Si la Navidad no es más que una conmemoración histórica, entonces no tiene más poder que el Día Nacional de la Hamburguesa. Pero eso no es cierto, ¿verdad?

Mire la foto otra vez. Mire los pies de los personajes, mire entre las latas de cerveza y los periódicos desechados y los grafitis que hablan de la Palabra que se hizo Carne. Hay un pequeño retoño que emerge de una grieta en el pavimento, una nueva vida que surge más allá del concreto gris. Ese retoño está lleno de luz y vida y está creciendo en el corazón de una escena, que de otra manera podría aparecer sin esperanza. La imagen tiene resonancia bíblica, pero realmente no necesitas saber eso para entender que el pequeño retoño que se abre camino desde el suelo representa una esperanza que brota en la desesperación de la vida, una esperanza

que se abre paso, incluso cuando no hay lugar en la posada.

Ha sido un año difícil, un año marcado por la pérdida y el dolor, y el mundo parece estar cambiando y mutando en formas y sucesos que aún no comprendemos. El establo en Belén puede sentirse lejano y como algo que sucedió hace mucho tiempo. He querido ir allí, pero las noches han estado tan nubladas que no puedo ver la estrella.

En realidad, no necesitamos ir a Belén, porque Dios está con nosotros aquí y ahora; Él está con la pareja sin hogar que se halla en el estacionamiento, Él siente el frío de la lluvia, ha experimentado nuestra preocupación, nuestro estrés y nuestra desesperación. Él sabe todo esto porque ha estado ahí y lo ha sufrido en su propia carne y por eso, se dirige a nosotros y nos dice “no tengan miedo”. Y esa afirmación no fue fácil de ganar: viene de haber sido puesto en un pesebre de recién nacido y luego, 33 años después, al ser clavado en una cruz de madera tosca.

Así que este año, José y María me recuerdan que no se trata de la conmemoración de la Navidad, sino de su inmediatez. Se trata de confiar, no en la historia, sino en el presente, en la relación. Y esa confianza puede que no sea más grande que un pequeño retoño que se escabulle a escondidas en un gran mundo malo, pero aún necesita ser nutrida, y necesita todavía protección, mientras que nuestras esperanzas y temores se cruzan en la historia de la Navidad y el Dios que nació en Belén y que vive con nosotros hoy. ✝

Matthew Cadden-Hyde es un blogger de Inglaterra. Puede encontrar sus pensamientos, inspiraciones y reflexiones sobre la vida y la fe en matts bibleblog.wordpress.com.

¿Tú También Me Abandonas?

¿Por qué seguir siendo católico después de todo lo que ha pasado en la Iglesia?

Por Joel De Loera

Con todos los escándalos recientes de la Iglesia, ¿por qué desear permanecer en la Iglesia?

Muchos católicos bien intencionados se preguntan esto. El reciente escándalo de abuso sexual definitivamente está sacudiendo la fe de muchos. Con la esperanza de ayudar a cualquier persona que pueda estar luchando con esa pregunta, me gustaría compartir mi experiencia personal.

Regresé a la Iglesia hace 11 años cuando tenía 20 años en busca de la verdad. Había estado lejos de Dios por muchos años y no sentía ningún deseo de volver a la Iglesia Católica. La verdad es que yo había desarrollado un odio especial hacia la Iglesia. Durante el tiempo que estuve alejado de ella, leí literatura anticatólica y desarrollé la creencia errónea, pero firme, de que todo estaba “podrido” en la Iglesia, empezando por el Papa e incluido hasta el clero y los católicos comunes.

No obstante, en un momento en que ya no podía hundirme más y estaba completamente perdido en mi propio estilo de vida destructivo y adictivo, mi madre me convenció de ir a un retiro carismático. El orador principal fue un diácono de Nueva York conocido por sus muchos carismas espirituales. Entre ellos se encontraban los dones de sanación y profecía. En un momento dado, y casi en contra de mi voluntad, el diácono me impuso las manos y oró al Espíritu Santo

por mi “curación espiritual”.

