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**Paul Alley**  
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**Tim Bradford, FIC**  
Cell: 817-821-2323  
tim.bradford@kofc.org



**Carlos Canseco**  
Cell: 682-465-9691  
carlos.canseco@kofc.org

**Chris Stark, FICF**  
*General Agent*  
Cell: 979-218-3664  
Office: 817-616-5359  
chris.stark@kofc.org



**Tom Centarri, FIC**  
Cell: 682-261-5806  
tom.centarri@kofc.org



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



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

**Andrew Tice, FIC**  
*Assistant General Agent*  
Cell: 972-333-7462  
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**Michael Bryant, FIC**  
*Assistant General Agent*  
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# EMMANUEL AND THE EUCHARIST

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



 @BpOlsonFW

This issue of the *North Texas Catholic* is focused upon the mystery of the Eucharist. It is fitting that we should consider the Eucharist, especially at this time of Christmas when we celebrate the nativity of the Son of God and the Son of Mary — Jesus Christ, the Word Made Flesh. We read in the account of Jesus’ birth in Matthew’s Gospel: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us’” (*Matthew 1:23*). The celebration of the Eucharist at midnight on Christmas has always most vividly called to mind the mystery of God made man, Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Particularly at midnight Mass, the celebration of warm joy amidst the cold and darkness reminds us most beautifully that Christ is the light of the world shining brightly in the darkness — the darkness of our lives and of the world. In a special way, the placing and blessing of the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger scene places all of us gathered at midnight Mass in that original nativity scene. It helps us to belong in the manger spiritually with the Infant Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Saint Joseph, and to remember who was there on that great night so many years ago.

The shepherds were in the outskirts and fields, caves and valleys, the periphery of society, seldom venturing into the town. The shepherds are watchful because they have no place of their own, so they have no spare room for God in their lives; so, in their watchfulness God reveals fully in the Infant Jesus their place in God’s life rather than God’s part in their lives.

Who isn’t watchful and who chooses not to belong in the stable? Herod, the Roman Empire’s bureaucrats, corrupt members of the religious leadership, the inn keepers, and others who are too busy and too preoccupied to belong to anybody.

They are indifferent to God.

The philosophers, the experts, and those who already have a spare room for God in their lives miss the song of the angels and the birth of the Christ Child. In keeping a spare room for God, they choose not to belong to Him but to treat Him as an occasional guest whom they invite when they are bored. They are either asleep or about evil business transacted in the dark of night; the very darkness in which the light of the Christ Child now shines so brightly.

Reason itself, unaided by faith, does not permit us to watch for the mystery of God’s victory in the defenseless Infant Jesus who conquers humanity by vulnerable love. Reason, unaided by faith, fosters isolation and selfishness in each of these groups who choose not to belong in the stable. This is the selfishness which darkens the intelligence of human beings so that they miss their identity of belonging to God and to each other as His children; they sadly prefer the tinsel allure of autonomy. This darkness still pervades in much of our world today; yet the Light of the Christ Child shines ever brighter in its midst at Christmas.

So, fallen humanity receives its Savior in a manger, a place where animals go by instinct to feed. Yet, the same Christ Child will grow and as a man nourish our fallen humanity with the redemptive banquet of His Body and Blood, the Eucharist — the sacrament whereby we can truly belong.

Our gift of belonging to God in Christ requires our not simply having a spare room for Him but embracing in our weakness His room for us; it requires our swaddling in His divinity through the gift of Baptismal grace; and it requires our being nourished and transformed at the banquet of His sacrificial love, the Eucharist. “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (*Matthew 28:20*). ✝



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PUBLISHER BISHOP MICHAEL OLSON

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR PAT SVACINA

EDITOR JUAN GUAJARDO

ASSOCIATE EDITOR SUSAN MOSES

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT ROSA ROSALES

WEB DESIGNER CHRIS KASTNER

CIRCULATION DEBBIE DOWIS

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER ANNETTE MENDOZA-SMITH

CONTRIBUTORS KEVIN BARTRAM | JILLIAN BREARLEY  
 JERRY CIRCELLI | MARIA DIAZ  
 JAYME DONAHUE | SANDRA ENGELLAND  
 JOY KAISER | JOAN KURKOWSKI-GILLEN  
 RODGER MALLISON | MICHELLE McDANIEL  
 ALICE MURRAY | WALKER PRICE  
 VIOLETA ROCHA | MICHAEL SHERMAN  
 MARY LOU SEEWOSTER | MATTHEW SMITH  
 BEN TORRES

TRANSLATOR YOLANDA NEWCOMB

REGULAR COLUMNISTS JEFF HEDGLEN | ALI HOFFMAN  
 CALLIE NOWLIN | FR. TAD PACHOLCZYK  
 FR. MATTHEW TATYREK | SEAN WRIGHT

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

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## “For You, Sweet Child”

Around this time of year, my wife and I pull out our bin of Christmas and Advent-related books to read to our children.

Among the collection are several books by Tomie dePaola, who wasn't shy about sharing that Christmas was his favorite liturgical season.

One that I recently read to my daughters was *The Clown of God*, an old French tale that goes back centuries. In dePaola's version, the main character, Giovanni, a penniless and homeless (but very talented) juggler catches on with a group of traveling players. The boy wows audiences with his juggling feats and, eventually, makes it to the big time, performing for princes and nobles. As the years pass, Giovanni grows old, his talent diminishes, and so do his admiring crowds. With his age sapping him of his dexterity, Giovanni finds himself again poor and homeless. On a cold Christmas eve, he seeks refuge in a church, where he witnesses a procession of gifts for the Christ Child.

After the church empties, Giovanni, “the clown of God,” approaches the statue of Mary and the Infant Jesus and realizes that while he doesn't have material possessions to gift, he does have his great talent for juggling. It dawns on him that his talent, his gift, becomes even more valuable when it's used to honor God. So, in the empty church, he presents his gift to the Christ Child in “good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing” (*Luke 6:38*) and juggles the best he ever had. Exhausted and with heart pounding, he proclaims, “For You, Sweet Child, for You!” His heartwarming display brings a smile to the statue of the Christ Child.

During this liturgical season we celebrate the astonishing fact that God, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, makes Himself man — not only man, but a powerless infant bound by time and space. He gives Himself to us wholly and without reservation both in His Incarnation and later at His crucifixion.

My hope this Christmas is that we take the beautiful examples set by Jesus and Giovanni to heart and give our Blessed Lord the best of us, each and every day.

*Juan Guajardo*  
 EDITOR



Anayansi Camargo (left) and Kate Sanchez rehearse at Nolan Catholic High School. (NTC/Ben Torres)



## Following the footsteps



Catholic schools offer clubs for ballet folklórico

**FORT WORTH** — Kate Sanchez loves the rhythm and music of ballet folklórico, but she is most excited about the sound of her shoes, reinforced with nails in the soles, which strike the floor to the beat.

Sanchez and eight others are part of “La Vikina,” the Ballet Folklórico Club of Nolan Catholic High School, which formed in 2019.

“Dancing is a talent that God has blessed us with,” Sanchez said. “It is a very cheerful atmosphere and ... it shows Mexican culture in our diverse Catholic school,” she added while joyfully pointing out members who do not have Mexican roots.

Maria Beltran, Nolan

Spanish teacher who leads the club, admires the tenacity and discipline of the group, and she finds the joy of the music and dance “contagious and inspiring.”

The Club de Ballet Folklórico at St. Maria Goretti Catholic School has a membership with diverse ages and cultures.

Martha Zavala, Spanish teacher who directs the club with volunteer Ashley Martinez, observed older students welcoming and teaching the younger students. She pointed out many fruits of the group, including community, empathy, and unity.

