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O come,
Emmanuel!



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COME, LORD JESUS — EMMANUEL

BISHOP MICHAEL OLSON
is the fourth bishop of the
Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth.



 @BpOlsonFW

We began the season of Advent with the liturgical antiphon and refrain, “Come, Lord Jesus!” We have continuously said this prayer throughout Advent in our contemporary circumstances of a spike in cases of COVID-19; of continued civil unrest regarding the political outcome of our presidential election; of the uncertainty of what the future holds regarding matters of religious liberty; of the scandal and doubt caused by the ongoing McCarrick issue and the reception of the report issued by the Vatican; of the mistrust of legitimate authority; and of the fears of economic hardships because of future uncertainty regarding employment for so many. “Come, Lord Jesus!”

God answers our Advent prayer of “Come, Lord Jesus” with His announcement made through His angels to the shepherds, and their response, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” As Catholics, our place is in Bethlehem in the stable with Mary and Joseph, with the angels, with the ox and the donkey, with the shepherds, at the manger-crib of Emmanuel. God has answered our prayers again by being with us amidst our fears with the offer of unconditional love and the gift of His peace.

God has made Himself small again and dependent on human love in the Incarnation, seen first in the birth of the Divine Infant in Bethlehem. His smallness drives away our fears and evokes a more human love and compassion than that rejected by Adam and Eve in Eden. God has made Himself small again and vulnerable in the Divine Infant, who from the moment of His birth in the fullness of

humanity, shows us what our proper disposition should be in God’s presence: acceptance of His love and dependence on His grace.

Christmas is not only the celebration of the power of God over sin and evil. More poignantly, it is the celebration of humanity — the fullness of humanity not marred by sin but at peace with God. The humanity that is prone to all of the fears that were mentioned at the start of this article is now shown a renewed dignity and confidence in the birth of the Divine Infant, surrounded by His Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph — each of whom said “yes” to God where our first parents said “no.”

The fears that were mentioned at the start of this article dissipate, not because of wishful thinking or political planning, but because of the real truth that God is Emmanuel — He is with us and for us — and will never be against or away from us and has chosen to be so in the full humanity of the Baby Jesus given to us and for us in the manger of Bethlehem.

Our fears dissipate when in the Christ Child we recognize the vulnerability of each and all other human beings with whom we share our humanity as created and redeemed in the image and likeness of God. The dignity of every human being is not based in an abstraction but in the full and perfect revelation of God in the Christ Child, surrounded by Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Christmas calls on our response to let go of fear and embrace our God. He has made Himself embraceable as a little baby that we might embrace Him in the love of our neighbor by sharing what we have been given with confidence and peace: Emmanuel, God is with us. 🇺🇸

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GOD IS WITH US

Their hands are young and smooth. Or knotted with arthritis. Or callused with labor. All shades of skin, and all seeking one thing: the body and blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

As an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at my parish of 22 years, I have the awesome privilege of distributing the Holy Eucharist at Mass. It never fails to fill me with gratitude and humility.

Parishioners form a line as they approach. I know some of these people well. I've studied with them, eaten with them, served with them, mourned with them, and laughed with them.

Others I've never met, but yet I feel like I know them nevertheless. They are my brothers and sisters in Christ, and we have come together this Sunday morning to worship God and receive His Son — Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity — in the Eucharist. Like the Wise Men, we come to find Jesus.

During the weeks in March and April when there was no public celebration of the Mass, my family and I took virtual road trips each Sunday. We saw beautiful basilicas, listened to homilies from renowned priests, and heard cantors whose singing rivaled the angels. Each week, we participated in a spiritual Communion in a different location, making virtual pilgrimages each Sunday to several destinations on a Catholic bucket list.

Despite the grandeur of the churches and the insightful homilies, we missed the Eucharist. When parishes in the diocese reopened for public celebration of the Mass, we arrived 30 minutes early just in case the pews were packed. (They weren't. Helpful ushers seated us in the front row.) We were thrilled to get back to our local parish and receive the Blessed Sacrament.

The pandemic has thinned attendance at Mass. Many familiar faces have not returned out of health concerns. In this challenging year, the words of Saint Teresa of Kolkata seem especially apt, "In an ever-changing world, the Holy Eucharist is a constant reminder of the great reality of God's changeless love."

The Holy Eucharist sustained the faithful who came before us through pandemics and wars and natural disasters. For us, too, Jesus is with us — Emmanuel — in a real and tangible way through it all. That explains why "Eucharist" means giving thanks. Thank you, God, for making your eternal love for us manifest in the Blessed Sacrament.

I pray for the day that finds all of us in the sanctuaries of our parishes again, united in worship and receiving the source and summit of our Christian life.

Susan Moses, Associate Editor



Gemma Vasquez, 10, plays the role of Mary during a drive-thru live Nativity scene outside Holy Trinity Catholic School Dec. 5. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Holy Trinity School hosts drive-thru Nativity scene

GRAPEVINE — COVID-19 restrictions? No problem for Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine. With COVID rates rising in the Metroplex, school leadership partnered with Catholic Charities Fort Worth to come up with an ingenious way to host the school’s annual Nativity on December 4-5.

Instead of hosting the live Nativity scenes inside the school like they did during Advent 2019, students and teachers set up five live Nativity scenes at neighboring homes in Colleyville and Grapevine. Two other live scenes took place outside Holy Trinity school. Visitors viewed the scenes from the comfort of their cars. At the final scene, families were invited to donate a new, unwrapped toy for CCFW to give to children in need.

“The toy drive was phenomenal,” said Kristine Webb, development director for Holy Trinity. “The outpouring of support for

Catholic Charities was amazing. CCFW was able to fill two vans. They were thrilled.”

Parents and students also enjoyed the new twist on presenting the Nativity, which also featured live farm animals.

“They loved our ‘outside’ the box thinking,” Webb said. “We were not going to let COVID-19 stop us from holding our second annual live Nativity. Our families embraced the idea. During this time, events that involve our community are so important.”

School organizers estimated that over the event’s two nights, more than 400 cars visited.

More than just a fun tradition, the Nativity was a way for students to display and explore their faith.

“Our students are so excited to be a part of the cast. They take their role seriously,” Webb said. “We hope our live Nativity inspired families to learn more about the birth of Christ.”

#iGiveCatholic campaign brings generous results

FORT WORTH — The Diocese of Fort Worth’s first year of participating in the #iGiveCatholic program, an online giving day held Dec. 1, brought generous results.



the 24-hour crowdfunding event, held nationally on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, has grown consistently, both in participation and total donations.

“In fall 2019, 39 partnering dioceses raised more than \$7.4 million for 3,500 plus participating parishes, schools, and ministries,” Collins said.

This year 48,275 donors gave more than \$12.7 million to hundreds of ministries nationwide.

Locally, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Fort Worth, Our Lady of Lourdes in Mineral Wells, and St. Michael in Bedford raised more than \$12,000 each. Altogether, Catholic schools in the diocese raised \$36,197.

More than 900 donors gave \$156,062 to 43 ministries in the diocese, said Wendy Collins, director of stewardship and parish relations for the Advancement Foundation.

“We are overwhelmed by the generosity of our community that supported the Fort Worth diocese in our first ‘Giving Tuesday’ with #iGiveCatholic,” she said. “We are so grateful for your help in making this a very successful year.”

For the past six years,



Seminarian Austin Hoodenpyle checks his vestments before daily Mass at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Lewisville. (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)

Pastoral year offers seminarians firsthand lessons

LEWISVILLE — Austin Hoodenpyle can't imagine formation to become a priest without experiencing a pastoral year. After enrolling at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., for theology studies, the 26-year-old moved to Lewisville in June to become entrenched in parish life at St. Philip the Apostle.

Designed to show how a priest balances ministry with administrative work and outreach to the community, a pastoral internship for seminarians offers added lessons in 2020. Shepherdng parishioners toward the light of Christ in the midst of a pandemic has been a skill Hoodenpyle is learning.

"One of the challenges I've come across this year is taking what I learned in theology and philosophy and making it something fruitful for the people of God," the seminarian said.

During his year away from the classroom, Hoodenpyle is enthused to witness firsthand how a

parish operates.

"The pandemic allowed me to observe how the administration and staff worked together with the pastor to make the adjustments needed to keep people safe," Hoodenpyle said.

Brandon LeClair arrived at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in September for his pastoral year. The large Keller parish differs greatly from the small, rural parishes in Seymour and Megargel where he spent his first summer as a seminarian.

In addition to administrative work and serving at Mass, the 27-year-old accompanies priests on home visits and hospital calls. Their presence is a sign of hope and compassion during the current health crisis.

What's appealing about priestly ministry?

"I think it's bringing the sacraments to the people, but also just being with them," LeClair said.

—Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Bishop Olson clarifies confusion regarding COVID-19 vaccines

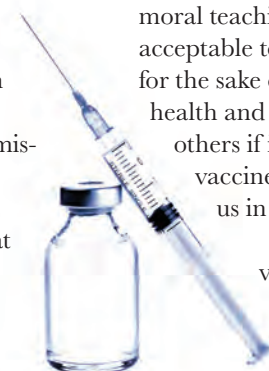
FORT WORTH — With the distribution and administration of an initial allotment of more than 1.4 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine having begun, many faithful Catholics have questioned the moral permissibility of using the vaccines, especially those developed by Pfizer and Moderna.

In response, Bishop Michael Olson released a statement to assure "Catholics and men and women of good will that it is morally permissible to receive the vaccines for COVID-19" that arrived in Texas beginning Dec. 14.

He continued, "Some have asserted on social media that if a vaccine is connected in any way to tainted cell lines, then it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. This is an inaccurate and rigorist portrayal of authentic Catholic moral teaching."

A third vaccine, produced by AstraZeneca, is "morally concerning because of its origins," the bishop said. But according to Catholic moral teaching, "it is also acceptable to receive it for the sake of our own health and the health of others if it is the only vaccine available to us in this area."

For more, visit bit.ly/vaccine-ethics.





Bishop Michael Olson (center) talks with a panelist during a taping of the American Religious Town Hall Meeting. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Bishop Olson gives Catholic voice on TV show

DALLAS — The free exchange of ideas and opinions is critical to an informed society, and Bishop Michael Olson of the Diocese of Fort Worth is a leading Catholic voice as a panelist on the American Religious Town Hall Meeting.

The American Religious Town Hall Meeting is a weekly syndicated television program that features clergy from various religious denominations debating religious, social, and political issues.

Begun in 1952, the program is taped in Dallas and is broadcast on Sundays on a number of local television stations nationwide as well as on Dish Network.

Bishop Olson said that the program is an important vessel for learning about other religions and points of view, as well as teaching Catholic traditions to others.

“It most certainly is not a debate nor an exercise in apologetics, two valuable things for other venues;

rather, the program involves respectful listening and a reasonable articulation of what the Catholic Church teaches in discussion with people of other faith traditions,” the prelate said.

Bishop Olson joined the program in 2008 when its producers were looking for a replacement for Father Michael Duca, a Dallas priest who had just been appointed the Bishop of Shreveport, Louisiana.

The show melds religious, moral, and ethical topics, and the bishop said he takes the opportunity to share the Catholic perspective.

“I also think that the program has served as a vehicle to introduce viewers to the social teaching of the Catholic Church that is focused on the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God, and not upon partisan positions in popular culture,” Bishop Olson said.

— Lance Murray

FBI expert talks about keeping kids safe online

FORT WORTH — Now more than ever, kids face a big threat from sexual predators. And it can happen even if the child never left the home.

The threat comes from the technology that’s a routine part of life from grade school through high school. According to statistics from the FBI, one in five children has received a sexual solicitation online and more than 70 percent report receiving messages from someone they don’t know.

Parents and others who work with children need to know how to keep kids safe when they go online, said Sandra Schrader-Farry, director of Safe Environment for the Diocese of Fort Worth. The Safe Environment program aims to provide that help for parents, educators, and volunteers.

On Oct. 26, Safe Environment offered a special presentation, “The Online World: Keeping Children Safe,” presented by FBI Special Agent Chris Thompson, who works in the crimes against children unit in North Texas.

“I usually find out about something after the damage is done,” Thompson said. “If we educate ourselves and others and prevent a child from becoming a victim in the future, it’s worthwhile.”

Thompson, a parishioner in our diocese, touched on several ways for parents to keep children safe online.

Schrader-Farry said the Safe Environment Office plans to provide the presentation on a regular basis.

— Sandra Engelland

Local Knights donate to vocations, deaf ministry

FORT WORTH — Even in a pandemic year, the Knights of Columbus in the Diocese of Fort Worth aim to show their support for vocations and deaf ministry.

Although COVID-19 restrictions prevented the Knights' annual Priest and Religious Appreciation Dinner and Auction from taking place this year, the Knights didn't let that keep them from showing their appreciation.

"The annual dinner is always held before the seminarians go back to school, giving members a chance to meet and visit with all the seminarians [and priests] in the diocese," said Pat Henz, program director for the Knights' Texas State Council. "Because the dinner was canceled, cards were sent to all the seminarians with notes of support and a little extra cash to help them

as they return to school."

Leaders from the Knights presented Bishop Michael Olson with a check for \$211,830 earmarked for supporting Deaf Ministry and Vocations programs of the Diocese of Fort Worth. Wichita Falls Council #1473 raised \$146,000 of that sum.

The Knights also presented Father Jonathan Wallis, director of seminarian formation and vicar general, with a \$4,000 check to assist with any emergencies that may arise with seminarians. Those funds were raised through the Knights' "Pennies for Seminarians" program.

Another \$1,000 was given to the diocese to support infirm and retired priests. Finally, the Knights donated a \$1,000 check to Bishop Olson for him to use toward the charity of his choice.

— Juan Guajardo

Father Jonathan Wallis (left) and Bishop Michael Olson are presented a check for more than \$211,000 by the Knights of Columbus. (Photo courtesy Pat Henz)



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

PRIEST ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL F. OLSON

REV. ANTHONY BORROW, SJ

Retreat Director of Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House in Lake Dallas, has been recalled by his religious order community to take on a new assignment in Belize, effective October 2.

REV. BASIL ERUO

Has been granted faculties to serve at Sheppard Air Force Base and as needed in the local parishes of the Diocese of Fort Worth, effective September 25.

REV. MICHAEL GRECO

Has been assigned as Adjutant Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Fort Worth, effective October 14.

REV. ASCENCION REA LAGUNAS, CORC

Has been assigned as Parochial Vicar of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, effective October 8.

REV. JOSE MANUEL JIMENEZ MEDINA, CORC

Has been recalled by his religious order community to take on a new assignment in Mexico, effective September 30.

IN MEMORIAM

SR. MARY BRIAN BOLE, SSND

October 2, 2020



Sister Mary Brian joined the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1963 because she was convinced it was the way God wanted her to serve others. The longtime educator served at Nolan Catholic High School from 1997-2003.

SR. FRANCES VUILLEMIN, SSMN

November 13, 2020



Sister Frances knew from the age of 12 that she wanted to serve God. Following in the footsteps of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur she so admired, she spent 80 years serving others in various capacities.

DCN. EMILIO "POPO" GONZALEZ

November 26, 2020



Beloved in the Denton community and beyond, Dcn. "Popo" was known for his advocacy for the poor and immigrants. He also worked tirelessly as a permanent deacon assigned to Denton's Immaculate Conception Church.

Full obituaries are available at NorthTexasCatholic.org.



Knights of Columbus from across the diocese gathered at St. Andrew Parish to celebrate the beatification of Father Michael McGivney. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Young Catholic Professionals celebrates 10 years

FORT WORTH — In the spring of 2010, Jennifer Baugh was in a time of transition. She was in a season of silence and she searched for God in her prayers. Soon, she received an answer to those prayers: “a moment of grace, peace, joy, and serenity...a feeling of lightness.”

Baugh suddenly felt much more connected to God. “When we grow in love with someone... we have to share it,” she said. And she did. She shared her faith in bars, restaurants, and even her apartment gym.

While doing so, she noticed a “tremendous amount of restlessness” among young adults like her. So she began the organization known as Young Catholic Professionals (YCP). Ten years later, that nonprofit, and the community it has fostered

nationwide, continues to grow and empower young adult Catholics to share their faith at work and in their parishes.

Currently, there are YCP chapters in 23 cities. The Fort Worth chapter was formed in 2014.

“I’ve had the pleasure of working for some pretty well-known companies,” said Mark Kennedy, associate director of marketing for the Fort Worth chapter. “While these companies have great values, they are driven by their profits. The difference is YCP is driven by its mission.”

This year, the apostolate has continued that mission by forming new chapters and hosting multiple virtual events, such as speaker series and Rosaries. For more information, visit ycpfortworth.org.

— Kiki Hayden

Local Knights gather for beatification of Fr. McGivney

FORT WORTH — That Knights of Columbus founder Father Michael McGivney died during a pandemic that may have been coronavirus related and was, more than a century later, raised to the status of a Blessed during a similar pandemic certainly begs contemplation, said Chris Stark, general agent for the Knights in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Stark was also impressed by the priest’s tireless ministry to immigrant Catholics in Connecticut from 1887 to his death in 1890.

“You’ve got to remember, he only lived to be 38 and in just eight years put together everything that the Knights of Columbus has become,” Stark said.

On Oct. 31, Stark joined dozens of Knights of Columbus from across the diocese in St. Andrew Church to watch EWTN’s live broadcast of the Mass and celebration of Fr. McGivney’s new title, Blessed McGivney.

Father Jim Gigliotti,

TOR, pastor of St. Andrew, expressed jubilation following the broadcast, commenting that it was the first beatification Mass he had experienced.