Al principio quise correr y huir. Pero luego bajé la guardia y me rendí. Fue entonces cuando sentí que una sensación abrumadora descendía sobre mí. Ahora sé que fue la presencia del Espíritu Santo obrando en mí, pero cuando esto sucedió, estaba extremadamente confundido. Por primera vez en muchos años creí que Dios era real; estaba convencido de que Jesús me amaba y que quería salvarme del estilo de vida dañino que llevaba. (Guardaré los detalles de esta poderosa experiencia para otro momento.)

Mi familia estaba tan agradecida de este diácono que él se convirtió en parte de nuestra familia. Lo invitamos a venir a nuestra parroquia y a otras parroquias cercanas en varias ocasiones. Lo llevábamos a comer y a veces pasábamos toda la tarde conversando con él sobre las alegrías de ser discípulos de Jesucristo. Simplemente, no podíamos expresar suficientemente nuestra gratitud hacia él. Dios había obrado milagros en nuestra familia a través de este hombre y nos sentíamos eternamente en deuda con Dios y con él. Él se convirtió para mí en un modelo a seguir y alguien a quien realmente admiraba. Él era nuestro héroe. Pero un día, todo cambió.

Habíamos convencido a mi hermana a que hablara con él, ya que tenía algunas dudas sobre la fe y no estaba lista para volver a la Iglesia. Mis padres estaban tan emocionados de eso. Estaban convencidos

de que, si había alguien que podía traerla de vuelta a la Iglesia, sería él.

Pero las cosas salieron terriblemente mal. Después de que ambos tuvieran varias conversaciones en los retiros y por teléfono, mi hermana nos reveló un secreto muy oscuro: el diácono la había llamado en medio de la noche y había tratado de convencerla de que fuera a su habitación del hotel. Estaba intoxicado y actuó de manera beligerante. Ésa no fue la peor parte. Él le hizo además amenazas aterradoras;



Joel de Loera

y hasta le advirtió que le pasarían cosas malas, si ella le contaba a alguien sobre su acoso. Naturalmente, ella nos lo dijo, pero pensó que no le íbamos a creer debido a la excelente reputación que el diácono tenía. Él era una especie de “superestrella católica”, por así decirlo, el “hombre del momento”. Todos los líderes de los ministerios católicos querían que visitara sus parroquias para una misión o un retiro. Al fin y al cabo, le creímos a nuestra hermana.

Más tarde en la misma semana la llamó de nuevo y ella lo puso en el altavoz del teléfono para que lo escucháramos. Así nosotros pudimos oír también la evidencia. Lo reportamos a la diócesis y luego de realizarse una investigación descubrieron que estaba involucrado en conductas inapropiadas y delictivas en otras diócesis. El diácono fue finalmente removido del ministerio.

Naturalmente, estábamos en estado de shock, enfurecidos y completamente



decepcionados. Yo personalmente no sabía ni qué pensar. De repente, se me cayó el mundo. Tenía un par de amigos protestantes que me decían que la Iglesia Católica no podía ser la verdadera Iglesia de Cristo debido a toda la corrupción. Insistieron en que todos los católicos eran borrachos, pervertidos, se creían justos, o que eran ladrones, mentirosos o hipócritas. Debido a esta experiencia tan decepcionante y dolorosa, casi empecé a creerme lo que me decían. Después de todo, en ese momento mi fe no había madurado lo suficiente.

Entonces, ¿qué me hizo quedarme en la Iglesia Católica? Recuerdo que cuando llegué a casa una noche me arrodillé ante un crucifijo en mi habitación y oré: “Dios mío, no conozco a muchos católicos

fieles y comprometidos, y no estoy seguro de si están viviendo una vida doble. Ni tan siquiera sé si hay alguno. Pero incluso si no hay ninguno, quiero complacerte y quiero permanecer fiel a tu Iglesia. Pero no puedo hacer esto por mi cuenta. Ayúdame a mantenerme fiel y ayúdame a resistir la tentación de tener una vida doble y a no ser hipócrita. Ayúdame a ser sincero y apasionado contigo y con tu Iglesia”.