— *Violeta Rocha*





# Deacon candidates advance

 Bishop institutes acolytes and lectors

**FORT WORTH** — “Faith begins with listening to God,” Bishop Michael Olson proclaimed at St. Patrick Cathedral at a Nov. 6 Mass during which seven men took major steps forward in their journeys toward the permanent diaconate.

At the morning liturgy, six candidates from the Class of 2022 were instituted as acolytes; one of those six also received the Ministry of Lector. One aspirant was admitted to candidacy for the Class of 2024, bringing the size of that cohort to two.

David Kinch, one of ten candidates in formation in the Class of 2022, said, “What was the most beautiful moment was kneeling before the bishop and taking the chalice and paten, as he was, in essence, instituting me as an acolyte, as he’s saying this prayer, looking at me and smiling.”



Sergio Vera stands with other members of the diaconal Class of 2022 during the Mass for the Institution of Lectors and Acolytes. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Kinch, who hopes to serve where the need is greatest, continued, “It was just a beautiful moment to experience that, as we move closer to service and to those in need within our diocese.”

For diaconal candidates, listening for

the voice of God is critical as they journey together through a six-year process to become permanent deacons for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

— Michelle McDaniel



A matachine dancer prays on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

## Still converting hearts



Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of the Americas

**MANSFIELD** — Long before sunrise at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield, parishioners gathered to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe on her feast day, December 12.

The morning began at 5 a.m. with *Las Mañanitas*, traditional songs in Spanish, followed by *los matachines*, whose dance dates back centuries and acts out the battle between Christianity and paganism.

Many other parishes

in the diocese honored Our Lady of Guadalupe in a similar manner, along with Catholics across the U.S. and Mexico.

In 1531, Mary appeared to a humble peasant, St. Juan Diego, as a pregnant indigenous woman speaking his native language, Nahuatl.

Our Lady asked him to go to his bishop and have a chapel built on the hill where she appeared.

The skeptical bishop eventually believed when

St. Juan Diego brought him a tilma full of roses. Underneath the roses — an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Our Lady of Guadalupe was named Patroness of the Americas by Pope Pius XII in 1945 for her role in the conversion of as many as nine million Aztecs to Christianity.

About 10 million pilgrims visit the Basilica de Guadalupe near Mexico City annually.



## A mission close at hand

**ARLINGTON** — About 170 volunteers with Hand-in-Hand Share Missions conducted a medical mission at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington, where more than 350 individuals received free medical, dental, and optical care and screenings.

The nonprofit, headed by local Catholics and led by Dr. Tram Nguyen, has made nine journeys to some of the poorest villages in Vietnam to provide health care and therapy.

Dentist Katherine Luong performs an extraction at Hand-in-Hand Share Missions free medical mission. (NTC/Ben Torres)



## Whitehead named director of evangelization and catechesis

Previously the director of faith formation, he strives to hand on the faith with fidelity

**FORT WORTH** — With nearly 10 years' experience in Catholic faith formation, Jason Whitehead has been appointed the director of evangelization and catechesis for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Although he summed up the duties of the position succinctly — “to proclaim the Gospel, teach the faith, and pray and work for vocations” — Whitehead holds many varied responsibilities.

He oversees parish-based catechesis, which includes religious education, sacramental preparation, and RCIA. He supports parishes by vetting curricula and guest speakers, and he will help pastors interview candidates for parish youth ministers and religious education coordinators, if requested.

At the diocese, he oversees education plus youth, respect life, marriage and family life, and Hispanic ministries.

Whitehead pursued a career in Baptist ministry until further study led to his call to enter the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil service at Holy Family Parish in 2012. In 2014, he became RCIA coordinator at St. Patrick Cathedral. He has worked for the diocese since 2016, as assistant director of evangelization and catechesis then director of faith formation.

He earned a Master of Arts degree in moral theology from Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut.

One of his near-term goals is to

expand the courses and locations offered by the St. Junipero Institute, the diocese's adult formation program.

The director said he is “so proud to be a part” of the diocese, which he said is “very much committed to keeping intact what the Church calls the deposit of faith. We strive to hand that faith on whole and entire, and in its purity, without minimizing it or watering it down.”

He continued, “When you stand against the tide of the world and stand up for what Christ taught, that makes us all better. It calls each and every one of us outside of ourselves and to become, in cooperation with God's grace, saints.”



Jason Whitehead





## Perennial bloom

**GAINESVILLE** — The Knights of Columbus honor Our Lady of Guadalupe, reaffirm dedication to the sanctity of life, and demonstrate unity between Knights in North America with the Silver Rose. Eight roses run different routes, passing from council to council from Canada to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.

◀ Knights of Columbus prepare to process into St. Mary Church in Gainesville with the Silver Rose. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



## Pray and remember

**FORT WORTH** — Students from Holy Family Catholic School honored November, which is dedicated to the souls in purgatory, by visiting Oakwood Cemetery and praying the Rosary, planting flowers in the section for the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, and taking rubbings of gravestones and praying for those individuals.

◀ Mary Ellen Price, a seventh-grade student, and Abigail Smith, an eighth-grader, take rubbings from a gravestone in the Catholic section of Oakwood Cemetery. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



## Built for battle

**LEWISVILLE** — TEACH Robotics, a DFW-based Catholic homeschool robotics team, competed with 16 other teams from across DFW in the Cowtown Robotics Competition. The TEACH Robotics team placed fourth for the robotics portion and first overall in the competition, which also judged engineering notebooks and marketing presentations.

◀ Arianny Putera secures a couple of PVC pipes onto the robot during competition November 6 in Flower Mound. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)



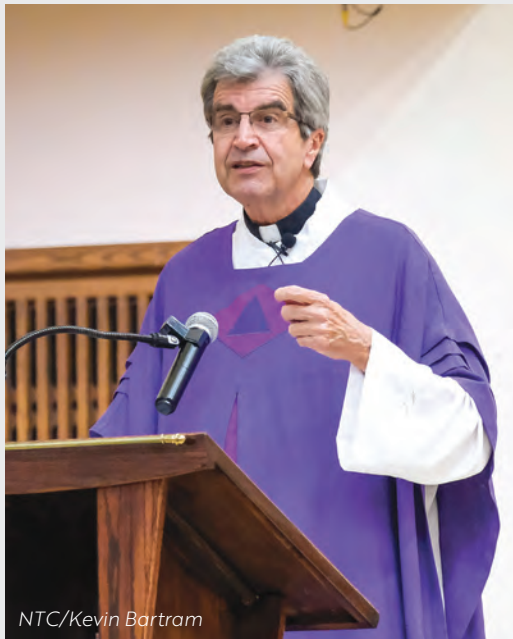
## Dress rehearsal

**FORT WORTH** — Father Thu Nguyen, director of liturgy and worship for the diocese, has conducted rehearsals for deacon candidates to prepare them to preside over Baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

To make practices as realistic as possible, Fr. Nguyen borrowed a coffin and recruited stand-in couples and babies.



Alfred Mosco, a deacon candidate in the Class of 2022, practices presiding over a funeral rite. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



NTC/Kevin Bartram

## Warm welcome

**FORT WORTH** — All Saints Parish in Fort Worth gave a warm welcome to its new pastor, Father Tim Thompson. After the evening Mass on December 2, more than 100 parishioners surprised Fr. Thompson with a reception in the parish hall.

## Lock-in for Life

**FORT WORTH** — About 80 teenagers attended the annual Lock-in for Life, where they learned about fetal development, abortion legislation, and abortion procedures. The final speaker emphasized responding to an expectant mother with joy and compassion, explaining that an unexpected pregnancy is not to be feared because support and resources are available.