St. Andrew parishioner Brian Sprague, a field agent with the Knights, said Bl. McGivney’s life serves as a reminder to all Catholics of the importance of outreach and building the domestic church within families.

“The Knights are geared toward building that domestic church and keeping families together, [especially] in instances where the worst happens and the breadwinner is no longer there for that family...,” Sprague said.

Pope Francis in May authorized a decree attributing a 2015 miracle to Fr. McGivney’s intercession, opening the way for his beatification. That leaves Bl. McGivney one step from possible sainthood.

— Matthew Smith



Alberto Rios at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Fort Worth. Rios is one of two instructors who can train Safe Environment facilitators in Spanish. (NTC/Jayne Donahue)

PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN? **SÍ**

With new Spanish facilitator training and expanded virtual sessions, Safe Environment program keeps emphasis on child protection

By Sandra Engelland

In November, five people in the Diocese of Fort Worth trained to become facilitators in the diocese's Virtus program to prevent child sexual abuse, Protecting God's Children®.

That training is something that has happened frequently since the diocese began using the Virtus program a little more than two years ago. But this time the instruction for the facilitators was given in Spanish.

Facilitators have been leading the program for clergy, employees, and volunteers in Spanish since it began, but they had to

learn the materials in English first.

"So many nuances get missed as facilitators have to translate them into their own language," said Sandra Schrader-Farry, director of Safe Environment.

Alberto Rios, one of two instructors in the diocese equipped to teach facilitators in Spanish, said, "There's a lot that is lost in translation whenever we go from one language to another. It's also helpful to have a background in the culture."

Sometimes a literal translation doesn't work as well as a program designed in Spanish, he said.

The end result is that more people can facilitate the sessions to reach more

participants across the diocese, which makes children safer as parishioners' eyes and ears are opened to signs of potential abuse, Schrader-Farry said.

Reaching more people during the pandemic was also the goal of offering Protecting God's Children and other Safe Environment programs in Zoom sessions.

Nancy Mitchell, assistant director of Safe Environment, said that about 4,000 people in the diocese have attended sessions on Zoom since March.

Susan Schabel, liturgy coordinator at St. Philip the Apostle in Lewisville, has

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ON ANY GIVEN sunday

Parish security teams use observation and training to build a community that looks out for one another

By Juan Guajardo

On any given Sunday, Mark Hesselgrave steps into Good Shepherd Church in Colleyville ready to give up his life for his fellow parishioners attending Mass.

And it's not just him. Good Shepherd relies on an entire team of armed Guardians, plus medical personnel trained in first aid and basic life support, and ushers and greeters — observers — trained in identifying suspicious behaviors and body language.

Before the Mass, the diverse team gets together and recites a prayer composed by Deacon Richard Griego, a Marine who served in Vietnam. "Protecting Father, you have called us to 'stand a post' as Guardian Ministers for the protection of those you place in our path, the faithful and visitors of our parish..."

Prayer is needed, Hesselgrave

explained. "We are a group of folks willing to put our lives on the line to protect each other and the lives of our [fellow] parishioners. It's so critically important that we pray together and ask God to watch over and protect us."

After their prayer, the team rolls into action.

Members brief in the usher room and gear up with two-way radios and earpieces. They run a complete facilities check, making sure nobody is hiding out in the building. They lock doors that should be locked. They greet worshippers as they come into the church to discreetly screen for anyone who might seem out of place, fidgety, or suspicious. ("We call it heightening our 'Spidey senses,'" Hesselgrave said).

They also introduce themselves to the police officer on duty, "so he knows who we are. The [officers] know we're armed and they're totally supportive and glad to

have the backup," Hesselgrave explained.

Then they sit or stand in specific places in the church, where they can have clear views of the congregation during Mass. You might not notice them, but they notice you.

That safety ritual at Good Shepherd is just one of many similar ones taking place at Masses all over the Diocese of Fort Worth. It's all part of the diocese's multi-layered security program to proactively ensure the safety of the faithful in its 91 parishes and 19 schools. Despite challenges presented by the pandemic, training of Guardian Ministry teams continues.

A COMMUNITY MINISTRY

The idea of the Guardian teams was introduced in early 2018, when Bishop Michael Olson enlisted the help of a security firm to assist the diocese in developing



Many parishioners may not notice the Guardian Ministry team keeping a watchful eye at Mass. (NTC/Ben Torres)

a comprehensive plan to address the reality of mass shootings in sacred spaces, such as the Sutherland Springs massacre in 2017.

The firm conducted vulnerability assessments at every parish and school and gave recommendations.

It also proposed the idea of recruiting, screening, and training parishioners to provide security at parishes, a model that has been used successfully by other Christian churches.

Led by Mike Short, the diocese's first director of security, parishes across the diocese's 28 counties are currently implementing Guardian Ministry teams.

While one aspect of the Guardian Ministry includes training and deploying armed parishioners, the most important part of the ministry is building a "community that looks out for one another," Short said, explaining that many Guardians do not carry firearms.

Continued on Page 14



Guardian Ministry members position themselves to have good visibility of the sanctuary. (NTC/Ben Torres)

At St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, security members put on an earpiece before Mass. (NTC/Ben Torres)



From Page 13

Hesselgrave, an armed Guardian himself, explained, “The huge part of the ministry is training in observation and recognition of potential threats.”

That means recruiting volunteers from across different ministries — such as ushers, greeters, lectors, and even Eucharistic ministers — and training them in a “holistic approach to safety.”

Guardian team members are extensively and continually trained in everything from observation and recognition of potential threats to de-escalation techniques and responding to medical emergencies. The volunteers who make up the medical personnel on the team receive training in “Stop the Bleed” techniques and treating trauma.

During the week, many of Guardian Ministry team members work in law enforcement, or as doctors, nurses, and EMTs. Some are veterans or currently in the military and some work in retail and customer service jobs.

For Eric Debus, who leads the Guardian Ministry at St. Mark Parish in Argyle, there’s a common thread between those different occupations.

“You must have a servant’s heart to do this,” he said. “The virtues that go along [with this ministry] are charity, you want to give back in some way. Justice is another, because you believe in being there for others, holding people accountable, and being there to protect. Then, of course, courage. You need courage to do this on any part of the team.”

Short, the director of security, would add “relational” to that.

“The reality of this vision is a community-based system that looks out for one another,” he said. “We primarily do that through relationships. Everybody [on the team] should be relational so that they can understand who is coming to the parish and building a relationship with them.”

SHEEP DOGS

Of course, a crucial aspect of the Guardian Ministry is the selecting, screening, and training of parishioners to respond to an armed threat. Debus, a law enforcement officer, is one of those armed Guardians.

He describes those men and women as “the sheep dogs of the parish” who “protect the flock in the event that something bad were to happen.”

Short, a former detective and SWAT team member with the Lewisville Police Department, is quick to point out that the training of armed Guardians is extensive and continual. He also understands the concerns of some the faithful, “Why do we even need to have armed civilians in there?”

To which he responds, “If you look at the White Settlement shooting [at West Freeway Church of Christ] that happened in December 2019, that was a clear indication of why we’re doing what we’re doing. Unfortunately, three people died in six seconds that day. Obviously, that’s a worst-case scenario, but it happened so quickly.”



A member at Good Shepherd Parish checks doors of meeting rooms before Mass. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Mike Short, diocesan director of security, leads a training at St. Mark Parish in Argyle. (NTC/Kenneth Mulyer)



Parishioners on the Guardian Ministry team at St. Mark Parish participate in a training drill. (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)

The gunman in that shooting was fatally shot by 71-year-old Jack Wilson, a volunteer security team member at the church.

“We’ve seen how these kinds of things play out,” Short said. “In order to mitigate that risk, to bridge that gap, we really need people who are involved in the community, but we can’t do that with just anybody.”

Applicants for any role in Guardian Ministry are extensively screened through criminal background checks, a comprehensive personal history analysis, and go through extensive, year-round training, including scenario-based training. Armed Guardians are taught that responding with force to a threat is the last resort.

“It’s taken very seriously because there is a great responsibility that comes with it,” Short said. “If something happens where we find somebody who is a person of concern, we have the understanding and training to be able to respond to that. We always come from the Christian perspective and want to help that person. The last thing we would want to do would be to have to utilize any kind of force.”

MINISTRY NUMBERS GROWING – MORE VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

Despite a worldwide pandemic, training of new Guardian Ministry members and the creation of new teams has continued steadily.

Continued on Page 16



SCREENED AND TRAINED

All Guardian Ministry team members undergo rigorous screening and ongoing training, especially those who carry firearms.

Criteria to be considered for this include:

- Current Texas License to Carry
- Self Defense Legal Service Membership (USCCA, CCW Safe, US Law Shield)
- Comprehensive social history
- Virtus Safe Environment training
- Physical standards:
 - ✓ Capability to sprint
 - ✓ Capability to move side to side rapidly
 - ✓ Capability to move from standing to kneeling and back to standing

Individuals interested in volunteering to become a Guardian Ministry team member should contact their pastor.

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“Over the last six months, we’ve really made strides in a lot of parishes,” Short said. “We’re getting a lot of new recruits, training a lot of folks... To date, we’ve trained almost 300 individuals” to participate in the various parts of the Guardian Ministry.

Taking advantage of Zoom livestreaming, Short has conducted online weekly and monthly training for different members of the Guardian teams, “so that we can continually keep this top of mind to better understand how an emergency response looks like in our parishes.”

Yet, more faithful Catholics are needed to continue the leading-edge security program the Diocese of Fort Worth is creating, Short said. “We haven’t stopped just because of COVID. We’re still training. We’re still recruiting.”

Parishioners interested in joining should reach out to their pastor and find out if there’s a team at their parish. “It’s a group effort,” Short said of the security program. “I think so many people benefit from it, so if it sounds like something you’re interested in, please seek it out.”

For Bruce Mallory, director of Safe Environment at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, the creation of a trained Guardian team has made protecting their 20,285-square-foot church possible.

“If someone reports [something suspicious] up the chain, then we’ve got a strategy for how to do that. They can make us aware, we can observe, and we have enough cameras in the church to keep an eye on people inside or outside,” the armed Guardian and longtime Knight of Columbus said.

Thanks to the team of volunteer Guardians, not only is the parish safer, it has allowed qualified Catholics to give back to the church community by using their skills and experience.

“We provided something where they can give back to the Church in a way that’s meaningful,” Mallory said. “And the Church is grateful for their contribution.” 🇺🇸

THERE'S MORE

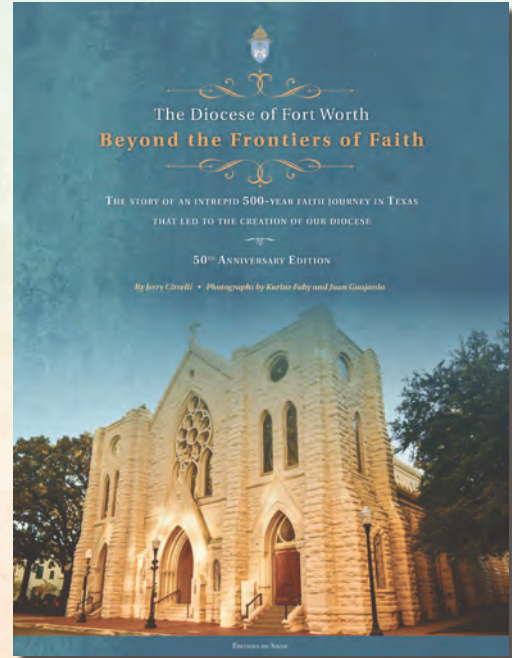
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facilitated sessions on Zoom several times a month. She was surprised at how well the online sessions went.

“People are a little more talkative in their homes, and it’s neat meeting people from all over the diocese,” Schabel said.

Her Zoom sessions max out at 28 people.

“Beyond that, it gets to be too many to participate,” she said.

Schabel wanted to facilitate the virtual sessions because it was a way she could serve from her home, and she’s conducted both Protecting God’s Children and the refresher course.

Schrader-Farry said, “People continue to want to be trained. A lot of volunteer opportunities are on hold, but they want to be ready. I find that encouraging.”

OPENING EYES AND EARS TO STOP ABUSE

In addition to virtual sessions of Protecting God’s Children, the diocese started offering the 90-minute refresher program, Keeping the Promise Alive™, and conducted special presentations on human trafficking and cyber safety for kids and teens.

The primary and follow-up trainings also are offered in person at some locations.

Keeping the Promise Alive sessions started in July, two years after the diocese began using Virtus programs. Two years after participants attend Protecting God’s Children, they are asked to go through the refresher course.

Schrader-Farry said the refresher course covers how to actively engage in preventing child sexual abuse.

“It also shares success stories on how the information has made a difference, and it goes beyond just the Church,” she said.

Participants can use the knowledge wherever they encounter kids who may be in danger, both to prevent abuse and assist them in getting help. Anyone can take part in the initial training and special presentations, if they register online and create a Virtus account.

Mitchell said, “Our prayer is it

encompasses not just those who have regular contact, but everyone who has contact with kids or vulnerable adults, to help them in learning how to keep their eyes and ears open regarding potential abusive behavior.”

With all the changes from COVID-19 in 2020, child sexual abuse is still a big problem because abusers often are in the home with the child, Schrader-Farry said.

Safe Environment continues to reach out to potential victims and promote awareness of the problem. The office and coordinators across the diocese have placed posters in all 91 parishes and 19 schools to help victims. They offer resources like the victims’ assistance hotline and website.

The Safe Environment staff is looking forward to returning to live and in-person sessions soon.

“Because of the importance and nature of this topic, we feel it is best presented in person to promote discussion and interaction with participants,” Schrader-Farry said.

OPENING THE DOOR TO DIALOGUE

Rios, the Spanish facilitator, said he’s been impressed by the conversations that the Virtus training has prompted. Because they’ve talked about what to look for in potential abuse and how to address it in training, they can ask a colleague, “Did that seem okay to you?”

“Before, I didn’t feel like these conversations were taking place,” he said.

In addition to a lot of helpful conversations, the Spanish instruction of facilitators included a new element. At the end of the two-day training, they played “Pomp and Circumstance” and handed out nameplates and manuals.

That was done at the request of Rios because he wanted the new facilitators to “feel special and know how important they are to the process.”

He said the little ceremony was a hit. “I couldn’t tell if they were smiling because of the masks, but there was a brightness in their eyes,” he said.

For more information on Safe Environment programs, visit fwdioc.org/safe-environment. 🇺🇸

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:

- ▶ If someone is in immediate danger call 911.
- ▶ 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 about our abuse prevention policies and programs, visit fwdioc.org/safe-environment



BEYOND “I do”

Making marriage front, center, and sacramental

By Susan McFarland

Marriage, just like life, has its ups and downs. And with the challenges of a national pandemic, families are undergoing stress in ways they have not experienced previously. Sometimes couples need help getting through tough situations. Other times they just need to reconnect and find intimacy like they shared during their dating days.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter offers a remedy. For more than 50 years, the experience has helped more than 3.5 million couples in almost 100 countries listen, share, and connect more deeply, enriching marriages in ways unimaginable.

Ron and Judy Pekny, parishioners at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Keller, are one of 12 to 15 couples in the North Texas area who facilitate the experience. The couple recently chatted with the *NTC* about WWME.

us closer together, giving us an awareness of each other that we didn't have before.”

JUDY: “We were the typical happily married couple when we went on our Marriage Encounter — busy with home, family, work, and tons of outside activities that often had us traveling on separate paths. Our marriage was background music to our hectic lives. Going on the weekend helped us to put our marriage front and center and see our sacrament in a whole new way — to realize that God had a real, personal love for the two of us.

“Marriage Encounter also gave us the tools to communicate in a much more effective, life-giving way. We've been able to share with each other in a much deeper way and listen without our own attitudes or judgments getting in the way. We've also learned the value of forgiveness and healing.”

guidelines for listening, which allows couples to listen differently, thereby allowing them to discuss issues and come to resolution themselves.

“During the experience, the Worldwide Marriage Encounter team, which is composed of three couples and a Catholic priest, share how their lives have been changed by using the communication technique, and how their sacraments and Catholic faith has been enhanced and strengthened.”

JUDY: “Worldwide Marriage Encounter should never be confused with marriage counseling. The presenters are not professional counselors, simply couples and priests who have had an extraordinary experience and want to pass that gift along to others.

“The presenters' sharings become the catalyst for couples to have private time with each other to discuss their own experiences. This type of dialogue allows them to reconnect in a new way, since it's not focused on solving problems, but on rediscovering the person they fell in love with.”

? How has WWME blessed your own marriage?

RON: “Our Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend provided us with another means of communication where we can share more than our thoughts and attitudes and judgments — where we can share our feelings. It gives us another way of finding out what motivates and drives our partner, thereby knowing more than just what we can see. Once that happens, it brings

? How does this experience differ from marriage counseling?

RON: “In a Worldwide Marriage Encounter experience, the couple listens to presentations by the facilitators, and then has the opportunity to discuss what they have heard in the privacy of their room, using the communication technique that they have learned throughout the experience. This communication technique provides

? What do people take away from WWME that strengthens their relationship?

RON: “Couples have come away from the weekend telling us that they have never realized how our priests have a



Ron and Judy Pekny in front of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Keller. (NTC/Ben Torres)

genuine stake in their marriage, or how our priests have a need for relationships with their people. Couples finally recognize that they are actually the sacrament of Matrimony.