“Pero si tardo, para que sepas cómo hay que portarse en la casa de Dios, que es la Iglesia de Dios vivo, columna y fundamento de la verdad”. (1 Tim 3,15)

Han pasado muchos años y no estoy ni cerca de ser perfecto o santo. Todavía soy un pecador. Pero sigo intentando ser auténtico y fiel a mi vocación. Estoy tratando de ser el discípulo misionero que

Jesús quiere que yo sea. Me siento a veces gastado y necesito renovación. A menudo, necesito visitar el Sacramento de la Reconciliación. Mis oraciones diarias, el Santo Rosario, la adoración del Santísimo

Sacramento y la Misa diaria me han mantenido en marcha. Mi esposa también me santifica y me ayuda a permanecer enfocado. Nos ayudamos mutuamente a ser responsables y rendirnos cuentas uno con el otro. A lo largo de los años, también he tenido la bendición de conocer y hacerme amigo de sacerdotes, obispos, religiosas, monjes y católicos laicos fieles y santos. Su testimonio radical y sus vidas de oración mantienen unida a la Iglesia. Sin lugar a dudas, toda esta bondad se debe a que el Espíritu Santo continúa guiando y santificando a Su Iglesia.

Todavía estoy en la Iglesia porque no importa qué tan mal se pongan las cosas, Jesús siempre estará presente de manera sacramental en la Sagrada Eucaristía, y la gracia de Dios continuará infundiendo nuestras almas a través de los sacramentos que Cristo mismo instituyó. Los humanos tropezamos y nos caemos, pero Dios nunca falla y nunca rompe Sus promesas. ✝

Joel de Loera tiene una maestría en Teología Pastoral y es el Director de Formación de la Parroquia de San Bartolomé de Fort Worth.



¿De Dónde Proviene el **Árbol de Navidad?**

Por ACI Prensa

¿Qué tiene que ver el origen del árbol de Navidad, el dios nórdico pagano Thor y San Bonifacio? La vida de este último, santo conocido como el apóstol de los germanos, explica la relación de los tres en una famosa historia.

San Bonifacio nació en Inglaterra alrededor del año 680. Ingresó a un monasterio benedictino antes de ser enviado por el Papa a evangelizar los territorios que pertenecen a la actual Alemania. Primero fue como sacerdote y después eventualmente como obispo.

Bajo la protección del gran Charles Martel, Bonifacio viajó por toda Alemania fortaleciendo las regiones que ya habían abrazado el cristianismo y llevó la luz de Cristo a quienes no la tenían aún.

El Papa Benedicto XVI dijo acerca de San Bonifacio en el año 2009 que “su incansable labor, su don para la organización y su carácter moldeable, amigable y firme” fueron determinantes para el éxito de sus viajes.

El escritor Henry Van Dyke lo describió así en 1897 en su libro *The First Christmas Tree*, (El primer árbol de navidad): “¡Qué buen tipo! Era justo y ligero, pero recto como una lanza y fuerte como un bastón de roble. Su rostro todavía era joven; su piel suave estaba bronceada por el sol y el viento. Sus ojos grises, limpios y amables, brillaban como el fuego cuando hablaba de sus aventuras y de los malos actos de los falsos sacerdotes a quienes enfrentó”.

Alrededor del año 723 Bonifacio viajó con un pequeño grupo de personas a la región de la Baja Sajonia. El conocía a una comunidad de paganos cerca de Geismar que, en medio del invierno, iban a realizar un sacrificio humano (donde usualmente la víctima era un niño) a Thor, el dios del trueno, en la base de un roble al que consideraban sagrado y que era conocido como “El Roble del Trueno”.