NTC/Jayme Donahue

See the photo galleries online at [North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com](http://North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com)



# Greatest experience of his life



Deacon Hector Salva to retire from St. Thomas the Apostle Parish

**FORT WORTH —** A chance encounter with a priest on Holy Thursday led Deacon Hector Salva into a ministry that blessed him with the best 26 years of his life.

“I was the only person in the Cathedral when I saw a priest, so I started talking to him,” remembered the native of Puerto Rico who moved to Texas only months earlier in 1984.

During the conversation, Dcn. Salva found out the person telling him about the diocese’s new deacon formation program was the bishop.

“I was too late for the first class of deacons, but Bishop [Joseph P.] Delaney told me to apply for the next one,” recalled the former St. Patrick parishioner. “He said, ‘Maybe you’ll be my deacon someday.’”

That’s exactly what happened. Ten years later, after his ordination to the permanent diaconate in 1995, Dcn. Salva was assigned to St. Patrick Cathedral where he assisted Bishop Delaney for six years before leaving to become a pastoral administrator with the late Father David Bristow at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Fort Worth.

Since 2014, the deacon has served at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, where he helped parishioners build a new

church, mourn the unexpected death of a beloved pastor, Father Mathew Kavipurayidam, TOR, and cope with a pandemic that kept current pastor, Father Benjamin Hembrom, TOR, in India for eight months. Dcn. Salva and Deacon Mike Handler managed the parish in his absence.

“The best part of being a deacon is just serving the people,” explained Dcn. Salva, who is retiring at the end of this year. “That’s been the most important part of my ministry.”

In January, Dcn. Salva and his wife, Manuela, will celebrate 59 years of marriage along with their three children, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Once retired, the 80-year-old spiritual director will spend time “praying for everybody” and will serve in the diocese if needed.

Being present for people and their needs is something he’ll miss, the deacon admitted.

“If a man is selected to be a deacon, it will be the greatest experience of his life,” Dcn. Salva said, looking back on his years of ministry. “When you serve at the altar at the time of consecration, you are so close to the Lord. It’s a miracle — every single time.”

— Joan Kurkowski-Gillen



Deacon Hector Salva preaches the homily at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish on Dec. 12. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

## PRIEST ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

### REV. FEDERICO ORTIZ MADRIGAL, OFM Cap.

From outside the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, effective October 12.

### REV. SIMON HARKINS, FSSP

From outside the diocese, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Benedict Parish at the proposal of his order’s superior, effective November 8.

### REV. KARL PIKUS, FSSP

Former pastor of St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth has been **transferred** outside of the Diocese of Fort Worth at the proposal of his order’s superior, effective November 8.

### REV. D. TIMOTHY THOMPSON

From pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton to **Pastor** of All Saints Parish in Fort Worth, effective December 1.



# THE MORE, the merrier

Catholic Charities Fort Worth is partnering with parishes in the diocese to make an even greater impact in our communities

By Susan Moses

**W**hen it comes to giving a hand to the impoverished, the needs are always greater than the capacity. To maximize the impact of charity and social ministry programs, Catholic Charities Fort Worth is partnering with parishes. So far, results are promising.

Kasey Whitley, director of CCFW's parish social ministry and her team are crisscrossing the diocese to meet with pastors, ministry leaders, and volunteers to collaborate on how best to serve individuals and families on the margins of society.

Denise Koch, social outreach coordinator of St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Lewisville, has seen the parish's relationship with CCFW grow stronger in her three years on the job.

"What Catholic Charities did was open us up to a better understanding of what [social ministry] should really look like and how to move forward, how to make adjustments, and how to manage the people's expectations," Koch said, adding that she communicates with CCFW a few times each month.

By working with CCFW and other community aid organizations, Koch has learned to mimic their best practices of determining who is eligible for aid, vetting clients' needs, examining the sustainability of their efforts, and working collaboratively to find more resources.

Koch, who came from a business management position with American Airlines, called CCFW "instrumental in learning how it's done," and noted that the parish's social ministry has become more systematic, more accountable, and more robust. At times, it can even be creative, she said, giving an example of telling a client that after they found employment, the parish would match the first month's income.



(L-R) Pamela Morris, financial assistance specialist, Kasey Whitley, director of CCFW's parish social ministry, Allison Moore, Gabriel Project coordinator and Angel advocate, and Maria Barahona, Gabriel Project case worker. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

## DOING MORE, TOGETHER

According to Whitley, parishes and CCFW bring different strengths to their common goal to assist the least of these. Parishes have insights into the community's needs, committed volunteers, and visibility in the neighborhood or town. CCFW, meanwhile, brings resources for short-term assistance as well as data-driven strategies to eliminate poverty, which includes programs to help clients realize the employment, education, and financial goals necessary to be self-sufficient.

The first step of the alliance often begins with a parish referring a person to CCFW, if the person has needs greater than the parish can meet. CCFW has adopted an electronic system for direct referrals from parishes, which is more streamlined and efficient than phone calls. Whitley estimated that 90 percent of their parish referrals this year have been electronic.

Whitley said CCFW responds to the

referral within three to five days, then communicates to the parish if the agency can help the client. If not, the agency may suggest other community resources.

Another benefit of the collaboration can be measured in dollars and cents. Say a client's car broke down so they can't get to work, and they face eviction. The parish and CCFW can work together to provide complementary assistance. CCFW's funds are often restricted to utility or housing assistance, but parish resources tend to be more flexible and could help with a car repair.

## STEADY PROGRESS

Forming parish referral partners with the 91 parishes of the diocese is a slow and deliberate process, said Whitley, as each parish has its own needs and resources, and CCFW customizes its approach for each particular parish. Plus, CCFW frequently evaluates data generated by their parish referral partners, and then tweaks the program to

become more effective.

The nonprofit piloted parish referral partners about two years ago, and its goal is that 80 percent of parishes will be on board by 2023.

This year, Whitley said, parishes alone have referred more than 800 clients to CCFW, which has dispensed more than \$500,000 to meet those requests.

"We can serve more this way," explained Whitley. "When we deputize and empower people at the parishes to do some of this legwork of getting client information and determining their eligibility, then we're able to go out and serve more. We're able to do it faster and better."

If you deputize all the social ministry volunteers at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, you'd run out of badges.

The Keller parish had a robust social ministry program when Patricia Gonzalez became its director of outreach

Continued on Page 14



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in August. As many as 200 volunteers would show up for its monthly sandwich-making for the homeless, and much of the parish participates in holiday food drives, an angel tree program, and collections of non-perishable food and toiletry items, to name a few.

“The success of an outreach office depends on two vital pieces: a strong volunteer corps... but also the support of your leadership,” Gonzalez said, citing Father James Flynn’s philosophy. “If there’s a need out there, he wants to meet that need.”

Earlier this year, Whitley visited the parish for “a very, very active meeting with a ton of idea sharing and synergy,” Gonzalez remembered. “What I didn’t realize I was looking for was how can we complement [CCFW’s] services and make sure the clients we see, the clients that CCFW sees, how can we make sure their needs are being met.”

For the short term, Gonzalez said the social ministry volunteers at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton are better informed to know what financial assistance CCFW can provide and to refer clients to CCFW’s working family services program.

Gonzalez said the parish and agency can work together to “get clients further away from crisis mode, and in a place where they can start making more rational and better decisions.”

The outreach director expects the partnership with CCFW will help accomplish some future goals also. She hopes the parish will become a baby closet for Gabriel Project, a CCFW program for mothers in crisis pregnancies.

“A successful outreach program is one that will hold the hand of that client through any stage they are in, whether it’s a young mom with an unplanned pregnancy, whether it’s someone with school-aged kids... or an older adult on a super limited income,” Gonzalez said.

Whitley continues to meet with the outreach ministry at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, sharing ideas and her knowledge base. For example, Whitley knew of a parish that developed a strong Gabriel Project ministry and recommended that Gonzalez contact them for ideas.