JUDY: “I can’t count the number of times someone will say ‘I never knew my spouse felt that way.’ Or, ‘We never knew how to talk about this.’ Honest communication is the lifeblood of a marriage and being able to walk in each other’s shoes opens up a whole new world of intimacy and understanding. No matter how long a couple has been married or how well they communicate, there’s always more to discover.

“The couple who invited us told us we didn’t need the weekend — we deserved it. And they were right — every marriage deserves this kind of attention.”

? **How is this year different, with COVID-19 restrictions?**

RON: “Worldwide Marriage Encounter has utilized a virtual environment

to present the WWME experience. Numerous locations around the country have used technology to present the traditional experience, beginning on Friday evening and continuing through Sunday afternoon.

“Other than that traditional timetable, Marriage Encounter presents the very same Worldwide Marriage Encounter experience on weekday evenings, spread out over several weeks. We have been part of the presenting team for one of those, which was conducted on Monday and Thursday evenings, over the course of three-and-a-half weeks. Each of these experiences provides the same content and allows for couples and priests to attend from the privacy of their own homes.”

JUDY: “This has been a life-changing year for couples, families, churches — and certainly for Worldwide Marriage Encounter and other ministries. Seeing the stress couples and priests are under made it more important than ever that we offer them an opportunity to hit

a reset button for the benefit of their relationships.

“WWME is very conscious of the need to honor all local COVID restrictions, while at the same time continuing to offer the gift of a WWME experience. That’s why we have been quick to switch from in-person to virtual experiences while we are in the midst of this pandemic.

“Even though couples may have been spending far more time together during this COVID crisis, it’s usually not quality time to benefit each other. We’re grateful for the technology that enables us to continue to reach out to couples and priests in this way — until, we hope, in-person experiences can begin again.” 📍

Worldwide Marriage Encounter offers the experience in both English and Spanish. The next event is a virtual weekend from Jan. 29 through Jan. 31. More information can be found at dfwme.org or by calling **469-444-0904**.

SCHOOLED IN faith

In spite of a global pandemic, Catholic school teachers continue their dedication to teach and nurture students

By Susan Moses

It's easy to say this has been a year like no other in the 19 Catholic schools of the Diocese of Fort Worth.

It's difficult to say who is happier to be at school, Catholic school teachers or their students.

After experiencing virtual learning for the final months of school last spring, teachers and students express a special appreciation for being physically present this school year.

As the school year neared its midway point, the *North Texas Catholic* visited teachers at three schools who represent the faith-driven focus and dedication to nurturing the next generation that Catholic educators exhibit day in, day out.

TRAINED IN THE FAITH

Coach Dale Schilling has a favorite analogy to describe Catholic education. By going to Catholic school, he explained,

a little bit of the Catholic faith sticks to you every day. By the time you graduate, you are covered in it.

By now, Schilling has been covered in more layers of the Catholic faith than a lasagna has layers of cheese.

The youngest of six was raised in Muenster and graduated from Sacred Heart Catholic School in 1980. He played football and excelled at track, competing in distance events at the National Junior Olympics his junior and senior years.

He remembers "faith just oozing out of the place," with religious sisters teaching most classes, three priests and a religious brother teaching high school, and Mass celebrated with students four times a week.

When he was in sixth grade, his mother died on the Feast of St. Joseph, her favorite saint. The tight-knit Sacred Heart

community, especially his big sister Carla and the Walterscheid family, helped him cope with her death and kept him rooted in faith.

In 1983 he married a member of the Walterscheid family — his high school sweetheart, Elaine.

After graduating, Schilling didn't forget his alma mater, which was founded in 1890 shortly after German Catholics settled the Cooke County town. He began coaching there part time while he attended college, then joined the school's faculty after he earned his degree.

He has taught history, religion, and health; he also serves as dean of students; and he holds a 105-45 record as head football coach, plus 14 state championships in track.

Winning is not his main concern, however.

He explained, "Wins and losses, yes, you want to have

Coach Dale Schilling is shown before a game Nov. 7. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



wins, but the most important thing is to try to get these children to heaven. I've got a burning desire there."

His time with students on the athletic field provides some valuable opportunities to pass on the faith. For example, he appoints a team chaplain who either leads his teammates in prayer before each practice or selects a teammate to do it.

Lessons learned in competition also carry over to the faith. He tells his athletes, "If you stop training, stop running, stop lifting weights, atrophy sets in. Your muscles get weak. You're not as strong. You're not the athlete you were before.

"Same thing in your faith. As long as you continue it and push it and pray those Rosaries and continue to pray, you're going to stay strong. But once you slow down and stop, just like training, you can have atrophy in your faith as well."

With his roots firmly established at

Sacred Heart, the coach's faith continues to flourish.

He said, "My faith has grown so much stronger. You preach it, so you need to live it. I push so hard to make sure the students are going to Mass. We go three days a week [at school], but I really push to make sure they fulfill their Sunday obligation of going to Mass. . . . I'm very fortunate to take students to Adoration every single Friday."

His philosophy as a Catholic educator and coach can be summarized simply: always pray, and never give up. He said, "If you keep on it, keep instilling it into them, they are going to get it and hopefully push it on to their children."

LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

Anna Marie Rice said teaching has always been her vocation, and 19 of her 27 years as an educator have been in

Continued on Page 22

"I want to win, no doubt, but the most important thing is to try to get these children to heaven."

— Coach Dale Schilling

From Page 21

Catholic classrooms. She acknowledged that public schools pay more, but “my heart is being able to pray with my students, study the Bible, go to Mass, and celebrate the sacraments and the beauty of our faith. I truly feel like this has always been my calling, to teach in Catholic education.”

Ditto for her daughter, Chloe Rice.

The two women teach at St. John the Apostle School in North Richland Hills. Anna Marie is in her seventh year at St. John the Apostle and teaches fourth grade.

Chloe, who loves her kindergartners, is in her third year of teaching, unless you count the years she played school with her little sister. Her mom remembers watching Chloe prop up her baby sister with pillows to create an attentive pupil. Chloe was an effective teacher even as a child, because her sister learned to read by age four.

Teaching at the same school as her daughter is “just the best,” said Anna Marie. “It’s just a gift to be here, to teach with her.” She said seeing Chloe in action, leading a class to recess or stopping to tie a shoe “makes her heart swell.”

Witnessing her daughter at work completes the circle for the proud mother. Anna Marie said, “Everything you did [as a parent] to help them will help someone else.”

Their dual relationship as colleagues and mother/daughter is mutually beneficial.

Chloe’s enthusiasm spills over to the veteran teacher. The excitement Chloe demonstrates as she organizes her classroom and prepares lessons is contagious, renewing her mother’s zest for teaching.

And Chloe appreciates her mother’s support and advice, particularly in her first year when her mom assisted with planning, suggested activities, and shared classroom décor.

As special as it is to teach in the same school, the women most appreciate the opportunity to weave faith into their day.

Chloe said that kindergartners use Jesus as their example as they learn how



to be good listeners and how to treat one another with love and respect. Taking time to pray is always appropriate, and Chloe delights in watching her young students make the Sign of the Cross, bow their heads, and close their eyes for a short prayer when faced with a challenge.

Chloe said Catholic education benefits even the youngest students. “They really get to know what it means to be Catholic — learning about Jesus and how Jesus shared and how He cares for

▲
Chloe and Anna Marie Rice are daughter and mother who both teach at Saint John the Apostle Catholic School. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Continued on Page 24

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

in the Diocese of Fort Worth



Jan Barker is a history and PE teacher at Holy Family Catholic School in Fort Worth. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



From Page 22

us and how He loves us, and how they can share Jesus' love with others."

Fourth grade students, according to Anna Marie, are ready for lessons on how to share Jesus' love with others through service. The parish has an active outreach program, and her students helped collect, sort, and distribute food, clothing, and baby items to clients before the pandemic limited their interactions.

The community service opens the students' eyes and hearts. Anna Marie told her students, "We're doing what Jesus asked us to do. It doesn't matter who they are or where they came from, we're doing what He asked us to do. To lend a hand."

Anna Marie "uses every opportunity to bring God into the curriculum," even if it's just to pause and say a prayer of thanksgiving for a beautiful tree. She can't imagine going an hour without a prayer or a mention of God.

Academics are important, she said, but "My number one goal is to reach them spiritually and to help them grow in their faith walk. I ask my students, 'Why are we here? To help each other get to heaven.'"

AN UNCOMMON HISTORY

Never in her wildest dreams did Jan Barker think she would return to Holy Family Catholic School after completing first through eighth grades there.

But now she teaches at the Fort Worth school — for 29 years and counting.

"It was never my plan, but it was the best plan — God's plan. I don't plan on going anywhere. I hope to retire from here," she said.

She attended the Catholic school along with her sister and brother. After high school, she majored in physical education and minored in history at North Texas State University (now University of North Texas), planning to be an aquatics director at the YMCA. After a December

"Catholic education is in my blood. I don't know how to teach history without Catholicism."

— Jan Barker

graduation, she agreed to substitute teach for six weeks at Holy Family for a sixth-grade teacher who had a new baby.

The new mother opted not to return, but Barker did, despite having to review the next day's math and English material each night before she taught the subjects. "It was feet to the fire," she recalled.

In the years since, she's taught grades 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 at the school, along with physical education and a host of special projects. She's also taught her daughter, niece, and nephew, all of whom attended Holy Family.

One thing that Barker loves about the school is the sense of family. "We're a family here. That's who we are. We look after each other," she said, especially in difficult times. In 2012, her mother was diagnosed with cancer and her father died within a few months.

Barker remembers parents handing her a meal through the car window as she helped with the carpool line. "It's just amazing. People look after you. And your prayers change from 'How am I going to make this work?' to 'Thank you.'"

When her daughter was diagnosed as nearly blind in second grade, her school family came through with care and commitment. The principal and teachers showed kindness and determination to accommodate her daughter's learning differences, helping meet each challenge as it came. Her daughter's fourth-grade teacher became a licensed educational therapist and a long-term education advocate for her daughter and others.

In addition to its sense of family, the second thing Barker loves about the school is its Catholic identity. No matter what she has taught, she incorporates God. She currently teaches history to grades 5 through 8, and PE to various grades, working faith into the lessons.

Even PE? Yes.

"What would Jesus do? Would Jesus push him off the scooter?" Barker said with a laugh. In her viewpoint, much of physical education is learning to get along with others and follow God's rules.

According to Principal Ann Walters, Barker makes history come alive. Her secret is "if you tell it like a good tale, you've got 'em." The educator infuses creativity into history, assigning students projects such as building a life-sized sarcophagus lid or the Alamo mission. No boring worksheets here.

History is so intertwined with the Church that Barker can't imagine teaching in a public school. She said, "Catholic education is in my blood. I don't know how to teach history without Catholicism, how to not rely on faith."

She hopes to instill an appreciation of history in her students, but even more she wants her students to grow into good, faithful people who "try to be a light, no matter where they go." 🇺🇸



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Betty Rose Walterscheid puts the finishing touches on a cake Dec. 11, 2020. (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)

sweet for the SOUL

Muenster Catholic reflects on 50 years
of making and donating cakes

By Susan McFarland

After 50 years and almost 15,000 cakes, Betty Rose Walterscheid is hanging up her spatula.

The longtime parishioner of Sacred Heart Church in Muenster has donated many of her cakes to

Catholics in the Muenster-Gainesville-Denton area since she made her first tiered cake in 1970 for her parents' 35th anniversary. The spatula that retires with Walterscheid was a gift received when she married her husband, Jerry

Walterscheid. The couple will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary Jan. 28.

Cakes for a sacramental event like a wedding or first Communion were donated by Walterscheid. Some of her special ones include cakes made for the May 25, 2002

ordination of Father Kyle Walterscheid, pastor of St. John Paul II Parish in Denton. And 15 years later, cakes made to celebrate his priestly anniversary and other anniversaries for service which included honorees Father Ken Robinson (25 years), Sister Francesca Walterscheid (70 years), SSMN, and Sister Roberta Hesse (65 years), SSMN.

Those cakes are recorded in her famous ledger, which includes a list of all the people she made cakes for since 1972, which total 12,764. Of that number, 2,154 were for weddings and, just like at Fr. Kyle's ordination celebration, included multiple cakes.

"My wedding cakes included a groom's cake, so my total would be close to 15,000," she said.

Walterscheid is self-taught. The first cakes she made were for her family and not recorded in her ledger. Her cake-making business started after she made a tiered wedding anniversary cake for her parents.

"I never had any lessons. I studied Wilton cake decorating books," she said. "It's like riding a bicycle, you try and try and then, finally you get it!"

For several years she made cakes when former Fort Worth Bishop Kevin Vann celebrated and blessed couples who had been married 50 years or more.

"Any time I could do cake for a celebration at our parish, honoring nuns and priests, first Communion classes, and other celebrations, I did those as a gift to my parish with great joy," she said.

The last wedding cake she baked in 2020 is for a bride in Henrietta, and one that brings her cake career full circle, showing the loyalty of her clients.

"I did her mother's cake over 30 years ago, then her sister's wedding cake, so what a way to end my years of cake decorating," she said.

Walterscheid said she would continue to decorate only for family, including making the cake for a great niece who is getting married in January at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine.

"I did her mother's cake and the groom's mother's cake in Grapevine," she said, reiterating the generations of family



Betty Rose Walterscheid holds the ledger she uses to keep track of the cakes she's made in her 50-year career. (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)

members who've come to her for cakes.

Walterscheid said sometimes a cake is booked a year in advance of the wedding day. But she's never frozen a cake. She bakes the day before the wedding and frosts them on the big day.

"On a few occasions, [husband] Jerry delivered a wedding cake while I finished another. The most layers I baked in a day was 39," she said.

The couple has delivered cakes all over Cooke County and even delivered cakes to San Antonio and Austin.

"We did many weddings in Denton and the Metroplex," she said.

On many occasions, the couple did full-service weddings.

"We did the tablecloths, all glass dishes, the cake and

punch ... Jerry helped by doing dishes, making icing, and driving us to where we needed to go and getting us there on time," she said.

The most cake orders Walterscheid made was in May 1984, when she baked 60, nine being weddings.

While the number of cakes Walterscheid has baked in the last 50 years is amazing, the number of Rosaries the couple has prayed together is more impressive.

"We started saying the Rosary in Lent the first year we were married and never stopped," she said. "If for some reason we were not together, we'd call and make sure we prayed it. Jerry calculated the number in our 59 plus years as [approximately] 21,855."

Jerry Walterscheid has been a Knight of Columbus for 68 years, and Betty Walterscheid has been a Catholic Daughter of the Americas for 58 years. She is also a lector and minister of Holy Communion and helps with Vacation Bible School. Before COVID-19 hit, the couple served as greeters at Mass.

The couple has three sons, John, Doug, and Ron, and three daughters-in-law who have blessed them with eight grandchildren, with their fifth great grandchild due in December.

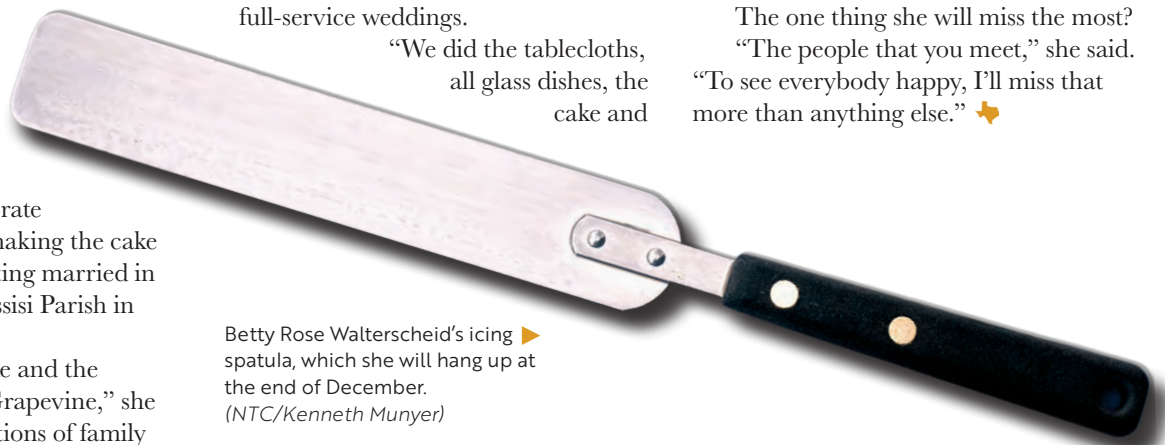
As for who will take over the cake business? Betty Walterscheid said she has no clue. "I wish someone would take it over," she said.

She has plenty to keep her busy while retired: caring for her grandsons after school, canning fresh fruits and vegetables, and running the family farm.

"I don't think we will be twiddling our thumbs," she said.

The one thing she will miss the most?

"The people that you meet," she said. "To see everybody happy, I'll miss that more than anything else." ✚



Betty Rose Walterscheid's icing spatula, which she will hang up at the end of December. (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)

sharing their STORIES

Sisters of St. Mary of Namur create digital quilt of memories and insights

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

When Elizabeth Martin's mother, Dorothy, passed away in 2011, the Fort Worth native found comfort by wrapping herself in a quilt made by her grandmother.

Eight years later, grieving the death of her father, William, she experienced a similar emotion after visiting the Our Lady of Victory Center with her sister, Mary.

"It was a warm feeling in the midst of a challenging time," remembered Martin, who was there to donate a medical walker to the convent. "Walking in and seeing the faces of the sisters consoled me. It felt like home."

Returning to Washington, D.C., where the Catholic school graduate tackles health policy, she began looking into ways to help her former teachers, the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur (SSMN), survive the financial hardship many religious communities now face.