Bonifacio, acatando el consejo de un obispo hermano, quiso destruir el Roble del Trueno no sólo para salvar a la víctima sino para mostrar a los paganos que él no sería derribado por un rayo lanzado por Thor.

El Santo y sus compañeros llegaron a la aldea en la víspera de Navidad justo a tiempo para interrumpir el sacrificio. Con su báculo de obispo en la mano, Bonifacio se acercó a los paganos, que se habían reunido en la base del Roble del Trueno, y les dijo: “aquí está el Roble del Trueno, y aquí la cruz de Cristo que romperá el martillo del dios falso, Thor”.

El verdugo levantó un martillo para ejecutar al pequeño niño que había sido colocado para el sacrificio. Pero en el descenso, el Obispo extendió su báculo para bloquear el golpe y milagrosamente rompió el gran martillo de piedra y salvó la vida del niño.

Después, se dice que Bonifacio habló así al pueblo, “¡escuchen hijos del bosque! La sangre no fluirá esta noche, salvo la que la piedad ha dibujado del pecho de una madre. Porque esta es la noche en que nació Cristo, el hijo del Altísimo, el Salvador de la humanidad. Él es más justo que Baldur el Hermoso, más grande que Odín el Sabio, más gentil que Freya el Bueno. Desde su venida el sacrificio ha terminado. La oscuridad, Thor, a quien han llamado en vano, es la muerte. En lo profundo de las sombras de Niffelheim él se ha perdido para siempre. Así es que ahora en esta noche ustedes empezarán a vivir. Este árbol sangriento ya nunca

más oscurecerá su tierra. En el nombre de Dios, voy a destruirlo”.

Entonces, Bonifacio tomó un hacha que estaba cerca de ahí, y según la tradición, cuando la blandió poderosamente hacia el roble una gran ráfaga de viento voló el bosque y derribó

el árbol con raíces y todo. El árbol cayó al suelo y se rompió en cuatro pedazos.

Después de este suceso, el Santo construyó una capilla con la madera del roble, pero esta historia va más allá de las ruinas del poderoso árbol.

El “Apóstol de Alemania” siguió predicando al pueblo germánico que estaba asombrado y no podía creer que el asesino del Roble de Thor no haya sido golpeado por su dios. Bonifacio miró más allá donde yacía el roble y señaló a un pequeño pino y dijo:

“Este pequeño árbol, este pequeño hijo del bosque, será su árbol santo esta noche. Esta es la madera de la paz... Es el signo de una vida sin fin, porque sus hojas son siempre verdes. Miren como las puntas están dirigidas hacia el cielo. Hay que llamarlo el árbol del Niño Jesús; reúnanse en torno a él, no en el bosque salvaje, sino en sus hogares; allí habrá refugio y no habrá actos sangrientos, sino regalos amorosos y ritos de bondad”.

Así, los alemanes empezaron una nueva tradición esa noche, que se ha extendido hasta nuestros días. Al traer un pino a sus hogares, decorándolo con velas y ornamentos y al celebrar el nacimiento del Salvador, el Apóstol de Alemania y su rebaño nos dieron lo que hoy conocemos como el árbol de Navidad. 🇩🇪

“Hay que llamarlo el árbol del Niño Jesús; reúnanse en torno a él, no en el bosque salvaje, sino en sus hogares; allí habrá refugio y no habrá actos sangrientos, sino regalos amorosos y ritos de bondad”.



DIOCESE OF
FORT WORTH
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



The mission of Catholic education in the schools of the Diocese of Fort Worth is to open the doors so that our students can see further than the walls that otherwise would enclose them in darkness. What does seeing deep into eternity really look like? It involves being able to recognize, to appropriate, and to cherish the eternal and transcendental goods of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. These three transcendental goods depend upon each other within the envelope of eternity.



Most Rev. Michael F. Olson
Bishop of Fort Worth