## SILENT PARTNER

As Koch coordinates social ministry at St. Philip the Apostle Parish, she taps into the wisdom and assistance of CCFW, other local aid groups, and the Holy Spirit.

She said, “Honestly, I pray to the Holy Spirit before I help anybody, ask Him to guide me and give me the tools that I need to be able to assist them in the way that He desires. Sometimes it’s just loving that person where they are.

“I have homeless people that will come in and [I tell them] ‘You’re a child of God and you’re beautiful.’ And I treat them with dignity and kindness and respect and love.”

When it comes to helping those in need, parishes and CCFW have a long history of being compassionate, generous, and merciful. By adding parish referral partnerships to their operations manual, they’ve now added “strategic.” 🇺🇸



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Dr. Lisa Sibley, DDS, treats patients at the Catholic Charities Fort Worth dental clinic. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

# ALL SMILES

Catholic Charities Fort Worth operates low-cost dental clinic

By Mary Lou Seewoester

When she was 12 years old, Lisa Sibley lost two teeth that could have been saved.

“I was that kid who didn’t have dental insurance. We only went to the dentist when it hurt ... and when it hurts, they pull it out because that’s the easiest option,” she said.

Today, Dr. Lisa Sibley, DDS, ensures that her patients at the Catholic Charities Fort Worth Dental Clinic know all possible options for treatment.

Sibley, who left a career in corporate dentistry for the CCFW Dental Clinic,

said “dental care is expensive, and my desire was always to go back and help those who could not afford it.”

She recalled a middle-aged man who recently came to the clinic after receiving a “long laundry list” of services he couldn’t afford from a private dental practice. Sibley put together an alternate, affordable treatment plan that met his needs.

Sibley said though the clinic doesn’t offer braces or implants, “We provide services that [patients] can receive in private practice. We don’t eliminate or exclude anything here.”

The clinic opened in 2013 with one dentist and a hygienist. Today, the

five-chair clinic serves more than 200 patients a month. It has three X-ray machines, a panoramic X-ray, and a staff of six, including two dentists, two full-time dental assistants, and a full-time hygienist, Sibley said.

Xergio Chacin, director of immigration services and the dental clinic at CCFW, explained the clinic is a “social enterprise,” meaning it is a costly service to operate, so CCFW charges reduced fees.

“We are not seeking to make a profit,” he said. “It’s a service we provide because the need is there. But we need for that service to be sustainable and financially self-sufficient.”

He said clinic dental fees are at least 50 percent lower than fees at private practices. The clinic keeps the cost of the initial visit artificially low to encourage patients to have a baseline comprehensive exam before establishing a treatment plan, he added.

“Many of our clients cannot afford regular dental care, and by the time they come to us they have a great need,” he said, adding that most clinic patients are uninsured with little or no income.

“Thankfully [the clinic] receives funds from St. Joseph Health Care Trust every year,” Chacin said.

This year, the clinic received \$285,516 from the St. Joseph Health Care Trust, which also granted CCFW \$457,020 for transportation services and counseling.

Renée Underwood, chief development officer for the Diocese of Fort Worth Advancement Foundation, said the St. Joseph Health Care Trust is “one of our largest endowments, and each year it produces enough income that we can be generous with grants.”

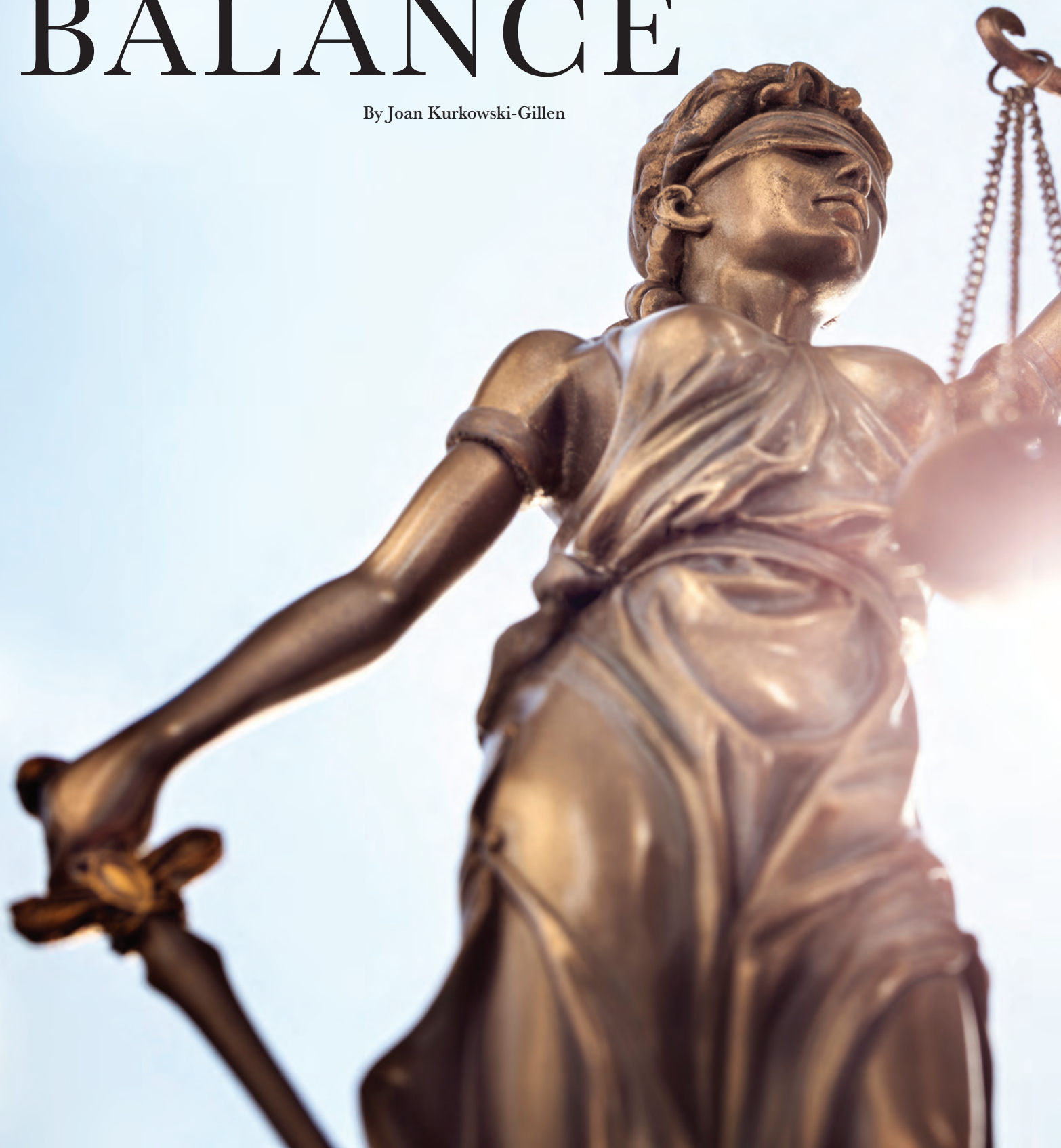
“CCFW is a truly good steward of any dollar you invest in them,” she said. “We are called to serve the least among us in whatever form that takes.” 🇺🇸






# HANGING IN THE BALANCE

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen





## Catholics respond to what many are calling the biggest Supreme Court abortion case in decades

**T**he Texas Heartbeat Act, which bans most abortions after the fetal heartbeat is detected at six weeks, received a flurry of media attention when it was signed into law May 19, but it's another piece of legislation that could upend the Supreme Court's 1973 landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.