"I've known these women since I was in kindergarten and they have been serving and giving and praying all these years," Martin emphasized. "I wanted to find a way to tell their stories."

The result is "A Legacy of Care," an innovative, digital collection of memories, thoughts, and insights that celebrate the work of the religious order's western province here and abroad. Created with help from Mary Beth Lehman, co-owner of M.Path public relations, and Diane Murray, an SSMN oblate, the project launched December 1 — on Giving Tuesday. Both Martin sisters are funding the venture and hope the personal accounts of vocation and service generate funds for the order.

The Sisters of St. Mary were hesitant, at first, about drawing attention to themselves.

"They are selfless women," noted Martin, who reshaped the conversation to persuade them. "This isn't just about the sisters but all of us whose lives were touched."

Videoed during Zoom computer calls, the interviews with five different sisters were woven together and placed on the website, LegacyofCareQuilt.com, to look like a virtual quilt. Clicking the different blue and gold squares reveals stories under the topics Life in the Order, History, Service, Mission, Joining

the Order, Life Before the Order, and Legacy.

"The sisters have been part of North Texas for so many years and have impacted generations of families," Murray explained. "We don't want to lose those stories."

Several much-loved members of the order recently passed away, so organizers admit feeling the pressure of time.

"We want to capture quickly as many stories as we can from these dear, powerful, and extraordinary women," she added.

Lehman, whose Dayton, Ohio firm was brought in to collate and format material, as well as offer suggestions, described the project as large and evolving.

"We started with 100 videos and five sisters, but we imagine doing a group of five sisters every month," said the public relations specialist. "Our job is to reflect back what we're seeing. We talked to each sister individually about telling her own story and just gave wings and some structure to that. This is entirely a project of the Sisters of St. Mary."

The video segments, lasting from 30 seconds to 10 minutes, are like treasures placed in a

digital time capsule, according to Lehman, who was impressed with the richness of the stories. Hearing details about the order's mission work in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide surprised her. Other narratives deal with segregation, racism, and social justice.

"There are some amazing stories and insights into living the Gospel and what that means in really tangible ways," she continued. "By listening to what it was like for these women to join the order and what it meant to them, you get a sense of where their hearts are."

The next batch of interviews set for upload to the website will highlight people in the community who were taught or helped by the sisters. Introduced to the public just a few days ago, "A Legacy of Care" already has garnered positive feedback and a few monetary gifts.

"It creates an opportunity for people to join us on this journey of supporting and making sure these sisters have everything they need to take care of themselves for the rest of their lives," said Murray, a member of the SSMN development ministry team.

Martin, who believes everything she does harkens back to her time with the sisters, said, "The mission and work of the sisters can only perpetuate good work in others. We spend a lot of time today talking about education, progress, and how effective we are. The service aspect of what the sisters do — to go forth and set the world on fire — I'd like us to remember that more." ✦



To help keep Christ at the center of Christmas, consider waiting to place the star on the tree until Christmas eve.



THE MORE. THE merrier

Liturgically living the 12 days of Christmas

By Nick Wagner

This year, hand on heart, I saw Christmas decorations for sale on October 1. When I was little, we didn't even start thinking about Christmas until after Thanksgiving.

My family would spend most of Advent getting ready. We'd shop for a tree, pull decorations down out of the attic, stock up on wrapping paper, and make lists for Santa. Most years the grownups would gather for a Christmas Eve party, and we kids would struggle to stay awake late into the night.

At the end of the evening, we'd bundle up against the cold and drive over to the church for Midnight Mass. Early the next morning my brothers and I would clatter down the stairs to the living room to tear into our presents. And then Christmas was over. For the next week or so, we played with our new toys and waited for school to begin again.

In the Church calendar, however, Christmas does not end on Christmas Day. It is only the beginning. In an earlier time, Christmas lasted for 12 days — a tradition from which we get the famous Christmas song.

The customs of our larger society have clearly shifted, and there is no way we are ever going to restore the ancient balance of having our Christmas merry-making take place during the 12 days after December 25. Still, there are many ways we can mark the Christmas season (the one that starts with Christmas), and deepen our Catholic identity. Here are 12 suggestions.

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DAY 1: WAIT FOR IT

In our grandparents' day the Christmas tree wasn't decorated until Christmas Eve. For most of us, it might not be practical to wait until then, no matter what our grandparents might have done. Still, there are some things we can do to keep the traditional Christmas cycle.

Go ahead and put up the tree whenever you like but save placing the star on top until the night of December 24. Plan to leave the tree up until the Christmas season ends on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, usually the second Sunday in January.

Also consider waiting until December 24 to complete the crèche. Many Latino families put the crèche out early in Advent, but they leave the manger empty until after Midnight Mass. Whenever you put the crèche out, place the Magi statues a good distance from the manger. Each day of Christmas, until Epiphany, move the Wise Men a little closer to the crèche.

This might seem like a no-brainer, but I've heard more than a few families say they like going to the Christmas Eve 4 p.m. children's liturgy to "get it out of the way" before Christmas.

If you are raising children, keep in mind you are creating lifelong memories for them. I still remember the smell of incense and the sounds of carols at the Midnight Masses I went to as a child. If midnight really is too late for you, at least consider worshipping on Christmas Day itself instead of the afternoon before so the children learn to place Jesus at the center of the season.

DAY 2: PAY IT FORWARD

December 26 is the feast of St. Stephen, the Church's first martyr. He was also one of the first deacons, whose job it was to care for the poor.

A good way to celebrate St. Stephen's Day is to follow his example. Spend 20 minutes online, either alone or as a household, researching poverty issues in your area. Make a commitment to volunteer or donate more during the coming year to serve the poor as Stephen

did. Perhaps spend an hour on this day going through your closets and drawers to find clothing you seldom wear and donate it to a shelter.

DAY 3: PICK A CARD

Another great way to keep the Christmas season alive is to gather up all the Christmas cards you've received and choose one at random each evening to read at dinnertime. If you live with family or a roommate, share some memories about the person who sent you the card. If you live alone, recall how you met the person and resolve to send an e-mail or make a phone call to reconnect in the coming week.

DAY 4: MAKE TIME FOR FAMILY

The Sunday after Christmas is the feast of the Holy Family. Plan to spend the entire day with family — including extended family if possible. If you like to cook, plan for a festive brunch after Mass. Or make reservations and let your favorite restaurant do all the work. During the meal, share stories of your favorite times together.

If you live alone or if you don't live in a traditional household, be creative about gathering today with those who are family to you. Invite some friends for dinner, or phone someone whom you haven't talked to in a long time. In this time of COVID-19, consider using virtual

conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Facebook Portal, or Apple's FaceTime.

DAY 5: BRIDGE THE GAP

December 27 is the feast of St. John the Evangelist, though he gets bumped by the Holy Family this year. It is a day of reconciliation in Eastern European churches. In 1983 it was the day Pope John Paul II reconciled with the man who tried to assassinate him.

Take the opportunity during these Christmas days to reach out to an estranged friend or family member. If it is too big a step to call or send an e-mail right now, at least take a moment and ask St. John to pray for your reconciliation.

DAY 6: EXAMINE YOUR CONSCIENCE

On December 29 we celebrate the feast of St. Thomas Becket. After Thomas became the archbishop of Canterbury in 1162, he had to struggle with spiritual and political decisions that affected the role of the Church in England. He did not always choose wisely, sometimes giving in to the powerful influence of King Henry II. But in the end he picked the right path, taking a stand for justice, and it cost him his life.

Today is a good day to examine our own lives and resolve to do more to overcome injustice in the world. We can begin with ourselves. Where have we been unjust?

As a way to keep the Christmas season alive, consider placing the Magi statues a good distance from the manger. Each day of Christmas, until Epiphany, move the Wise Men a little closer to the crèche.



CHRISTMAS
BOOKS FOR
YOUNG
READERS

Visit [NorthTexasCatholic.org/
books-news](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org/books-news) for Catholic book
recommendations that your little
ones are sure to love.



When have we used our influence or authority solely for our benefit?

Take some time today to write or e-mail your congressional representative about an issue of injustice that needs to be corrected. See FaithfulCitizenship.org and Congress.org for ideas.

DAY 7: COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

December 31 is the feast of St. Sylvester I, who, along with Pope John Paul II, is one of the 10 longest-reigning popes (January 31, 314 to December 31, 335). Not much is known about St. Sylvester, but there are stories about him giving hospitality to Christians who would travel through Rome. Like Jesus, he would wash their feet and serve them at the dinner table.

One way to mark the end of the year is to have an outdoor dinner party (it's Texas — odds are weather will be mild) or at least a special family dinner. Ask everyone to bring something to the party or dinner that symbolizes a blessing received from God in the last year. Place them all under the Christmas tree, and, just before midnight, ask everyone to describe their blessing.

DAY 8: RING IN THE NEW YEAR

Besides being New Year's Day, January 1 is also the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. Years ago many Catholic households, especially German Catholics, used to pray the Rosary as a family after dinner. That custom has mostly faded, but the feast of the Mother of God is a good opportunity to revive the practice for a day. If you need a refresher on how to pray the Rosary, go to usccb.org/how-to-pray-the-rosary.

DAY 9: SAY "I LOVE YOU"

On January 2, we celebrate the feast of St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen. These are two great fourth-century Eastern saints who did a lot of serious thinking and teaching about the Trinity. As young men, they studied together in Athens where their friendship grew into a lifelong brotherly love.

Spend some time this day with your closest friends, and be sure to let them know how much they mean to you.

DAY 10: CLAIM YOUR NAME

In his *Letter to the Philippians*, St. Paul says that God bestowed on Jesus "the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (2:10).

January 3 is the day we take that message to heart: the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. Names have great power, and Orthodox Jews are forbidden to even say God's name. When St. Paul, a good Jew, says Jesus' name is above every other, he is equating Jesus' name with God's name.

Just as Jesus' name is holy, so is ours. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "Everyone's name is sacred. The name is the icon of the person. It demands respect

Consider waiting until December 24 to complete the crèche. Many Latino families put the crèche out early in Advent, but they leave the manger empty until after Midnight Mass. ▼



CNS photo/Mc Crup

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as a sign of the dignity of the one who bears it.”

Find out from your parents (if you can) why they chose your name and what it means.

DAY 11: CLEAN HOUSE

In the United States, Epiphany is celebrated on the Sunday between January 2 and 8. In 2021, Epiphany falls on January 3.

The arrival of the Magi to honor Jesus is not the only tradition associated with this day. Another ancient Epiphany practice is to bless our homes by marking the entrance to the house with chalk. To bless your home, grab a piece of chalk, gather everyone outside the front door, and offer this prayer:

Leader: “Let us bless our home and pray that all will be welcome here. Let this door be an entry for the blessings of God. Let this door be a gateway of God’s blessings to the world.”

All: Members of the household take turns inscribing “20 + C + M + B 21” over the top of the door. C, M, and B are the initials of the traditional names for the Magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar.

Leader: “Christ taught us to call upon the Father, and so we pray: Our Father . . .”



▲ An ancient Epiphany practice is to bless our homes by marking the entrance to the house with chalk.

DAY 12: REMEMBER YOUR “BIRTHDAY”

Before the Second Vatican Council, the Baptism of Jesus was celebrated on Epiphany. The Church leaders who revised the liturgical calendar after the council decided to create a separate feast day focused solely on Christ’s Baptism. In doing so, they wanted to emphasize three truths of faith:

1. At the moment of His Baptism, we come to know Jesus is the Son of God.
2. We also come to know Him as the Messiah at His Baptism, which is symbolized in the Gospels by the descent of the dove — an anointing in the Holy Spirit.
3. Through His Baptism — which was not required of Jesus — Christ affirms His complete solidarity with all of us fallible human beings who do require the saving waters of grace.

Plan to spend some time today telling stories about family Baptisms. If you live alone, call your parents or godparents and ask them to tell you what your Baptism was like. ✚


Nick Wagner is co-director and co-founder of Team RCIA, an online resource for catechumenate ministry. This article originally appeared in *U.S. Catholic Magazine* (Vol. 74, Nov. 12).




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THEY ARE: MaryChristy and Martin Medina, with their children Damian, Marlene, Thalliah, and Jonathan, at Holy Family of Nazareth Parish in Vernon. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Close to the Church

A FAITH HOME: MaryChristy grew up attending Holy Family of Nazareth Parish in Vernon, and now lives with her family on the same street. Her husband Martin said they teach their four children to “stay close to the Church” by praying, receiving the sacraments, and attending Mass.

COUPLE CONNECTION: Martin said the most important thing that spouses can do is to make the time to communicate. “It makes a big difference, and it helps gain respect and trust towards one another.”

A SACRED TIME: MaryChristy said when her oldest son started religious education, she helped with children’s ministry while he was in class. To have that scheduled time “not only gave him the knowledge and time to learn about God, but it did the same for me. . . . It also gave me the chance to reconnect with God.”

GIVE AND RECEIVE: MaryChristy also serves as a Eucharistic minister, lector, and altar server, and the family pitches in at fundraisers. Being the hands and feet of Christ “has been so rewarding and tough for sure, but when I look at the end picture it’s all worth it, because I know I am not perfect, but my family and I are perfectly made and blessed, no doubt.” 

there's MORE to LIFE

Pro-birth? Yes, and so much more. Pro-life ministries debunk the myth that Catholics are just pro-birthers.

By Susan Moses

Pro-birther. Like most labels, it's incomplete at best. In the case of pro-life ministries in the Diocese of Fort Worth, it's counterfactual.

The word "pro-birther," a derogatory term describing someone opposed to abortion, assumes that those who advocate for the right to life will then ignore the needs of the mother or the infant after his birth.

The pro-birth term gained national attention during a 2004 interview between journalist Bill Moyers and Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister, where she emphasized the importance of extending support to children and

families throughout a lifetime.

She said, "I do not believe that just because you are opposed to abortion, that that makes you pro-life. In fact, I think in many cases, your morality is deeply lacking if all you want is a child born but not a child fed, a child educated, a child housed. And why would I think that you don't? Because you don't want any tax money to go there. That's not pro-life. That's pro-birth. We need a much broader conversation on what the morality of pro-life is."

Accusations of the Catholic Church being pro-birth, not pro-life, have reverberated for years. This fall, during

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Flourishing Tree founder Roxanna Young provides baby items with drive-thru service. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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her nomination process to become a Supreme Court justice, Amy Coney Barrett was labeled pro-birth, despite the fact that she has adopted two children.

Labelling individuals, or the Church, as pro-birth is an attempt to deflect attention from two important matters — the ugly reality of abortion and the teaching and ministries of the Church.

“In my mind, [pro-birth] is a ridiculous assertion to distract from the truth of the issue and the situation,” said Terri Schauf, Respect Life coordinator for the Diocese of Fort Worth. “Honestly, pro-lifers are the most generous and loving people I have come across. The pro-life people that I know are helping at pregnancy centers, donating food, helping people at the border. The list goes on and on.”

BUT WHAT ABOUT?

One criticism that detractors express about the pro-life community is that they do not respond to every human rights violation, which Schauf describes as an absurd standard. Naysayers ask questions such as “Why aren’t you solving the crisis in Nicaragua?”

Calling on pro-lifers to solve every humanitarian struggle is not just an absurd standard, but a double standard. Schauf gives the example of her brother-in-law, who has participated in fundraisers for ovarian cancer since his mother died of the disease. “They are not against him for not raising funds for breast or prostate cancer,” she said.

Bobby Warren, Fort Worth campaign coordinator for 40 Days for Life, has spent years on the front lines praying at abortion clinics. He has heard similar complaints, such as “Why aren’t you building houses?” He called it an unrealistic and “onerous expectation to say that if you are truly pro-life you have to do a myriad of other things.”

He continued, “We all give our time, our treasure, and our talent in many ways, and we don’t have time to participate in every ministry.... There is singleness in purpose in ministry, and there must be to be effective. You can’t be spread so thin that you can’t focus on

the mission at hand.”

Warren and his family focus on pro-life ministries year-round, from sidewalk prayer to delivering furniture for moms in need.

COME AND SEE

To counteract the pro-birth claim, critics need to understand the scope and the specifics of what happens in pro-life ministries, according to Schauf. A lack of knowledge, perhaps willful, fuels the disparaging comments about pro-lifers disregarding mothers and their babies after birth.

She encouraged Catholics, as well as their critics, to get acquainted with the many pro-life ministries in the diocese.

The first example Schauf cited was surprising: Rachel Ministries, which helps women and men heal from the emotional and spiritual pain of abortion.

She explained, “If we were truly only pro-birth, we would ignore any woman who has had an abortion. We would have no desire to help her. That’s not the case. When the choice has been made, the Church is still there. There is outreach for women who have regret and want to seek God’s mercy after an abortion.”

God’s mercy and compassion are also offered to the women entering abortion clinics.

When sidewalk counselors have the opportunity to interact with women entering the clinic, Warren said they “listen to her situation and understand where a person is coming from. Then provide feedback, and hope, and options, and choices for that person beyond abortion.”

Warren said that sidewalk counselors may only have five seconds to communicate to the women that “We can help you. You have resources, you have options.”

If an abortion-minded woman leaves the clinic and goes to a pregnancy center instead, she will be surprised at the options and quantity and quality of resources provided.

CRISIS SOLVERS

A long-established pro-life pregnancy center, Mother and Unborn Baby Care



has been helping women with unplanned pregnancies for 36 years.

Pat Pelletier, president of Mother and Unborn Baby Care and wife of its late founder, Chuck Pelletier, said that many women come to the center seeking abortion, and about 90 percent of those women change their minds.

She has learned by talking with these women, “There’s always a crisis that’s put her in that position. But it’s generally not the baby that’s the crisis. It’s financial, or it’s lack of support from the parents or the guy who’s the dad. She’s being pushed into this,” Pelletier said.

Other people in the pregnant woman’s life may tell her “She’s too young, she’s too old, she has too many kids, whatever. The baby within her is not causing that problem right now. There’s no added expense. So, if you can eliminate the crisis — if you can identify it and work with her and eliminate the crisis...we’re not eliminating the baby,” Pelletier continued.

Pelletier laughed at the accusation of



Bobby Warren and his daughter Esther pray outside an abortion clinic in west Fort Worth. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

being a pro-birther. “Every pregnancy center that we know of offers help all the way through with whatever they need. Food, clothes, bills paid, whatever.”

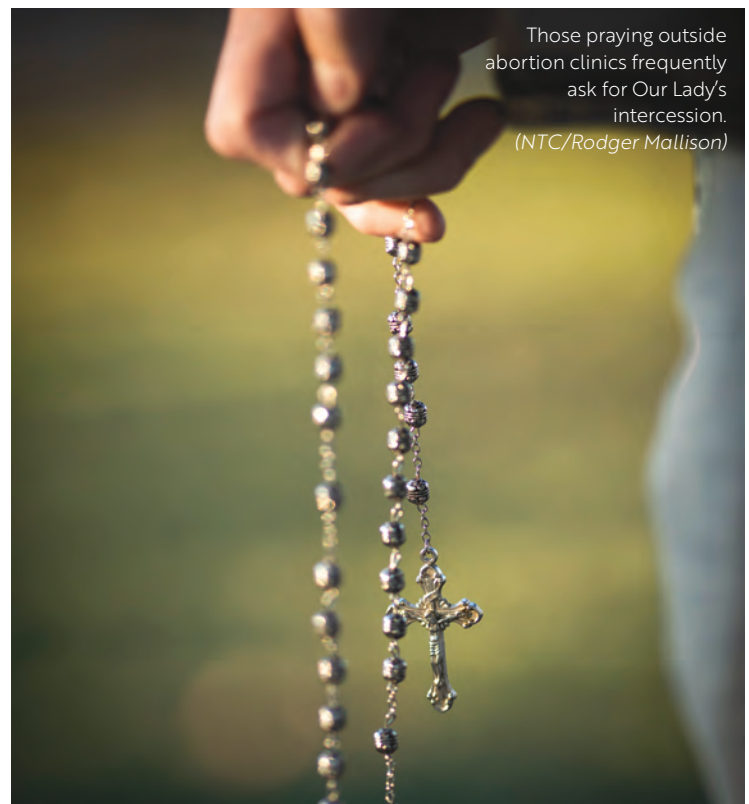
Like other pregnancy centers, Mother and Unborn Baby Care helps pregnant women tap into community resources for adoption referral or services and needs beyond what the center can provide.

Pelletier explained, “That’s the difference between the pregnancy centers and abortion clinics. If she walked into an abortion clinic and found out she was pregnant and decided she didn’t want to have an abortion, there’s not going to be any free diapers, there’s not going to be a crib, there’s not going to be a support system, there’s not going to be a ‘Let us help you through this. What’s the crisis?’ There’s going to be ‘\$650 and we will eliminate the baby and you can go on.’”

INFORMATION AGE

At Mother and Unborn Baby Care and other pro-life pregnancy centers, when a pregnant mother sees the reality of the baby in an ultrasound and learns about the resources and support available, she often reaches a turning point in her decision to have the baby.

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Those praying outside abortion clinics frequently ask for Our Lady’s intercession. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Pat Pelletier, president of Mother and Unborn Baby Care, estimates the center has saved more than 9,000 lives. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



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With a new baby on the way, the prospective mother may need more than diapers, wipes, and baby gear.

Several pregnancy centers, such as Loreto House in Denton and Flourishing Tree in Aledo, offer pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting classes in a learn-to-earn format.

Loreto House has about 140 class curriculums for a woman's first trimester of pregnancy until the child turns three, getting parents through the challenges of potty training and temper tantrums. It's not uncommon for mothers to return during their second and third pregnancies.

By attending information classes (or Mass or Bible study, in the case of Flourishing Tree), mothers and fathers

earn points that they exchange for diapers, baby items, and even baby furniture and strollers.

Alicia Lopez, a member of Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton, has attended dozens of these sessions.

With her family a few states away, Lopez came to Loreto House three months pregnant and looking for resources and education.

The hospitality that Loreto House prioritizes made Lopez feel comfortable right away. "Everyone is so happy to see you, and they are so welcoming. It's like going to a friend's house," she said.

Lopez thinks the knowledge she's gained through parenting classes have helped her be a better mom to her 2½-year-old son, Luka.

Plus, by taking the classes she has

earned diapers, wipes, and other supplies, which helped the family as they adjusted to living on just her husband's income.

She has especially appreciated the support of Loreto House during the coronavirus pandemic. Although classes are taught remotely, her counselor and prayer companion check in by phone. Lopez said, "Having those ladies there that really care about what's happening in our lives has meant the world to our family."

Marjorie Looney, an advocate at Loreto House, emphasized that their support does not end when the baby arrives. She said, "We don't stop when the baby's born. Our guests, they know we add an extra layer of support for them. We are here for them just as much as they possibly need."

Looney explained that the pregnancy

SEE THE VIDEO

Pat Pelletier discusses the first days of Mother & Unborn Baby Care: NorthTexasCatholic.org/video-gallery



center treats their guests with respect, compassion, and dignity to help the mothers realize their own worth and inner strength. Through material, emotional, and spiritual support, “We set them up for success.”

According to Looney, the pro-abortion community message tells a mother she’s not strong enough to handle being a mother. Their message is “If you get it taken care of, then life will be better. That’s such a lie that young women think is true,” she said.

In her four years at the center, Looney has come to see that often “We save the life of that child, but we save the life of that mother, as well.” Some mothers return to Loreto House years later and report that by choosing life for the baby, they chose life for themselves and stopped making bad choices. The support and resources of the pregnancy help center serve as a springboard for the rest of their lives.

Located in Aledo, Flourishing Tree family pregnancy resource center also offers assistance to women in an unplanned pregnancy. But founder Roxanna Young will listen to anyone who needs help from any location.

They have assisted mothers and fathers from eight counties, but Young is open to whoever calls, including

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Alicia Lopez, husband Ricardo Hevia y Vaca Garcia and their son Luka, at their home in Denton. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



Mary Ann Barnard answers the phone at Flourishing Tree. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



HELPING HANDS

Interested in helping in Respect Life ministries in the Diocese of Fort Worth?

The first step, said Roxanna Young of Flourishing Tree, is to pray.

Young's second recommendation, after prayer, is to call the ministry and ask, "What do you need?"

The opportunities are vast, including work-at-home tasks such as translating, researching, or updating a website or social media. Persons are always needed to pick up or deliver furniture and other donations. Some feel called to pray on the sidewalk or volunteer in person at a pregnancy center.

Financial and material donations are always helpful. Some

parishes and schools organize drives for diapers and other needed items.

Learn about opportunities or register to volunteer at fwdioc.org/respect-life or contact:

- Flourishing Tree
817-485-0123
- Gabriel Project
1-800-545-5935
- Loreto House
940-380-8191
- Mother and Unborn Baby Care
817-870-2229
- Rachel Ministries
817-923-4757
- Sidewalk Prayer Ministry
bwarren2046@gmail.com

those from outside the county, state, and even other countries. She taps into a network across the country and all over the world that can provide resources to struggling expectant mothers and families.

"We don't just serve [North] Texas; we are able to help all over," she said.

Now in its fourth year, the center is young, growing, and "learning," according to Young. "We're learning in the sense of where God wants us to help and what He wants us to do. The Lord brings them to us," and they were able to help 67 clients in October.

Although primarily a resource for expectant mothers and young families, "We help whoever comes, and God gives us what we need to have," she said, listing examples of donations of older children's clothing or adult diapers arriving shortly before the items were requested.

In addition to material needs, a licensed counselor, lactation consultant, and nutritionist provide educational, emotional, and spiritual support.

PARISHES PITCH IN

Pregnancy centers aren't the only source of relief for pregnant women through their crisis and beyond.

Currently, 23 parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth offer Gabriel Project, a ministry that pairs a Gabriel Angel with a woman in an unplanned pregnancy for emotional and spiritual support, as well as some baby items. The Gabriel Angel walks with the mother through her pregnancy until the toddler is 18 months.

About 70 women have been trained as Gabriel Angels, and additional volunteers help with other tasks like delivering furniture. In the third quarter of 2020, 279 mothers were served.

Angela Walters has been the Gabriel Project coordinator since 2004. She explained that although they can assist or refer mothers with financial needs, "our whole mission is spiritual and emotional support. Not only do we want them to choose life for this baby, but we want to walk with them until they are on their feet, until they are out of

their crisis, until they can make different choices. We are trying to point them in the right direction for the future.”

Gabriel Project is a program of Catholic Charities Fort Worth, and many women transition to long-term case management afterwards. Walters said case management encourages women to develop a five-year plan and pairs them with a social worker in order to achieve that plan. After about two years, the family is self-sufficient and off government assistance.

The pro-birth claim isn't valid, according to Walters. “We're not just here for the baby itself. We're here for mom to get on her feet, to get out of a crisis — almost two years, walking with her. Beyond that, to help her get into long-term case management with Catholic Charities.... What we're doing is to teach her how to take care of herself and her baby, hopefully. We can't claim 100 percent success, because it takes the mom to do it, too.”

FAR FROM REALITY

In his many years in pro-life, Bobby Warren has observed pro-life ministry sometimes take on unexpected forms, like helping raise a credit score, career planning, and life-skill counseling.

Pro-life ministry, said Warren, is “just not what people think. It's just not pro-birth.... There's so much more going on.... It debunks the pro-birth term. Seeing all this around me, I just really scratch my head with that term. It couldn't be further from the reality of the pro-life work being done in this diocese and around the country.”

He continued, “I think it's a non-existent group that they are describing, and it's used to divert attention away from the truly spirited and zealous way that people approach the issue of defending the unborn.

“I would ask people who feel that way to come out and test the water. If they are truly interested in pro-life work, if they are truly interested in what happens from conception to birth and after birth, and see how we care for those lives, come on out. You will quickly see that pro-birth is someone else's term. It's not what happens in pro-life work.” 🇺🇸



At Flourishing Tree family pregnancy resource center, parents can earn credits by taking parenting classes and select baby clothing, diapers, and other supplies. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Director Laura Herrera lights the candles beside the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel at Mother and Unborn Baby Care. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



A GREAT vocation

Father Daniel Kelley celebrates 25 years of priesthood

When Thomas Merton penned his spiritual autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, little did he know the impact it would have on Christians around the world. Published in 1948, the powerful memoir about a Trappist monk's quest for holiness had a profound effect on a particular group of people. Inspired by Merton's words, many men and women embraced religious life and entered the seminary or convent. Father Daniel Kelley is one of them.

"I was very moved by everything in that book," explained the pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Arlington. "Merton's conversion story — his love for the Lord and desire to give himself to Christ — made sense to me."

Ordained in 1995, the Dallas native, who graduated from Bishop Lynch High School, celebrated his 25th anniversary as a priest December 9. The hustle and bustle of managing both large and small parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth made the years go by quickly. It's also a dramatically different life from the quiet, contemplative vocation the 61-year-old cleric explored as a young man.

After enlisting in the Air Force, where he developed reconnaissance images taken by spy planes, Fr. Kelley, then in his mid-20s, sought to follow in Merton's footsteps. Curious about the simple lifestyle of a monk, the military

veteran traveled to a Trappist monastery in Iowa for a retreat.

A week later, the vocation director gently told the visitor he didn't have the calling for monastic life. What led to that discussion?

"I've had years to think about that, and it's probably because I wasn't getting up for morning prayer," Fr. Kelley admitted candidly. "The monks get up at something like 3 a.m. for prayer and I just couldn't do that."

Instead, the director advised Kelley to look into becoming a diocesan priest — an option that hadn't crossed his mind. Still discerning a vocation, the 26-year-old enrolled at the University of Texas at Arlington in 1986 and began attending weekly Mass celebrated by rotating priests at the Catholic student center.

"I let them know I was interested in the priesthood, and Sister Donna Ferguson, who was vocation director at the time, came to talk to me," Fr. Kelley recalled.

The following year, he began his sophomore year at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio, and, after graduation, continued his studies at the Oblate School of Theology at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio. After a pastoral year spent at St. Peter the Apostle and serving as a transitional deacon, Fr. Kelley was ordained to the priesthood.

On a cold December morning, the ordinand's six siblings and parents — both converts — gathered inside Holy Family Church for the ceremony. The soon-to-be priest turned 37 the previous day.

"It was almost nine years to the day after I visited the monastery and it was all very moving for me," Fr. Kelley said. "I knew I was in the right place and this is what God was calling me to do. I was answering that call in the right place at the right time."

His first assignment — to assist Monsignor Charles King at St. John the Apostle Parish — seemed almost providential. Msgr. King was the same priest who baptized him as an infant inside Dallas' St. Pius X Church. Highly respected for his kindheartedness and intellect, the monsignor mentored his young assistant.

"He was a good person to form me during the two and a half years I was there," Fr. Kelley recounted. "He gave me a lot of good advice I still try to use in my parish."

As a new priest he often worked with couples preparing for marriage — something he still enjoys.

"Msgr. King helped me along with that and advised me how to do things," Fr. Kelley added. "He was also very good at visiting the sick and helping people deal with their crises. He was a very compassionate priest, and I was very



Fr. Kelley lifts his arms in prayer as he celebrates Mass on Veterans Day. Fr. Kelley is a veteran who served in the U.S. Air Force. (NTC/Ben Torres)

impressed by that.”

After a brief stay at Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton, the pastor shepherded rural parishes in Clifton and Morgan for three years then returned to Fort Worth where he was assigned to St. George Parish. For the past 12 years, Fr. Kelley has remained at St. Joseph — a parish with one of the most diverse memberships in the Metroplex. When he arrived, the Arlington faith community had gone without an in-residence priest for seven years.

“We have Mass in English, Spanish, and Twi [a language spoken in Ghana],” explained the pastor who serves families from India, Vietnam, Nigeria, Burma, and Latin America. “We also have a number of French-speaking Africans so, at times, a priest comes to say Mass in French and we have lectionaries and Roman missals in that language.”

“I see so much diversity here and everybody seems to get along,” Fr. Kelley continued. “I love the people and I’m always amazed at how generous they are and how much they respect a priest and will listen.”

The energetic leader stays involved with St. Joseph Catholic School and feels the presence of children contributes to a



Father Daniel Kelley hears confessions outside St. Joseph Parish in Arlington in May. (NTC/Ben Torres)

thriving parish life.

When he’s not busy ministering to parishioners, the ardent baseball fan serves as chaplain for the Texas Rangers and frequently celebrates Mass for the Discalced Carmelite nuns who live in a nearby Arlington cloister. He identifies with the contentment he sees in their faces.

“There’s joy in serving others,” Fr.

Kelley maintained. “The priesthood is a great life and a great vocation.”

Men considering the vocation will find the work rewarding, he promised.

“If God is calling you to this life, you’ll find a lot of fulfillment. I have,” said the uncle of 19 nieces and nephews. “Being part of a large family is amazing, but I’m glad I chose what I did. I have no regrets.” 🇺🇸



Paula Lewis waves from a CCFW van. As transportation requests decreased, CCFW switched to delivering food. (courtesy photo)

CCFW Shifts Tactics for COVID Assistance

By Mary Lou Seewoester

In March, when phones at Catholic Charities Fort Worth started ringing with triple the normal requests for help, the nonprofit quickly redirected staff and resources to the areas of greatest need.

Six months later, a CCFW COVID-19 report revealed remarkable outcomes for both its crisis response and for continued support of its existing long-term programs. Though CCFW's research shows that long-term client support is most effective, the pandemic required something different — a short-term case management program for emergency clients. The six-month program includes crisis support, information and referrals, emergency financial assistance, budgeting, and transitioning to long-term case management when needed.

"It's an emergency stop," said Katelin Cortney, CCFW strategic communications and creative director. "But we've built that out as a pipeline for people to turn to long-term management."

In the first six months of the pandemic,

short-term case managers served 381 clients with 86 clients transitioning to long-term case management.

A short-term client, "Celia" [not her real name] said, "CCFW was the only group that returned my phone call when I was trying to find help with my electric bill," she explained. "This was my first time asking for help ... I was so grateful to CCFW."

"Leonard," also a short-term client, said CCFW "helped me to survive another month without getting an eviction or late fees. This gave me time to find another job."

As communities moved into lockdown, CCFW transportation requests declined. So, CCFW redirected those resources to delivering food. Since March, CCFW partnered with area food banks and other agencies to deliver 37,663 meals and food boxes.

CCFW also launched the Community Cares Call Center as an intake for potential clients. The center answered 4,451 requests and CCFW distributed over \$1 million in emergency funds to more than 1,500 clients.

Cortney also noted the resilience of clients in CCFW's signature long-term case management programs.

"We've never been a Band-Aid organization," she said. "Working with people three to five years is no small feat ... but that's what we've found helps people get out of poverty."

To that end, 74 families moved out of poverty during the past six months, despite pandemic challenges and roadblocks.