On Dec. 1, the Supreme Court heard lengthy oral arguments on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. Under review is a Mississippi law prohibiting all abortions after the 15<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy except in the case of a health emergency or fetal abnormalities. The legislation was enacted in 2018 but never went into effect after an immediate legal challenge

led to the 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals blocking its enforcement.

When

Mississippi's only licensed abortion provider challenged the law's constitutionality in court, the state asked the Supreme Court to rule on whether all bans on pre-viability abortions are unconstitutional. Prior to *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, the Supreme Court had never agreed to hear a case involving a pre-viability

abortion ban.

"For the first time in three decades, the Supreme Court could potentially overturn *Roe v. Wade* and allow states to protect unborn babies throughout pregnancy," suggested Joe Pojman, founder and executive director of Texas Alliance for Life. "The *Dobbs* case is way bigger than the Texas Heartbeat Act."

Pojman and other pro-life advocates, including representatives from the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops, traveled to Washington, D.C., to voice their support for Mississippi's bill and other pro-life legislation. Standing on the steps of the Supreme Court building, Pojman called the oral arguments, broadcast by live audio, an exciting moment.

"We are encouraged by the questions the justices asked that signal their openness to reversing *Roe*," he said in a statement following the *Dobbs* hearing. "If that happens, the Texas Human Life Protection Act will begin protecting unborn babies from the tragedy of abortion beginning at conception. This is when science tells us that unborn babies come into being, indeed, when all of us come into being."

If *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, nearly half of the states already have or are expected to enact bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy.

The Supreme Court addressed abortion issues several times since 1973, most notably in the 1992 case *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. In that 5-4 decision, *Roe* was reaffirmed but states were given the power to regulate the industry so long as they did not impose an "undue burden" on the right to abortion. States

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could not restrict abortion before the 24-week mark when a fetus can survive outside the womb.

### PRAYER CRUSADE CONTINUES

As the Supreme Court reconsiders *Roe v. Wade*, Catholics have joined Orthodox and Protestant faith communities in a “Pray for *Dobbs*” crusade. Participants will pray and fast from now until June when the Supreme Court could render a decision affirming life as a human right.

“We should continue to pray but, regardless of the outcome, we have to stand firm and remain present for the women who are going to need help,” said Diocesan Respect Life Coordinator Terri Schauf, who feels guardedly hopeful after the *Dobbs* hearing. “Only an act of God can change the heart of someone adamantly against life.”

Since the Texas Heartbeat Act went into effect Sept. 1, many local pregnancy centers have reported an increase in clients coming in for assistance.

“And the same will be true if *Roe* is overturned or if additional restrictions are added,” she continued. “We have to continue to be loving, charitable, and the hands and feet of Christ to these women and their families.”

### ULTRASOUND REFRAMES THE ISSUE

Advances in technology are helping more mothers considering an abortion to choose life, according to Christina Bennett, a spokesperson for Live Action, a human rights, pro-life nonprofit with more



than 2.7 million digital followers around the world.

“When *Roe v. Wade* was decided, we didn’t have the technology we do now,” she said, explaining three and four-dimensional ultrasound imaging now allows patients and doctors to see a child developing in utero. “Lives are being saved by technology in the neonatal intensive care wards every day. The courts will recognize it’s time to relook at this issue.”

Regardless of gestational age, the child in the womb deserves to be protected, Bennett said. In prior generations, it was the norm.

“If you believe in science, if you are pro science, you’ll admit that a baby is alive, growing, and human. It’s not just a clump of cells,” stressed the Connecticut native, who grew up in a family that voted for pro-choice candidates. Abortion was never discussed at home or in her

non-denominational church.

Bennett joined the pro-life movement after learning in college that she was almost aborted. Her mother, a single woman in an abusive relationship, was crying in a hospital hallway when a janitor offered the comforting words, “God will give you the strength to have this baby.” Although pressured by the baby’s father to terminate the pregnancy, she changed her mind.

“That caused me to realize that everything I heard about abortion — that it was a woman’s right and was empowering for women — was a lie,” said Bennett, who is now a 40-year-old youth minister. “I’m alive, married, and have children all because my mom ran into someone who encouraged her to walk out of that appointment.”

Her mother faced obstacles during a crisis pregnancy, “but none of that



◀ A pro-life supporter takes part in a demonstration outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington Nov. 1, 2021, as the court heard arguments over a challenge to a Texas law that bans abortion after six weeks. On Dec. 10, the Supreme Court said clinics' legal challenge to the law can continue but in the meantime the law would remain in effect. (CNS/Evelyn Hockstein, Reuters)

made me worthy of a death sentence," she reasoned. "There are resources, nonprofits, and federal programs. I want women to know they are not alone, and we are here to help them."

### HEARTBEAT ACT IS SAVING LIVES

Mother and Unborn Baby Care has assisted women in crisis pregnancies since it was founded by Chuck and Pat Pelletier 37 years ago. The nonprofit provides counseling, agency referrals, and enough financial assistance to afford the costs related to pregnancy, delivery, and newborn care. Offering hope and spiritual guidance as well as practical resources, the only Catholic pro-life pregnancy center in Fort Worth has saved more than 8,000 babies from abortion.

"We help women understand the baby is not the crisis," explained Pat Pelletier, the organization's president. "We let

them know there is so much assistance available in this area."

Mother and Unborn Baby Care is currently building a \$1-million center adjacent to an abortion clinic on Lackland Road where 500 abortions are performed each month.

"It's going to give us an opportunity to walk a girl from [the clinic] right next door [to our center] where we can explain all the programs that exist to help her," Pelletier said. "We just have to interrupt that walk into the front door of the abortion clinic."

The Texas Heartbeat Act is already having an impact on the abortion industry. Fifty percent fewer abortions were performed at Texas facilities during September 2021 compared to last year, according to a study by the Texas Policy Evaluation Project at UT-Austin.

Local abortion clinics also are servicing fewer clients.

"The law has saved hundreds of babies," observed Pelletier, who continues to do sidewalk counseling. "One clinic is sometimes closed three days a week. They've cut back on their hours, so the Heartbeat Act has done a lot of good."

### CONSERVATIVE LEANING COURT IS KEY

On Dec. 10 the Supreme Court ruled on two legal challenges to SB 8.

In the first, *Whole Woman's Health v. Jackson*, the justices ruled 8-to-1 that abortion providers can continue their legal challenge against the Texas Heartbeat Act but let the law remain in effect in the meantime. Their action returns the case to lower courts for further proceedings. The court also narrowed down which state

officials can be sued by abortion providers.

The court dismissed the second case, *United States v. Texas*, as improvidently granted, meaning the court shouldn't have it in the first place.

The two cases highlighted the Texas Heartbeat Act's unique enforcement mechanism. The bill can be enforced only by private civil actions and not public officials.

"It's a very clever mechanism that's never been tried before to this extent and that's why the Supreme Court took the case," Pojman said. "They may want to create new precedent for this type of law."

Pojman admits his hopes of seeing *Roe v. Wade* overturned were dashed in the past, "but we have not had five votes on the court who we think are reasonably open to revisiting the *Roe v. Wade* precedent," he said.

The court now has a 6–3 conservative majority. When Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a staunch abortion rights supporter, died in 2020, she was replaced on the court by Justice Amy Coney Barrett, whose pro-life views were questioned during her confirmation hearing. Only one justice, Clarence Thomas, has publicly called for *Roe* to be overruled. During the *Dobbs* arguments, Thomas questioned U.S. Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar on how the Constitution permits elective abortion, hinting there is no Constitutional right to abortion.

Mississippi Solicitor General Scott Stewart made the same point in his opening remarks stating that *Roe v. Wade* and the Planned Parenthood cases "haunt our country" and have no basis in the Constitution. 🗝️



# CREATING Community

Young adult ministry gathers for spiritual formation, service, and social activities

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

A flyer inviting 18 to 35-year-olds to “movie night” coaxed Juan Becerra to learn more about the young adult ministry at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish.