"Because of our long-term case management model, many CCFW clients had the savings they needed to navigate financial challenges when COVID-19 arrived," the report stated.

Additionally, Stay the Course, which helps low-income community college students stay in school, graduated all students who were on track to complete the program.

"We've done well up until this point," Cortney said. "We're poised and prepared to continue serving, all the while knowing we need the help of the community, our foundations, and our donors." 🇺🇸



A verse a day keeps the fear away

I have heard for years that there are 365 occurrences in the Bible of the phrase “Fear not.” I think it is fair to say that in some ways I have been relying on this because, on top of all the normal fears in life, 2020 has given us all a lot of trepidation in our hearts and minds. So, knowing that God gives us a verse a day to quell the fear is a good feeling. But then I got to wondering, how many times does the Bible *actually* say “Fear not”? The answer surprised me, for a couple of reasons.

First off, in the New American Bible, “Fear not” occurs a total of 133 times and in the Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition) it occurs a total of 196 times. Now, lest this cause you anxiety over the lack of a daily dose of a fear elixir, keep reading. The second reason I was surprised is that when I searched for “Fear not” along with the phrases “Do not be afraid,” “Have no fear,” “Be not afraid,” “Do not worry,” and “Do not fear,” the New American Bible has these phrases 404 times and the RSVCE has them 436 times.

So, suffice it to say that God gives us more than a verse-a-day to keep the fear



Jeff Hedglen

away. Yet, I think we all know that just because there are verses tucked neatly in between the covers of the Bible doesn't mean they are penetrating into our daily lives and washing away the layers of fear that may have built up over time.

I suppose God knows this truth too and that is why He speaks not only with words, but with The Word made flesh. The Gospel of John begins with these words:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And a few verses later he continues with:

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us...

The incarnation may have happened over 2,000 years ago, but Jesus still dwells among us. I once heard someone say that the farthest God can get from us is an arm's length, because that is as far away as we can push Him. God sent Jesus, not just to be near us for 33 years, but to be in us, forever. St. Paul puts it this way,

“It is Christ in you, the hope for glory” (*Colossians 1:27*).

There are many, many reasons the Father's love sent His Son to earth and of course, the forgiveness of our sins and opening the gates of heaven are chief among the reasons. But I think another of these reasons is to give us someone to hold on to when the going gets tough.

Jesus was born into a time that was, in its own way, riddled with chaos and fear. Yet, right into that time comes the Prince of Peace. That little baby born in humble conditions to simple people became a man other people have put their faith and trust in for thousands of years. Christmas time is not just a time of twinkling lights, wrapped gifts, and celebratory foods. It is also a time to remember that no matter what turmoil engulfs us, we have an unshakable rock on which to cling. From the manger to modern day, Jesus is still the Prince of Peace

St. Padre Pio puts it succinctly, “Fear not because God is with you.” Or to put it in the words of the season: Fear not because Emmanuel! 🇺🇸

Jeff Hedglen is the Campus Minister at University of Texas at Arlington.



Mass is a Beautiful Thing

HE IS: Father Michael Greco, adjutant judicial vicar of the Tribunal, where he helps determine the validity of a marriage. He has recently completed his studies in canon law at Catholic University of American. He previously served as parochial vicar of St. Patrick Cathedral and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller.

THE CALL: An introductory philosophy class at Tarrant County College made the cradle Catholic desire to learn more about his faith. Reading helped awaken his faith and increase his appreciation of Mass and the sacraments. He was ordained on May 23, 2015.

DISCERNING MINDS:

Fr. Greco encourages young men and women discerning a religious vocation to remember “It’s a process. You’re not going to figure it all out in one hour, or one day, or one week. Stick with it and stay open to the various ways God may guide you and the various inspirations God may give you; the insights God may give you into yourself and how you can serve society and the Church.

“That takes time, and perseverance, and patience. The most important thing, not just for discerning a vocation but for everybody, is just to continue to grow in our faith and stay close to our Lord.”



BEST PART ABOUT BEING A PRIEST: “Celebrating Mass is to me one of the great joys of the priesthood. It’s such a wonderful thing when we can gather together in our faith and know that the Lord is present among us and He’s nourishing us. We are united as brothers and sisters in that moment in our faith. It’s a beautiful thing.”

FAITH GOES TWO WAYS: Fr. Greco said he is edified by the people he serves. When the faithful show up for the sacraments, it’s evidence of “God’s spirit at work in the world. God has touched their lives and inspired faith in them and inspired them to want to come and be joined together with other people of faith to serve God.”

UNIVERSAL CHURCH: “A beautiful thing about being Catholic is the universality. I can take a plane anywhere in the world, and apart from the language being different and a few cultural customs, it’s fundamentally, substantially the same.”

NUGGETS OF FAITH:

Fr. Greco likes to find and contemplate “wonderful little” verses in the New Testament epistles that capture the essence of our faith.

As an example, he cited *1 John 4:16*, “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.” 🇺🇸

NTC/Juan Guajardo

Built on hope

While serving at Saint Joseph Seminary College in Saint Benedict, Louisiana, I was introduced to living in the midst of Carnival, which extends from the day after Epiphany until Ash Wednesday (Jan. 7 – Feb. 16, 2021). This season of feasting precedes the long fast of Lent in preparation for Easter.

Carnival and the liturgical year are an outgrowth of Christianity serving as the foundation of our experience of time. It anchors life to the reality of our Catholic faith. The year is not just a measure of time. Each year is our annual living through the mystery of our redemption. We remember the expectation of the birth of Jesus Christ; His life and ministry among us; His suffering, passion, death, and resurrection; His continuing presence in the life of the Church; and our waiting in joyful hope for His coming at the end of time.

Carnival is a festive season, a continuation of the Christmas season and preparation for Lent. Preparation for great feasts and fasts helps us to build our lives on that which will last and that which is eternal. Times of feasting in the Church are not a distraction from real life. They serve to remind us our faith is built on hope — the promise of eternal life with Christ.

Seasons during the liturgical year help us to root our lives in Jesus Christ. Life

lived mindful of Christ necessarily leads us to ask what God desires of us and what He is asking of us in our lives. Living a life rooted in the annual celebration of Christ's life, death, and resurrection draws us into a closer relationship with Him.

One thing I look for when young people ask me to help them discern the priesthood or religious life is how they live their daily life. The interest and attention they pay to the liturgical year is a good indicator of how important the faith is in their lives.

One important way we can help promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life is to live out the seasons of the liturgical year in our own lives. The Church provides us with times of feasting and fasting. The liturgical year is not monotonous, and it helps create contrast in our experience of life.

In 2020 we saw prolonged crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic. Our lives continue to be changed as we struggle with the effects of COVID-19. The normal highs and lows of life — living in times of feasting and fasting — have been flattened by living against the background of continuing crisis.

Continuing crisis can make discerning God's will more difficult. It can seem the current crisis will never end, and life will never again be normal. Times like this make seasons of feasting in the Church all the more important.



Fr. Jonathan Wallis

Our faith is one of hope. We live in the midst of challenges, but times like Carnival can remind us God is greater than any of our crises, problems, or doubts. Seasons of feasting in the Church help us root our daily lives in the life of Jesus Christ. Being rooted in the life of Jesus Christ is what makes following Him as a priest or religious sister possible. Sin, death, and sorrow do not have the last say.

Living out our faith and asking if we might be called by God to the priesthood or religious life in a time of crisis is not easy. Taking time to recall the good things that God has done in our lives is not an escape from the world. Taking time to feast during Carnival serves to remind us of the goodness of God. He has created the world and all that is in it, and He calls us to Himself.

During this time of Carnival, may we strive to live lives that are mindful of Him. May this entire year be one in which we focus on the mystery of Christ present in our lives. Let us also be willing to follow Him into priesthood or religious life and pray that many from our diocese are willing to do so. ✚

Ordained to the priesthood in 2007, Father Jonathan Wallis, STL, serves as Vicar General, Director of Seminarian Formation, and Chaplain & Director of Texas Christian University Newman Center.



Rubén Jiménez y Karina Jiménez con el Padre Alejandro López fuera de la Parroquia Del Corazón Inmaculado de María en Fort Worth, el 14 de noviembre de 2020. (NTC/Ben Torres)

AMOR POR TODO EL MUNDO

El Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial acerca los matrimonios a Cristo,
un fin de semana a la vez

Por Violeta Rocha

Un fin de semana “cambió hace diez años la vida” de Karina, de 41 años, y de su esposo Rubén Jiménez, 52. Ellos son feligreses de la Parroquia de la Inmaculada Concepción de Denton y acababan de celebrar tres años de casados cuando descubrieron el Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial. Desde hace dos años, junto al Padre Alejandro López, Vicario de la

Parroquia del Inmaculado Corazón de María de Fort Worth, son miembros del equipo eclesial de la región del movimiento en la que se encuentra la parroquia. Ellos tienen la esperanza de que más parejas casadas decidan “proclamar el valor del matrimonio y mostrarlo en la vida diaria”.

A continuación, nuestra plática con Karina y Rubén sobre este movimiento de la Iglesia Católica, que está presente en unas ocho parroquias de la Diócesis de Fort Worth.



¿Qué es el Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial?

KARINA: El Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial es una puerta hacia el acercamiento a la fe de los matrimonios que desean que Dios los acompañe en la vivencia de su unión matrimonial. El Encuentro se ofrece para los matrimonios, pero también para los sacerdotes y religiosos, ya que ellos están casados con la Iglesia.

RUBÉN: Nuestro principal objetivo es realizar una experiencia única de “Fin de Semana” para los matrimonios. La misma comprende una serie de charlas y herramientas de comunicación basadas en los valores de la fe católica que invitan a cada pareja a ver la luz de Cristo en su matrimonio. A los sacerdotes y religiosos les ayuda a mantener esa cercanía y unión con su Iglesia.



¿Cómo se originó y cuál es su misión?

KARINA: El Encuentro Matrimonial comenzó en España hace más de cincuenta años, fundado por el Padre Gabriel Calvo. El sacerdote trabajaba con jóvenes que tenían problemas de conducta y se dio cuenta de que la forma en que vivían sus padres era la raíz del problema. Comenzó entonces a dar retiros a las parejas casadas para ayudarles a que hubiera un mejor trato y relación entre los esposos, y así esto a su vez tuviera un impacto positivo en los hijos.

RUBÉN: El Padre Chuck Gallagher de Nueva York se enteró de este programa y lo trajo a los Estados Unidos.

Lo enriqueció e incorporó más psicología en su estructura, lo que eventualmente dio lugar a lo que conocemos hoy día como “Fin de Semana”. Actualmente, el Encuentro está presente en más de 90 países del mundo. En Norte América trabajamos por regiones y nosotros coordinamos la Región 21 Hispana, que comprende el Norte de Texas, Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma y Colorado. La misión del Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial es proclamar el valor del matrimonio y del orden sagrado, en la Iglesia y en el mundo.



¿Qué ofrece la comunidad del Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial?

RUBÉN: Invitamos a los matrimonios que ya vivieron su Fin de Semana a que trabajen para atraer a otros matrimonios que no lo han experimentado. Como comunidad ofrecemos charlas y conferencias de crecimiento en la fe y en la familia. En la Región 21 Hispana tenemos 500 matrimonios.

KARINA: Somos una sola familia. Tenemos también el privilegio de tener familia alrededor del mundo y compartimos las mismas bases y valores de nuestra fe católica. Nuestro objetivo es criar hijos que estén muy conscientes de su fe y de lo que Dios quiere en la familia. Ofrecemos cinco herramientas para mantener viva la relación de la pareja: la oración, el diálogo, la relación sexual, el servicio/ involucrarse y la re-evaluación. Cuando una de éstas falla, hay que retomar todo para poder mejorar.



Recientemente estrenaron una nueva imagen de presentación y actualizaron su página web, ¿cómo se han recibido estos cambios?

KARINA: Estamos todos muy contentos y muy esperanzados. En junio se develó el nuevo logo, que cambió por primera vez en más de cincuenta años. La meta es llegar a los matrimonios jóvenes. Se actualizó también nuestra página web, wwme.org que está disponible en inglés, español, francés y coreano. Además, tenemos un nuevo lema, “Encuentro Matrimonio Mundial, Creciendo Juntos”.



¿Cómo les ha ayudado este movimiento en su vida matrimonial?

KARINA: Pensábamos que por ser un matrimonio joven el Encuentro no era para nosotros, pero al vivir nuestro primer Fin de Semana nuestras vidas cambiaron. Nos ha ayudado mucho en el crecimiento de nuestra fe y a mantenernos entregados al servicio de Dios por medio de este movimiento. Ver el crecimiento en la fe de nuestros tres hijos, que tienen 12, 5 y 2 años, es de los beneficios más gratificantes que nos brinda el Encuentro. Ellos están creciendo junto a los hijos de los otros matrimonios, donde ven a papá y mamá luchar para ser el mejor matrimonio que puedan ser.

RUBÉN: Nosotros no estábamos antes involucrados en la parroquia. No fue hasta que vivimos el Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial que nos hicimos conscientes de todo lo que implica ser católico y servir a la comunidad. Estar en el Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial no significa que hay solamente matrimonios perfectos, sino que, agarrados de la mano de Dios, tenemos herramientas para sanar, estar en la lucha y perseverar en el matrimonio.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 52

? Como equipo eclesial, ¿cuáles son las metas para su región?

RUBÉN: Llegar a más parroquias, a más matrimonios. Nos preocupa mucho que las nuevas generaciones no quieren compromisos, no creen en el matrimonio y muchos de ellos no creen ni tan siquiera en Dios. Queremos hacerles ver que es posible tener un matrimonio feliz, y ser una familia feliz y plena, y en la que todos se comprometen con la fe. Nos llena de ilusión que más gente sepa del Encuentro, y no sólo las parejas casadas, sino también los sacerdotes y religiosos, para que sientan la caricia de Dios a través de este movimiento.

PADRE ALEJANDRO LÓPEZ

? ¿Qué lo motivó a participar de un Fin de Semana del Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial? ¿Cuál fue su experiencia?

Me motivó la insistencia de un matrimonio de la parroquia en la que estaba en California en el 2013. Como sacerdote, a veces nosotros preferimos nuestros propios retiros sacerdotales. No obstante, la experiencia fue muy enriquecedora. La estructura del Fin de Semana es la de un taller, no la de un retiro. Cuando se trata de los matrimonios, conversan como pareja. En el caso de los sacerdotes, hablas con otro sacerdote. Nos ayuda a manejar nuestros sentimientos, a cómo expresarlos y encauzarlos. En fin, el “Encuentro” es con la Iglesia, nosotros estamos casados con la Iglesia, con toda la Iglesia. Luego de haber vivido el Fin de

Semana, el “Encuentro” se convierte en el servicio entre las parejas como matrimonio y para los sacerdotes, en el servicio a la parroquia.

? ¿Qué frutos ha visto del Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial tanto en los matrimonios como en los sacerdotes?

Los matrimonios del Encuentro llevan esta experiencia a sus hogares y la hacen vida al relacionarse con sus hijos y criarlos. A su vez, los hijos crecen en ese mismo pensar y sentir de cómo sus padres van siendo formados en su relación como pareja, en la vivencia de la sexualidad y en la vivencia de la fe.

Como sacerdote, los frutos se ven en la apertura, en manejar mejor tus emociones y sentimientos. Es un reflejo de lo que estás viviendo. Es como cuando vas con regularidad al gimnasio, que se te nota. Asimismo, cuando participas del Encuentro, estás viviendo tu fe y tus experiencias; y tus emociones, se notan.

? ¿Qué importancia tiene que más sacerdotes vivan este movimiento?

El vivir la experiencia del Encuentro te fortalece, te das cuenta de las cosas en las que tienes que seguir trabajando y te da además nuevo ánimo para servir a los demás. La formación del sacerdote, como la de cualquier persona, ha de ser constante. Creo que es muy importante que como sacerdote nos interese más en compartir este tipo de actividades con los laicos; y vernos ahí cercanos a ellos, ser parte de ellos. ✚

AMBIENTE SEGURO

Para Reportar Mala Conducta Sexual:

Si usted o alguien que usted conoce es víctima de abuso sexual por parte de cualquiera que sirve a la Iglesia, puede:

- ▶ Llamar a la Línea Directa de Asistencia a Víctimas: (817) 602-5119.
- ▶ Llamar el Director Diocesano de Ambiente Seguro: (817) 945-9334 y dejar un mensaje.
- ▶ Llamar al Canciller de la Diócesis: (817) 945-9315.

Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha de Abuso:

Si usted sospecha de abuso de un niño, anciano, o adulto vulnerable, o si abuso ha sido revelado a usted,

- ▶ Si alguien está en peligro inmediato, llame al 911
- ▶ Llame al Departamento de Servicios para la Familia y de Protección (DFPS) de Texas al (800) 252-5400.
- ▶ Reporte inmediatamente el presunto abuso a su supervisor, sacerdote o director, y presente el Aviso Confidencial de Preocupación con la información requerida por DFPS.

Para más información sobre nuestros programas de prevención de abuso, visite fwdioc.org/safe-environment





Un guardian saluda a los feligreses mientras observan quién llega a la misa dominical en la Parroquia Católica Good Shephard en Colleyville, el 6 de diciembre de 2020. (NTC/Ben Torres)

ÁNGELES GUARDIANES entre nosotros

El ministerio de seguridad diocesano se mantiene fuerte a pesar de la pandemia

Por Juan Guajardo

Mark Hesselgrave entra cada domingo a la Parroquia del Buen Pastor de Colleyville dispuesto a dar su vida por sus compañeros feligreses que asisten a Misa.