“I’m surrounded by the older generation and wanted to be around the younger generation as well,” said the 24-year-old architect who works for a Southlake firm. “I’d like to help both parish communities.”

Bringing together young parishioners like Becerra to watch “I’m Not Ashamed,” a Christian film about Columbine shooting victim Rachel Scott, is one of the ways Adrian Romero revitalized the young adult ministry he oversees at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Fort Worth. During the 18-month-long COVID health crisis, the program ceased in-person gatherings and members met virtually through video conferencing.

Zoom was a useful tool providing uplifting moments for participants coping with the stress and isolation caused by the pandemic.

“But connecting virtually is hard,” the ministry’s coordinator admitted. “We were able to share what we were going through but it’s not the same. As Catholics, we’re all about community. Being in person gives us that opportunity.”

Guest speakers, a new Bible study focusing on the *Gospel of Luke*, and plans to help the parish’s social outreach ministry collect hats and socks for holiday gift baskets are some of the activities attracting more young adults to participate.

Lifelong parishioner Guillermo Gomez began coming to the Thursday night meetings this fall hoping to build Christ-centered friendships. As a second-year student at Texas A&M University School of Law, the 25-year-old said the conversations he’s

having with new friends are a nice break from his “all-consuming” law studies.

“It’s providing what I hoped it would,” Gomez said. “We talk about Christ and that is a boon to my spiritual formation.”

Creating an altar for the parish’s *Día de los Muertos* or Day of the Dead celebration on Nov. 2 brought Gomez together with other young adults for the group’s first post-pandemic project. The Day of the Dead is a holiday celebrated by people from Mexico and Central America to honor dead ancestors.

“Our pastor [Father Luis Arraiza, OFM Cap.] wants to give our young people a greater presence in the Church so he asked if we would collaborate with our youth group to decorate the altar,” Romero said. “It was the first time we were assigned such a great responsibility and I think parishioners liked what we did.”

The ministry is now looking forward to more involvement in parish activities.

“It’s easy to put young adults and youth aside but we don’t want that,” he emphasized. “We want to be included and let the community know they can trust young people to lead and do what is needed in the Church.”

## CREATING MORE AWARENESS

Defined by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops as “people in their late teens, twenties, and thirties; single, married, divorced or widowed; with or without children,” the young adult population is a sizable part of the Church and leaders agree their youthful enthusiasm and energy have the potential to contribute greatly to parish life.

In his landmark exhortation on youth and young



From left, Veronica Sanchez, Shannon Onfray, Hans Ingold, and Amy Gonzalez deliver Thanksgiving food to a needy family on Nov. 20 in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

adults, “*Christus Vivit*” (Christ is alive), Pope Francis advised, “We need to make all our institutions better equipped to be more welcoming of young people. Young people need to be approached with the grammar of love, not by being preached at. The language that young people understand is spoken by those who radiate love — by those who are there for them and with them.”

Responding to the pontiff’s message in “*Christus Vivit*,” U.S. bishops are currently drafting a new document to help parishes support and nurture the faith of young Catholic adults.

### MEETING A NEED

A vibrant, active young adult ministry is an effective way to remind people of discipleship, according to Victoria Ramon, diocesan director of youth, young adult, and campus ministry. Attracting and retaining young parishioners who are busy building careers and families is especially critical in North Texas — one of the fastest

growing regions in the country.

“We’re seeing an influx of people from other states, so it’s important to get them plugged into the sacramental life of the parish community,” she said. “Creating young adult ministries helps do that. It not only connects them to other people in the community but recognizes that the sacrament of the Eucharist is what brings us all together.”

Currently, there are 17 parishes with an active young adult ministry in the diocese. Of these, six groups are for Spanish-speakers, Ramon said.

The young adult demographic is broad: college students, young marrieds, those in the military, young professionals, and people discerning the priesthood or religious life.

“It’s a mix of these people coming together from different backgrounds, and they need to be ministered to,” Ramon asserted.

The need is even greater as society emerges from the pandemic.

“People are looking for that community they have missed these past months,” she said, adding the Church is eager to help them make those connections. “In the past, ministry for young adults didn’t exist the way it does now.”

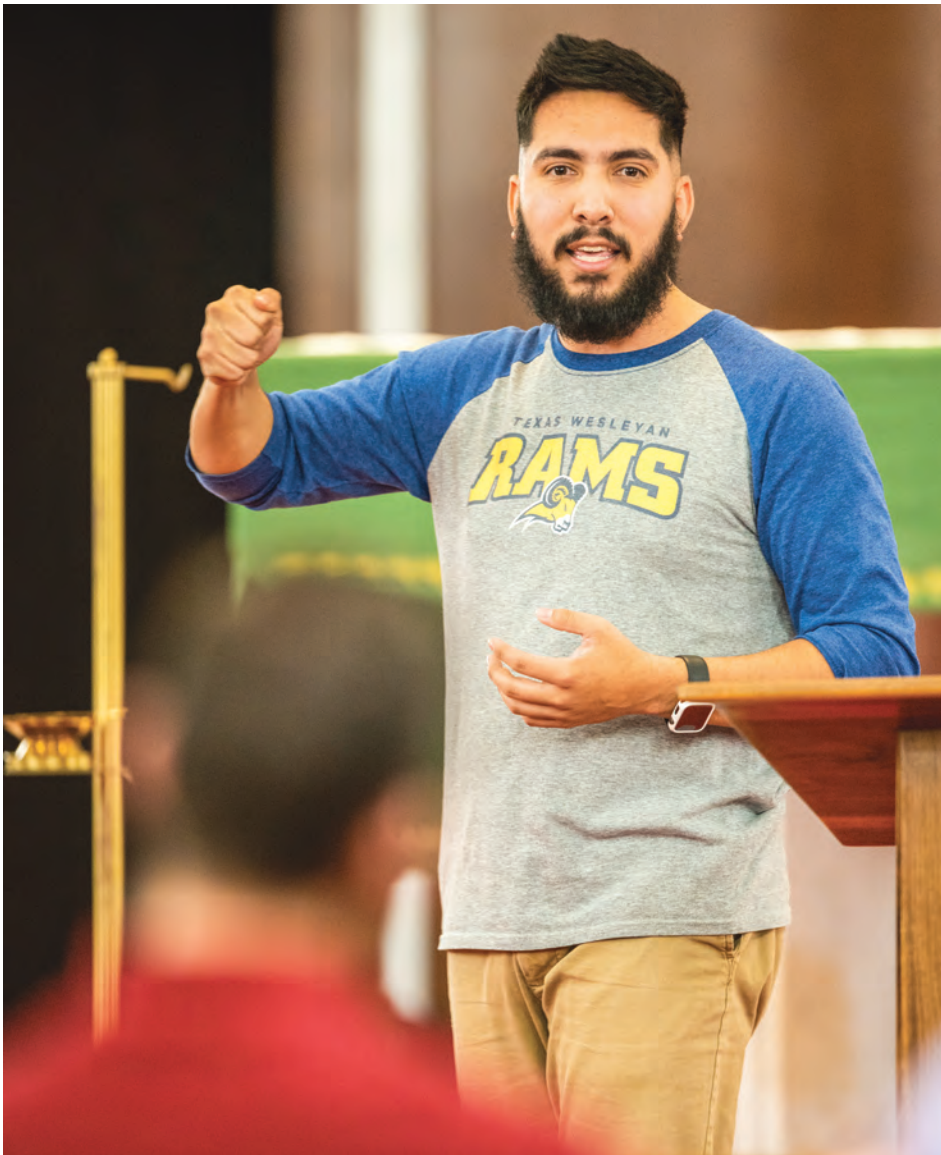
### BUILDING DISCIPLESHIP

Missing the inspiring service and worship opportunities she experienced at St. Mary’s Catholic Center at Texas A&M, 2012 graduate Meg Ruhter started a young adult ministry at Holy Family Parish in April 2019.

“It can be challenging to transition from a college campus that is thriving and building disciples to parish life where the young adults are expected to remain at the ‘kids’ table,” suggested the 31-year-old who relied on the support and guidance of Holy Family Pastor Father Hoa Nguyen to introduce the ministry. “Young adult ministry carves out a space for us to live

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Alex Lopez, president of Young Catholic Professionals Fort Worth chapter, gives a talk about Advent during Beloved: Eucharistic Adoration at Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth on Nov. 19. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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out our baptismal call. Slowly but surely, that will inspire other parishioners to do the same.”

A diocese-wide kickball tournament, a dance with the young adult group at St. Patrick Cathedral, and a well-attended kickoff dinner with Fr. Nguyen sharing his vocation story launched the venture. Members were just beginning a Lenten study of the Mass in 2020 when the pandemic hit. No longer able to meet in person, fellowship continued thanks to “happy hour” Zoom sessions and small group “bubbles.”

But Ruhter credits monthly Eucharistic Adoration, an event called “Beloved,” for sparking interest in the young adult group. Complying with social distancing and other COVID protocols, the evening attracts 50 to 70 young adults from across the diocese for praise and worship led by Shaun and Debra Fattig.

“We knew people needed to spend more time with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament,” said Holy Family’s coordinator of youth ministry. “I really believe our Beloved nights set the faith of our young adults on fire.”

Helping the parish’s St. Vincent de Paul Society and collecting items for the

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Check out the photo gallery at [North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com](http://North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com)

unborn baby drive add elements of service to the ministry.

“We try to have a well-rounded approach of praying, growing in our faith, and serving those in need while building strong, virtuous friendships,” she added.

Young adults can provide hope for older people and, at the same time, inspire the younger generation. Volunteers from her ministry recently staffed a Confirmation retreat for high schoolers.

Ruhter explained the mutual benefit. “The teenagers were able to see 20-year-olds who were still on fire about their faith and cared enough to share it with them.”

### FEELING SEEN AND KNOWN

Victoria Hamaty grew up in a Catholic home but didn’t “fall in love” with the faith until she was a student at Florida State University. The public relations major was influenced by the Brotherhood of Hope — a community of religious brothers who evangelize undergraduates on secular college campuses.

As director of discipleship at St. Philip the Apostle in Lewisville, Hamaty now works to help other young adults grow in relationship with Christ through prayer and community.

“This is the most active young adult group we’ve had at St. Philip’s in several years, and I think it’s because people were so isolated during the pandemic,” the 34-year-old said. “This age group seemed to really desire community and we’re seeing a lot more involvement.”

Ranging in age from 18 to the early 30s and mostly unmarried, members meet every Thursday for “faith learning” followed by fellowship, like a trip for



Emma Bouillion loads Thanksgiving food in a car at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church on Nov. 20. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Abigail Cruz listens during a young adult meeting at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Nov. 4. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

ice cream. Occasionally, a Holy Hour is planned, and the young adults dine together at a local restaurant.

In the past, participants have enjoyed barbecues, campfires, making comfort bags for the homeless, or volunteering at a shelter for homeless pregnant or parenting women. They hope to deliver Christmas baskets and do some caroling again this year.

“It’s helpful for a parish to have a

specific ministry for young adults so they can feel seen and known,” Hamaty observed. At the same time, she believes parishes operate best when everyone mingles.

“When you have a 25-year-old at a parish event with an 80-year-old, one person receives wisdom and the other sees the vibrancy, drive, and joy of youth,” she added. “Everyone is enriched.” 🇺🇸

## 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](http://fwdioc.org/safe-environment)





# kneeling at HIS FEET

Sister Maria Sagrario professes  
first vows as a Carmelite novice

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

**A**fter years of discernment, prayer, and learning about the quiet work and hidden service of her chosen religious community, Sister Maria Sagrario of the Pierced Heart of Jesus professed first vows as a Carmelite novice during a Dec. 4 Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson inside the Carmel of the Most Holy Trinity chapel.

“I feel very happy, very blessed,” Sr. Maria said moments before the start of the morning liturgy. “To prepare for this day, I’ve spent a lot of time in prayer and being alone with Jesus.”

Kneeling behind a grille that separated the religious order from the rest of the congregation, Sr. Maria pledged vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a large contingent of family members watched from the front pews of the chapel.

When asked by the bishop if she wished to consecrate herself to God in solitude and continual prayer for the universal Church, the 30-year-old Houston native uttered a resolute, “I do.”

Bishop Olson then presented a crucifix to the newly professed sister with the words, “Receive this crucifix. May it be your strength in weakness, your

comfort in sorrow, the seal of your vows, and the joy of your heart.”

Sister Teresa Agnes, the Carmelite order’s mother prioress, fastened the crucifix to her habit after placing a wreath of flowers on Sr. Maria’s white veil.

The Discalced Carmelite community in Arlington is part of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and models its mission after Mary of Nazareth who followed God’s will unconditionally. They observe papal enclosure, meaning the nuns do not leave the monastery grounds except for medical care. To show solidarity with the poor, the order is discalced or “shoeless.” Members wear sandals without stockings regardless of the weather.

Before entering the Carmelite monastery as a postulant on the Feast of All Saints in 2018, Rebecca Garcia studied psychology at the University of St. Thomas in Houston and belonged to a young adult group at Prince of Peace Parish. Thoughts of a religious vocation began at a retreat.

“She started to become more involved in the church and told us [entering a contemplative convent] is what she wanted to do,” explained older sister

Jessica Garcia. “We were surprised because she had a lot of friends and went out with them.”

Describing her younger sibling as a caring, family-oriented person who is always thinking of others, Garcia said everyone in the family prays for Sr. Maria and accepts her decision to become a cloistered nun.

“If she’s happy, that makes me happy,” her sister added. “I’ll miss her at family gatherings, but we have a very close mind/spirit connection. Every few months we talk on the phone or write letters, so I don’t feel much of a loss.”

In his homily, Bishop Olson used the story of two sisters, Martha and Mary from the *Gospel of Luke*, to show how the Carmelites demonstrate discipleship by their unique vocation. Like Mary, who sits at the foot of Jesus and listens intently to His words, “the same holds even more true for the vocation and discipleship of a Carmelite,” he told the gathering of worshippers. “It is love initiated by Jesus that links service to the poor and prayer — a love that is received and expressed at Jesus’ feet.”

The vocation of the Carmelite is given by Christ not just for the Carmelite but for the salvation of sinners, explained

Sister Maria Sagrario professed first vows as a Carmelite novice during a Dec. 4 Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson. (NTC/Ben Torres)



the bishop, who concelebrated the Mass with Monsignor E. James Hart, diocesan chancellor and moderator of the Curia, Vicar General Father Jonathan Wallis, and a cadre of diocesan priests.

Witnessing the ceremony was Father Sebastine Okoye, Sr. Maria's spiritual director. The pastor of St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish in Freeport, Texas, said guiding someone's vocation journey requires listening to their stories and helping them see what God is communicating.

He recommends Scripture passages and reading about lives of saints who answered a vocation call to inspire

reflection.

"Above all — like my being here today — I pray for them," Fr. Okoye said. "And I encourage them to pray and empty themselves before God."

Now a professed novice, Sr. Maria offered words of advice to other young women considering a religious vocation.