No se trata solamente de él. La Parroquia del Buen Pastor cuenta con un equipo completo de guardianes armados, además de personal médico capacitado en primeros auxilios y soporte vital básico,

y acomodadores y ujieres (observadores) capacitados para identificar los comportamientos y el lenguaje corporal que puedan ser sospechosos.

Antes de la Misa, el diverso equipo se reúne y hace una oración escrita por el Diácono Richard Griego, un infante de marina que sirvió en la guerra de Vietnam. “Padre protector, nos has llamado a ‘ocupar un puesto’ como Ministros Guardianes para la protección de las personas que ponemos en nuestro

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camino, los feligreses y visitantes de nuestra parroquia ...”

Hesselgrave explica que necesitan orar juntos. “Somos un grupo de personas dispuestas a arriesgar nuestras vidas para protegernos unos a otros y salvar la vida de nuestros compañeros feligreses. Es de vital importancia que recemos juntos y le pidamos a Dios que nos cuide y nos proteja”.

Después de la oración, el equipo de guardianes entra en acción.

Los miembros del equipo se reúnen y se informan en la sala de ujieres de la parroquia y se preparan con radios bidireccionales y los auriculares. Realizan un recorrido completo de las instalaciones

para asegurarse de que nadie está escondido en el edificio. Cierran las puertas que deberían estar cerradas. Saludan a los fieles cuando entran a la iglesia para detectar discretamente a cualquiera que pueda parecer fuera de lugar, inquieto o sospechoso. (“Llamamos a esto el aumentar nuestros ‘sentidos de Spidey’”, dijo Hesselgrave).

Cada uno de los guardianes también se presenta al guardia de turno, “para que sepa quiénes somos. Los oficiales saben que estamos armados y nos apoyan completamente y se alegran de contar con nuestro respaldo”, explicó Hesselgrave.

Los guardianes se sientan o se paran en lugares específicos de la iglesia, desde los cuales puedan tener una visión clara de la congregación durante la Misa. Es posible que nadie los note, pero ellos

notan a todo el mundo.

El ritual de seguridad de la Parroquia del Buen Pastor es sólo uno de los muchos que se llevan a cabo durante las misas celebradas en toda la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Todo esto es parte del programa de seguridad de varios niveles que la Diócesis ha implementado para garantizar de manera proactiva la seguridad de los fieles en sus 91 parroquias y 19 escuelas. A pesar de los desafíos que presenta la pandemia, la capacitación de los equipos del Ministerio de Guardianes continúa.

UN MINISTERIO COMUNITARIO

La idea de los equipos de Guardianes se introdujo a principios del 2018, cuando el Obispo Michael Olson solicitó la ayuda de una empresa de seguridad para

Los guardianes caminan por el pasillo buscando si los feligreses necesitan ayuda durante la misa dominical en la Parroquia Católica Santo Tomás Apóstol en Fort Worth, el domingo 29 de noviembre de 2020. El ujier principal trabaja en estrecha colaboración con el Ministerio de Guardianes y sabe dónde se encuentra cada Guardián durante la Misa en caso de que pueda necesitar ayuda. (NTC/Ben Torres)



ayudar a la Diócesis a desarrollar un plan integral para abordar la realidad de los tiroteos en masa en los espacios sagrados, como la triste masacre de Sutherland Springs ocurrida en el 2017.

La firma realizó una evaluación de la vulnerabilidad de cada parroquia y de cada escuela, tras la cual presentó sus recomendaciones a la Diócesis.

De ahí surgió la idea de reclutar, escudriñar y capacitar a los feligreses para brindar seguridad en las parroquias, un modelo que otras iglesias cristianas han utilizado con éxito.

Mike Short, el primer Director de Seguridad de la Diócesis, está a cargo de dirigir y supervisar la implementación de los equipos del Ministerio de Guardianes en las parroquias de los veintiocho condados de la Diócesis.

Si bien un aspecto del Ministerio de Guardianes incluye la formación y el despliegue de los feligreses armados, el propósito más importante del ministerio es construir una “comunidad en la que se cuiden unos a otros”, dijo Short, y aclaró que muchos guardianes no portan armas de fuego.

Hesselgrave, uno de los guardianes armados, explicó que: “gran parte del ministerio es la capacitación de los guardianes para aprender a observar y reconocer las posibles amenazas”.

Esto significa que se necesita que se recluten voluntarios de diferentes ministerios, como los acomodadores, ujieres, lectores e incluso ministros eucarísticos, y formarlos en un “enfoque holístico de la seguridad”.

Los Ministros Guardianes se entrenan de manera extensa y continua en todo lo concerniente al plan integral de la seguridad, desde la observación y el reconocimiento de posibles amenazas hasta las técnicas para apaciguar una situación y de cómo responder a una emergencia médica. Los voluntarios que integran el personal médico del equipo reciben capacitación sobre las técnicas para “detener una hemorragia” y el tratamiento de traumas.

Muchos de los miembros del equipo del Ministerio de Guardianes trabajan durante la semana como policías, médicos, enfermeras o personal de emergencias (EMTs, por siglas en inglés). Algunos

El Director Diocesano de Seguridad, Michael Short, instruye a los voluntarios del Ministerio de Guardianes. (NTC/ Kenneth Munyer)



son veteranos o están actualmente en las fuerzas armadas. Otros trabajan en ventas al detal y servicio al cliente.

Eric Debus, que dirige el Ministerio de Guardianes de la Parroquia de San Marcos de Argyle, piensa que hay un hilo común entre esas diferentes ocupaciones. “Debes tener un corazón de siervo para hacer esto”, dijo. “Una de las virtudes que acompañan este ministerio es la caridad, ya que se quiere devolver de alguna manera lo que se ha recibido. Otra virtud es la justicia porque crees en estar ahí para los demás, para responsabilizar a las personas y para proteger. Por supuesto, se necesita además valentía. Se necesita valor para desempeñar cualquier tarea como parte del equipo”.

Short, el Director de Seguridad diocesano, añadió a esta descripción otra cualidad, “relacional”.

“La realidad de esta visión es que es un sistema basado en una comunidad en la que se cuidan unos a otros”, dijo. “Lo hacemos principalmente a través de las relaciones con los demás. Todos en el equipo deben ser relacionales para que puedan entender quién viene a la parroquia y establecer una relación con ellos”.

PERROS PASTOR

Sin dudas, un aspecto crucial del Ministerio de Guardianes es la selección, el escrutinio y la capacitación de los feligreses para responder a una amenaza en la que están involucradas las armas de fuego. Debus, que es policía, es uno de los guardianes armados.

Debus describe a los hombres y mujeres del equipo del ministerio como “los perros pastor de la parroquia” que “protegen al rebaño en caso de que ocurra algo malo”. Short, ex detective y miembro del equipo SWAT del Departamento de la Policía de Lewisville, se apresura a señalar que el entrenamiento de los guardianes armados es extenso y continuo. Él también comprende la preocupación de algunos fieles que se preguntan: “¿Por qué necesitamos tener civiles armados en la iglesia?”

A lo que él responde sin vacilar: “Si nos fijamos en el tiroteo de White Settlement, ocurrido en la iglesia de West Freeway Church of Christ en diciembre del 2019, podemos ver que es una clara indicación de la razón por la cual estamos haciendo lo que estamos haciendo.

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Estudiantes y maestros de Cristo Rey muestran flexibilidad y determinación mientras navegan por aguas desconocidas



Miguel Castro, estudiante de Cristo Rey, aborda una minivan para ir a trabajar el 3 de noviembre. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

HACIA ADELANTE CON TENACIDAD

Por Susan Moses

¿E n clases presenciales? ¿Aprendizaje remoto? ¿Un híbrido? Desde que COVID-19 fue declarado pandemia el 11 de marzo de este año, los administradores escolares han tenido que tomar decisiones difíciles sobre cómo brindar la mejor enseñanza a los estudiantes mientras se protege la salud de los estudiantes, los profesores y el personal docente.

Además, los líderes empresariales han tenido que luchar para lograr la máxima eficacia y productividad, al mismo tiempo que mantienen un entorno de trabajo seguro para los empleados y el público. Una encuesta de Gallup reveló en

El presidente de Cristo Rey, Nathan Knuth, ha visto cómo Dios responde a las oraciones en la escuela preparatoria. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)



septiembre que el 58 por ciento de los empleados de los EE.UU. trabajaban a veces o todo el tiempo de forma remota para reducir la propagación del coronavirus.

Los administradores de Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep han tenido que navegar arduamente para ser “una escuela eficaz” a través de los rápidos cambios ocurridos tanto en la escuela como en el entorno laboral. Sin embargo, los estudiantes, profesores y socios de trabajo corporativos han respondido con flexibilidad y tenacidad.

EN EL TRABAJO

A diferencia de la mayoría de las escuelas católicas, el modelo de Cristo Rey es un programa de estudio y trabajo, en el que estudiantes económicamente desfavorecidos obtienen una educación católica de preparación universitaria, mientras que al mismo tiempo trabajan un día a la semana para una empresa en un puesto de nivel de entrada que paga la mayor parte de la matrícula de sus estudios.

La escuela tiene aproximadamente 40 socios corporativos. Pero este año el modelo de estudio y trabajo, que se había utilizado durante los dos primeros años,

tuvo que adaptarse al distanciamiento social y las medidas de precaución contra el coronavirus. Por ejemplo, éste es el primer año que la empresa GM Finacial se asoció con Cristo Rey para integrar estudiantes en sus equipos de seguridad cibernética, recursos humanos, sus servicios de los distribuidores y equipos legales. Si bien la empresa espera poder tener los estudiantes en la oficina más tarde durante este año escolar, los internos actualmente trabajan de forma remota y se conectan desde la escuela ubicada en el sur de Fort Worth.

Ryan Bachman, el Director de Seguridad de la Información de GM Finacial, dijo que el uso frecuente de las videoconferencias permite que los estudiantes se conecten cara a cara con su equipo de trabajo.

Amber Castañeda, estudiante de tercer año de preparatoria de Cristo Rey, es una de los cuatro estudiantes empleados por GM Finacial. Ella ha trabajado en varios proyectos, incluido el diseño de un nuevo estado de cuenta, concluyó: “He aprendido mucho y siento que estoy logrando hacer un gran impacto”, tal como si estuviera trabajando en persona.

La incertidumbre económica

causada por COVID-19 no hizo que GM Finacial reconsiderara su promesa de contratar estudiantes, una decisión que tomó la empresa antes de la pandemia. Bachman citó el compromiso de GM Finacial con la comunidad, que proviene de su director ejecutivo y declaró: “Cuando la economía es sólida y las cosas son normales, es más fácil comprometerse. Pero cuando los tiempos son difíciles, es cuando la comunidad más lo necesita”.

Bachman espera que sus internos tengan una visión clara de hacia dónde se encaminan. Declaró: “Una educación basada en los valores católicos trascenderá en oportunidades para su futuro. Al seguir una educación universitaria, tendrán unas oportunidades increíbles”.

Cuatro alumnos de Cristo Rey están trabajando en Cook Children’s Medical Center en el departamento de recursos humanos, al igual que lo hicieron el año pasado, aunque con menos reuniones de equipo y comidas grupales.

Beth Schmidt, la Vicepresidenta Asistente de Recursos Humanos, dijo que Cook Children “los mantiene muy

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Herlinda Cárdenas, profesora de español de Cristo Rey, enseña a sus alumnos virtualmente en su aula. (NTC/Jayne Donahue)

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ocupados” trabajando con el papeleo de las nuevas contrataciones, el seguimiento de los beneficios en hojas de cálculo de Excel y una gran cantidad de otros trabajos administrativos, incluida su ayuda en la planificación de una clínica de auto servicio de vacunación contra la gripe.

“Ellos hacen mucho por nosotros y su trabajo es muy valioso”, ella comentó. Como beneficio adicional, “su entusiasmo juvenil es contagioso y es divertido verlos aprender, crecer y participar”.

Sin embargo, no todos los estudiantes de Cristo Rey tienen una asignación de trabajo este año.

Para los estudiantes que no tienen un socio corporativo, o los que su lugar de trabajo ha retrasado el internado, la escuela ha diseñado cuatro vías para aumentar el mérito de los estudiantes en un lugar de trabajo en el futuro. Para los estudiantes bilingües, la Red de Traducción e Interpretación de Catholic Charities Fort Worth evalúa, capacita y luego certifica a los estudiantes como

traductores oficiales.

Un grupo de estudiantes está en el programa de liderazgo juvenil de Toastmasters, que les enseña a desarrollar habilidades de liderazgo y de hablar en público.

Otro grupo está completando la capacitación para la certificación de Microsoft Excel, una herramienta muy útil en muchas ocupaciones.

Hay un cuarto grupo de estudiantes a los que líderes de la comunidad local en diversas profesiones le están enseñando destrezas de comunicación y mercadotecnia.

LA ESCUELA EN SESIÓN

El presidente Nathan Knuth comenzó su trabajo en Cristo Rey Fort Worth un lunes muy peculiar. La escuela había sido cerrada el viernes anterior.

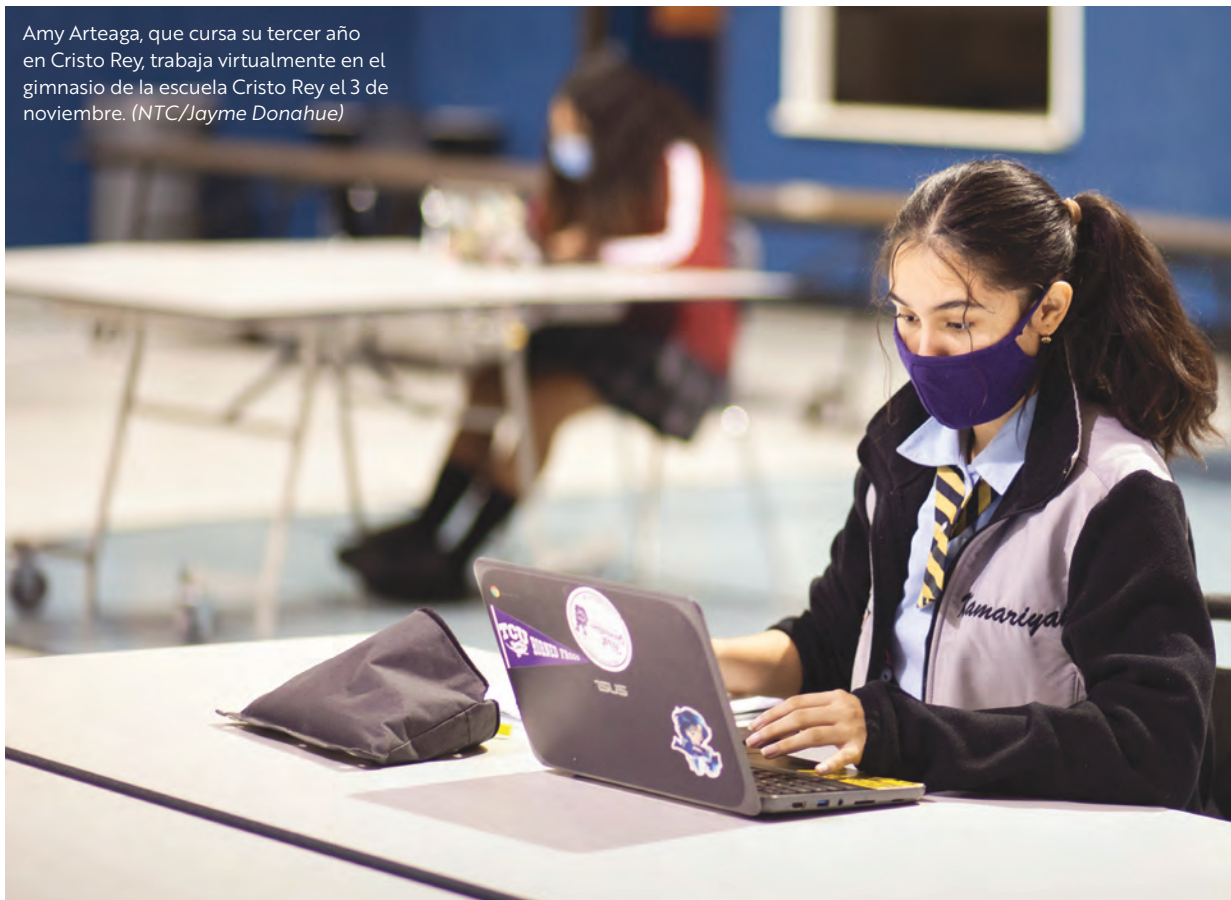
Después de las vacaciones de primavera en marzo la escuela tomó un día para reorganizarse y decidió seguir las clases de manera virtual, según Anna Brissman, la Decana Académica. Los estudiantes “hicieron el cambio sin problemas”, dijo.

La escuela continúa con clases remotas en este otoño, pero con un horario sincrónico que refleja el horario típico de cuando los estudiantes toman sus clases presenciales en la escuela.

La administración de la escuela reflexionó ampliamente sobre la decisión de continuar con la enseñanza remota, explicó Knuth. Se consideraron muchos factores, entre ellos, el asesoramiento de las autoridades de salud locales; el tamaño del aula que dificulta el distanciamiento social; la variedad de los horarios de los estudiantes, que hacen imposible mantener a los estudiantes dentro de un grupo pequeño todo el tiempo; y los resultados de una encuesta de los padres, en los que se indicó que muchos estudiantes viven en hogares multigeneracionales y que los padres tienen una gran preocupación por mantener seguros a sus familiares ancianos.

Los profesores y los estudiantes están ansiosos por reanudar el aprendizaje en persona. Brissman dijo que ve “un nivel completamente nuevo de apreciación por estar en la escuela. Los estudiantes ven lo

Amy Arteaga, que cursa su tercer año en Cristo Rey, trabaja virtualmente en el gimnasio de la escuela Cristo Rey el 3 de noviembre. (NTC/Joyme Donahue)



duro que están trabajando los profesores, los profesores ven lo duro que están trabajando los estudiantes y se extrañan unos a otros”.

A pesar de esto, reconocen varios beneficios que han surgido de esta difícil situación.

Herlinda Cárdenas, profesora de español, está impresionada con la paciencia y la perseverancia de sus alumnos. “Se necesita mucha responsabilidad y disciplina para quedarse en casa y tomar las clases remotas”, dijo. “Exige mucho más de ellos”, incluída la gestión de su tiempo y concentración.

Brissman agregó: “En la escuela, podemos controlar lo que están haciendo y dónde están. En casa, los estudiantes deben abogar por sí mismos y tomar la iniciativa de contactar a su maestro(a) si surge alguna dificultad.

Cárdenas cree que estas destrezas prepararán a los estudiantes en el futuro para el éxito en la universidad y en sus trabajos. “Están aprendiendo a ser persistentes en medio de los desafíos”.

El estudiante de segundo año de la secundaria Miguel Castro lo piensa

así también y afirmó que tiene que ser “mentalmente fuerte para sobresalir en estos tiempos difíciles”. Por otro lado, Miguel espera con ansias los martes cada semana, día que trabaja en JTaylor, una empresa de consultoría y tributación. En el trabajo ayuda a solucionar problemas de tecnología, colabora con el boletín de los empleados y presta su asistencia a otros proyectos. “Es un placer estar allí cada día que voy”, dijo.

TODA LA PERSONA

El presidente Knuth reconoció: “Todas las escuelas, públicas y privadas, se han enfrentado a muchos desafíos debido a la pandemia, al igual que las grandes empresas corporativas y empresas locales. Todo el mundo está tratando de navegar por aguas desconocidas durante esta pandemia, algo que nunca habíamos experimentado a este nivel. Nadie te prepara para un desafío de esta naturaleza o este tamaño”.

El presidente y los profesores de Cristo Rey enfrentan desafíos adicionales más allá del aula y las empresas en que los estudiantes realizan su internado. Knuth

estima que aproximadamente la mitad de los padres de Cristo Rey han perdido su trabajo o han experimentado una reducción en sus horas de trabajo durante la pandemia. La escuela se ha asociado con Caridades Católicas Fort Worth para brindar asistencia a esas familias.

La fe, la esperanza, la tenacidad y la flexibilidad llevarán a la escuela y a su comunidad de estudiantes, padres, profesores, socios corporativos y filántropos a hacer frente y sobrellevar los retos de la pandemia, según Knuth.

La escuela continúa atendiendo las necesidades espirituales de los estudiantes mediante una Misa en vivo cada semana, la oración por las mañanas y los retiros espirituales virtuales.

Knuth ofrece las necesidades de la escuela en su oración diaria y ha visto cómo Dios responde a esas oraciones.

Él concluyó diciendo: “Confío en el Señor y seguimos trabajando duro comprometidos con la gente, y hasta ahora, la gente ha seguido poniendo todo su esfuerzo... Sólo superaremos esta situación juntos. Y juntos somos más fuertes”. ✚



Dos guardianes supervisan un monitor de seguridad que muestra múltiples vistas de cámara en toda la iglesia durante la misa dominical en St. Thomas the Apostle en Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)

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Desafortunadamente, tres personas murieron en seis segundos ese día. Obviamente, ése es el peor de los casos, pero sucedió todo muy rápido”.

El pistolero de ese tiroteo fue asesinado a tiros por Jack Wilson, de 71 años, un miembro voluntario del equipo de seguridad de la iglesia.

“Hemos sido testigos de cómo se desarrollan este tipo de cosas”, dijo Short. “Para mitigar ese riesgo y cerrar esa brecha necesitamos realmente personas que estén involucradas en la comunidad y que estén capacitadas, pero no podemos realizarlo con cualquier persona”.

Los solicitantes para cualquier puesto en el Ministerio de Guardianes son evaluados exhaustivamente a través de la verificación de antecedentes penales, un análisis integral de antecedentes personales y pasan por una amplia capacitación durante todo el año, incluida la capacitación basada en diferentes escenarios. Se le enseña a los guardianes armados que responder a una amenaza mediante la fuerza es el último recurso.

“El ministerio se toma muy

en serio porque conlleva una gran responsabilidad”, dijo Short. “Si sucede una situación en la que encontramos a alguien que es una persona de interés, poseemos el entendimiento y la capacitación para poder responder adecuadamente a eso. Siempre actuamos desde la perspectiva cristiana y queremos ayudar a esa persona. Lo último que quisiéramos hacer es tener que utilizar cualquier tipo de fuerza”.

EL NÚMERO DE GUARDIANES HA CRECIDO, PERO SE NECESITAN MÁS VOLUNTARIOS

A pesar de estar en medio de una pandemia mundial, la capacitación de los nuevos miembros del Ministerio de Guardianes y la creación de nuevos equipos ha continuado de forma constante.

“Durante los últimos seis meses, hemos logrado realmente un gran avance en muchas parroquias”, dijo Short. “Hemos conseguido muchos nuevos reclutas y seguimos entrenando a mucha gente ... Hasta la fecha, hemos entrenado alrededor de 300 personas” para participar en las diversas facetas del

Ministerio de Guardianes.

Aprovechando la transmisión en vivo de Zoom, Short ha realizado capacitaciones semanales y mensuales en línea para diferentes miembros de los equipos de guardianes, “de modo que podamos estar al tanto continuamente y comprender mejor cómo sería nuestra respuesta si surgiera una emergencia en nuestras parroquias”.

No obstante, se necesitan más católicos fieles para continuar la implementación del programa de seguridad de vanguardia que está creando la Diócesis de Fort Worth, dijo Short. “No nos hemos detenido debido al COVID. Seguimos entrenando y formando. Todavía estamos reclutando nuevos guardianes”.

Los feligreses interesados en unirse deben comunicarse con su párroco y averiguar si hay un equipo de seguridad en su parroquia. “Es un esfuerzo de grupo”, dijo Short refiriéndose al programa de seguridad. “Creo que muchas personas se benefician de él, así que los invito a que, si esto suena como algo que le interesa, averigüe y búsquelo”.

Bruce Mallory, Director de Ambiente Seguro de la Parroquia de Santo Tomás Apóstol de Fort Worth, señaló que la creación de un equipo de guardianes capacitado ha hecho posible la protección de su iglesia que comprende 20,285 pies cuadrados.

“Si alguien reporta algo sospechoso a los que están a cargo de la seguridad, entonces tenemos ya una estrategia sobre cómo responder y hacerlo. Ellos pueden hacernos conscientes, podemos observar, y tenemos suficientes cámaras en la iglesia para vigilar a las personas adentro y afuera”, dijo el guardián armado y Caballero de Colón desde hace muchos años.

Gracias al equipo de guardianes voluntarios la parroquia no sólo está más segura, sino que también permite que los católicos calificados aporten a su comunidad parroquial mediante el uso de sus habilidades y experiencia.

“Le proporcionamos a ellos la oportunidad a través de la cual pueden aportar a la Iglesia de una manera significativa”, agregó Mallory. “La Iglesia está muy agradecida de su contribución”. 🇺🇸

Protegiendo A LOS NIÑOS

Nuevos programas virtuales de Ambiente Seguro en español ayudan a mantener seguros a más niños

Por Sandra Engelland

Cinco personas de la Diócesis Católica de Fort Worth se capacitaron en noviembre para convertirse en facilitadores del programa Virtus de la Diócesis para prevenir el abuso sexual infantil, como parte de la formación de Protegiendo a los Niños de Dios™.

Esa capacitación es algo que se ha venido haciendo con frecuencia desde que la Diócesis comenzó a utilizar el programa Virtus hace poco más de dos años. La diferencia es que esta vez la instrucción para los facilitadores se dio en español.

Los facilitadores han estado dirigiendo el programa en español para los clérigos, empleados y voluntarios de la Diócesis desde que comenzó, pero tuvieron que aprender primero los materiales en inglés.

“Se pierden muchos aspectos ya que los facilitadores tienen que traducirlos a su propio idioma”, dijo Sandra Schrader-Farry, Directora de Ambiente Seguro.

Alberto Ríos, uno de los dos instructores de la Diócesis formados para enseñar los facilitadores en español, dijo: “Se pierde mucho en una traducción cada vez que pasamos de un idioma a otro. Es útil conocer también el trasfondo de la cultura”.

“A veces, una traducción literal no funciona tan bien como un programa que se haya diseñado en español” continuó diciendo.

“El resultado final es que más personas pueden facilitar las sesiones para llegar a más participantes en la Diócesis, lo que hace que los niños estén más seguros ya que los ojos y oídos de los feligreses se abren a reconocer los signos de posible abuso en los niños”, dijo Schrader-Farry.

El objetivo de ofrecer sesiones en Zoom del programa Protegiendo a los Niños de Dios™ y otros programas de formación de Ambiente Seguro es llegar a más personas durante



Alberto Ríos, instructor de Ambiente Seguro en la Diócesis de Fort Worth. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

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la pandemia.

Nancy Mitchell, Subdirectora de Ambiente Seguro, dijo que alrededor de 4,000 personas de la Diócesis han asistido a las sesiones en Zoom desde marzo.

Susan Schabel, Coordinadora de Liturgia de la Parroquia de San Felipe Apóstol en Lewisville, ha facilitado sesiones en Zoom varias veces al mes. Se sorprendió de lo bien que transcurrieron las sesiones en línea.

“La gente tiende a hablar un poco más cuando están en sus hogares y es agradable conocer gente de toda la Diócesis”, dijo Schabel.

Sus sesiones de Zoom tienen un máximo de 28 personas.

“Si fueran más personas, serían demasiadas para que todas participen”, ella añadió.

Schabel quería facilitar las sesiones virtuales porque era una forma en la que ella podía servir desde su casa, y ha realizado tanto el programa Protegiendo a los Niños de Dios™ como el curso de actualización.

Schrader-Farry dijo: “La gente sigue queriendo recibir formación. Muchas de las oportunidades del voluntariado se han suspendido por el momento, pero los voluntarios quieren prepararse y estar listos. Eso me parece muy alentador”.

ABRIENDO LOS OJOS Y OÍDOS PARA DETENER EL ABUSO

Además de las sesiones virtuales de Protegiendo a los niños de Dios™, la Diócesis comenzó a ofrecer el programa de actualización de 90 minutos, Mantener Viva la

Promesa, y llevó a cabo varias presentaciones especiales para niños y adolescentes sobre la trata de personas y la seguridad cibernética.

La primera capacitación y las sesiones de seguimiento se ofrecen también en persona en algunos lugares.

Las sesiones del programa Mantener Viva la Promesa comenzaron en julio, dos años después de que la Diócesis comenzara a utilizar los programas Virtus. Se les pide a los participantes que tomen el curso de actualización al cabo de dos años de haber tomado el programa Protegiendo a los Niños de Dios™.

Schrader-Farry dijo que el curso de actualización comprende los modos de cómo se puede ayudar a prevenir activamente el abuso sexual de los niños.

“Durante las sesiones se comparten también historias en las que se manifiesta el éxito logrado por la información recibida y cómo hace una diferencia. Estos esfuerzos van más allá de nuestra propia Iglesia”, dijo.

Los participantes pueden utilizar el conocimiento adquirido en cualquier situación que en que pudieran encontrarse con un niño o niña que puedan estar en peligro, tanto para prevenir el abuso como para ayudarlos a obtener ayuda. Cualquiera puede participar de la capacitación inicial y de las presentaciones especiales, si se inscribe en línea y crea una cuenta Virtus.

Mitchell dijo: “Oramos para que el programa incluya no sólo a los que tienen contacto de manera regular, sino a todos los que tienen contacto con los niños o adultos vulnerables,



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para ayudarlos a aprender a mantener los ojos y los oídos abiertos con respecto a las señales de posibles comportamientos abusivos”.

“Debido a todos los cambios ocurridos por el COVID-19 en el 2020, el abuso sexual infantil es un gran problema en estos momentos, ya que a menudo los abusadores están en el hogar con el niño o la niña”, señaló Schrader-Farry.

La Oficina de Ambiente Seguro continúa llegando a las posibles víctimas y busca crear conciencia sobre el problema. La oficina y los coordinadores de la Diócesis han colocado carteles en las 91 parroquias y 19 escuelas para brindar asistencia a las víctimas. Tienen recursos disponibles como la línea directa de asistencia a las víctimas y la página web.

El personal de Ambiente Seguro espera volver pronto a las sesiones en vivo y en persona. “Debido a la importancia y la naturaleza

de este tema, creemos que es mejor abordarlo en persona para promover la discusión y la interacción con los participantes”, comentó Schrader-Farry.

ABRIR LA PUERTA AL DIÁLOGO

Ríos, el facilitador de las sesiones en español, dijo que está muy impresionado de las conversaciones que ha suscitado la capacitación de Virtus. En la capacitación se habla sobre las señales de un posible abuso y cómo abordarlo, lo que les facilita conversar con un colega y preguntar “¿Le pareció que eso está bien o no?”

“Hace un tiempo, antes de que se creara el programa de capacitación de Ambiente Seguro, no creo que este tipo de conversación ocurriera”, dijo.

Si desea obtener más información acerca de los programas de Ambiente Seguro, visite fwdioc.org/safe-environment. 🇺🇸



NUESTRO PASTOR HABLA

Obispo Michael F. Olson, STD, MA

VEN, SEÑOR JESÚS

OBISPO MICHAEL OLSON
es el cuarto Obispo de la
Diócesis de Fort Worth.



 @BpOlsonFW

Comenzamos el tiempo de Adviento recitando la antífona litúrgica y el estribillo: “¡Ven, Señor Jesús!” Hemos dicho continuamente esta oración durante el Adviento en medio de nuestras circunstancias contemporáneas de un gran auge de los casos de COVID-19; de los continuos disturbios civiles con respecto al resultado político de nuestra elección presidencial; de la incertidumbre sobre lo que depara el futuro en cuanto a los asuntos de nuestra libertad religiosa; del escándalo y la duda provocados por la discusión en curso relacionada con el ex Cardenal McCarrick y la manera en que ha sido recibido el informe al respecto del Vaticano; de la desconfianza actual de la autoridad legítima; y de los temores que se sienten por las dificultades económicas debido a la incertidumbre futura con respecto al empleo para muchos. “¡Ven, Señor Jesús!”

Dios responde a nuestra oración de Adviento de “Ven, Señor Jesús” con Su anuncio hecho a través de Sus ángeles a los pastores, y la respuesta de ellos: “Vayamos, pues, hasta Belén y veamos lo que ha sucedido y que el Señor nos ha dado a conocer”. Como católicos, nuestro lugar está en Belén en el establo con María y José, con los ángeles, el

buey y el burro, y con los pastores ante el pesebre-cuna de Emmanuel. Dios responde a nuestras oraciones nuevamente al estar con nosotros en medio de nuestros temores y nos ofrece un amor incondicional y el regalo de Su paz.

Dios se hace pequeño de nuevo y dependiente del amor humano en la Encarnación, vista por primera vez en el nacimiento del Divino Infante en Belén. Su pequeñez aleja nuestros miedos y evoca un amor y compasión más humanos que los que Adán y Eva rechazaron en el Edén. Dios se ha hecho pequeño otra vez y vulnerable en el Divino Infante desde el momento de su nacimiento en la plenitud de la humanidad, y nos muestra cuál debe ser nuestra propia disposición ante la presencia de Dios: la aceptación de Su amor y la dependencia de Su gracia.

La Navidad no es sólo la celebración del poder de Dios sobre el pecado y el mal. Es un regalo más profundo y enternecedor, es la celebración de la humanidad: la plenitud de la humanidad que ya no está empañada por el pecado, sino que está en paz con Dios. La humanidad, que es propensa a todos los temores que se mencionaron al comienzo de este artículo, ahora muestra una renovada dignidad y confianza en el

nacimiento del Divino Infante rodeado de Su Santísima Madre y San José, los cuales dieron su “sí” a Dios, en contraste con nuestros primeros padres que dijeron que “no”. Los temores que se mencionaron al comienzo de este artículo se disipan, no por las ilusiones o la planificación política, sino por la verdad real de que Dios es Emmanuel — Él está con nosotros y por nosotros — y nunca estará en contra o lejos de nosotros. Él ha elegido serlo en la humanidad plena del Niño Jesús que se da a nosotros y por nosotros en el pesebre de Belén.

Nuestros temores se disipan cuando reconocemos en el Niño Jesús la vulnerabilidad de todos y cada uno de los demás seres humanos con los que compartimos nuestra humanidad al haber sido creados y redimidos a imagen y semejanza de Dios. La dignidad de todo ser humano no se basa en una abstracción, sino en la revelación plena y perfecta de Dios en el Cristo Niño rodeado de María y José en Belén. La Navidad nos hace un llamado a dar nuestra respuesta a dejar de lado el miedo y abrazar a nuestro Dios. Él se deja abrazar de nosotros como un pequeño bebé para que podamos abrazarlo en el amor del prójimo al compartir lo que se nos ha dado con confianza y paz: Emmanuel, Dios con nosotros. ✝



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