"Give it a chance and see what the Lord says," she suggested. "Try to respond because the enemy will try to dissuade you from anything that is good and gives glory to God. Take a leap of faith." 🇺🇸




## SAINT FRANCIS VILLAGE

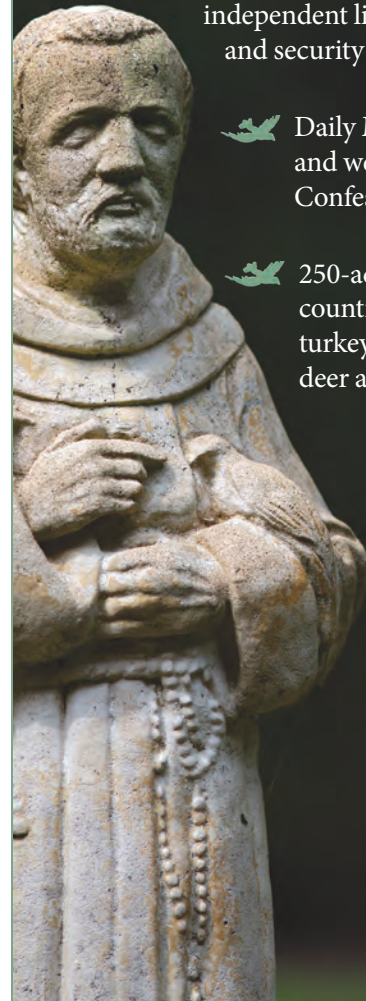
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# A LIVING, LEARNING Legacy

Graduates of Laneri High School reunite to celebrate past and explore present Catholic education

By Matthew Smith

Memories dominated the conversations and, for many of those attending, Nov. 18 marked their first visit to Fort Worth's old Laneri Catholic High School building since 1962 or earlier.

"The lockers look familiar, but the rest doesn't," Laneri Class of '56 graduate Larry Zeske said as he and fellow alumni toured the building, which now houses Cassata Catholic High School.

"This used to be the library," another graduate pointed out, motioning toward a classroom.

The school has long since updated windows that used to open, graduate Charles Haggard added.

"I actually opened this window and climbed outside once," Haggard said while enjoying the view from the third floor.

The graduates, all 70-plus years of age, quickly reverted to teenage mindsets sharing stories of their fondness for nearby Our Lady of Victory Catholic School, then an all-girls school; firecrackers set off in Laneri hallways; and the now-gone handball courts and gymnasium behind the school. The nearby Paris Coffee Shop, still there, was a great place to catch a bite, several added.

On a more serious note, alumni reflected on the positive impacts Laneri and the Benedictine priests who taught there had

on their lives and Catholic faith. Several spoke of their fathers who attended Laneri before them during the 1920s and '30s.

Class of '56 graduate James Farek said his father worked hard at the Armour & Co. packing plant to afford Laneri's \$7-a-month tuition.

"That was a big jump from Mt. Carmel [Academy] where I went for elementary," Farek said. "That was \$1 a month."

Zeske added that he and several Laneri graduates still meet monthly for lunch and golf. He added that those numbers have grown smaller over the years.

Laneri, the Diocese of Fort Worth's former all-boys high school, operated

from 1921 to 1962 at which point it, OLV, and other schools merged to form Nolan Catholic High School.

The unfortunate fact, many present said, is that Laneri, despite its rich legacy, is little remembered today. Officials from the Advancement Foundation and others organized the Nov. 18 gathering in part to address that issue.

"This was a wonderful school for us," Class of '62 graduate Walter Welborn said. "It's been great tonight meeting people older than me and trading stories, but a big reason we're here is to figure out how to bring the Laneri name and history forward."

Welborn's wife, Rose Hall Welborn, shared much of that history starting with Giovanni "John" Laneri who immigrated from Italy to America in 1882 at the age of 15. Laneri in 1899 cofounded Fort Worth's O.B. Macaroni Company and went on to donate generously to nearby St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church as well as found Laneri High School.

"This year this building is 100 years old," Hall Welborn said. "Next year it will be 60 years since Laneri's last graduating class. You were all formed by Laneri and your Catholic grade schools, which is why we want to capture your ideas on how each of us can let the Laneri name live on."



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ALUMNUS?

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817-533-3179

[dpettie@adv.fdn.org](mailto:dpettie@adv.fdn.org)



James Farek, center, of the Class of '56, reacts with laughter while sharing high school stories during the Laneri High School Alumni tour and fellowship dinner at Cassata High School. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Advancement Foundation President Clint Weber agreed.

“Catholic education is alive and well in the Diocese of Fort Worth,” Weber said. “But we can’t get where we’re going without remembering what our past is. The Laneri story must be integrated into the future of Catholic education. I don’t know exactly what that is and wouldn’t presume that I have the answers, but I think you in this room do.”

“Ultimately, what we want to do is create a series of events like this, bring more of your old classmates in to have discussions and get some ideas.”

Weber cited the school’s 1953 football awards banquet, which attracted more than 400 attendees including Texas Christian University Publicity Director Amos Melton and Notre Dame University Athletic Director Ed “Moose” Krause.

Cassata Principal Maggie Harrison spoke of the former Laneri building’s continuation as a non-traditional Catholic high school offering morning and evening classes to meet the needs of students who “for whatever reasons don’t do well in traditional high school settings.”

Cassata senior Gumseng Lamau called Cassata a perfect fit, given that he was too



Leonard “Buddy” Strittmatter, Class of ‘51, talks with Chris Chapman of the Advancement Foundation. (NTC/Ben Torres)

old to attend a traditional high school in 2017 when he immigrated to America.

“It isn’t the boys’ high school that it used to be,” Dr. Harrison said. “But I think you will be proud of what we do and the fact that students are still very much at the heart of our school.”

“We help students not because they’re Catholic but because we’re Catholic and it’s

our responsibility,” she continued.

Laneri Class of ‘57 graduate Jimmy Lyons agreed.

“The most important thing about any Catholic institution is formulating trust and faith in Jesus Christ,” Lyons said. “There’s too much going on in the world that’s not Christian, but you see how that’s guarded here with Laneri and now Cassata.” 🇺🇸



# JOY AROUND THE WORLD

Christmas traditions, while diverse, highlight the importance of the birth of Jesus

By Juan Guajardo

**W**e humans are creatures of habit and delight in remembering the old days. Is it any surprise we have traditions, then?

As an alumnus of the University of North Texas, for instance, we had plenty of those on campus — from the stately, like the lighting of the McConnell Tower, to the kooky, like spotting the famous albino squirrel on the way to an exam in order to receive good luck.

The point is that traditions have existed for millennia because, while they can be fun, they're a crucial way to build community bonds and pass down values. The same is true for many Advent and Christmas traditions in the Catholic Church. While they originated in vastly different times and places, they all point us to the immense love of a God who made Himself man to be with us.

## **GERMANY: THE ADVENT CALENDAR**

Though it may seem a commercial phenomenon, the Advent calendar is actually rooted in centuries of religious history.

The Advent calendar traces its roots to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Germany — where Christian families would tally chalk marks on the door or wall of their homes, or hang small religious pictures on the windows, to keep track of the days remaining until Christmas.

Gerhard Lang is credited with creating the more ornate printed calendars of today.

Though they were commercialized by Lang in 1908, they kept their faith-driven message. Lang's first edition of the Advent calendar, for instance, was centered on the theme "In the Land of the Christ Child" and featured small drawings children could cut out and glue onto a picture album of sorts. Unfazed by effort and cost, Lang worked hard to develop new versions of his Advent calendar. These grew to include calendars with little numbered doors which children would open each day. Hidden behind each door was a Scripture verse or religious image. Eventually, Lang's calendars even included chocolate pieces and an edition specifically for blind children.

Though they vary widely in their shapes and expressions nowadays, Advent calendars remain more than just a countdown — they're a warm reminder of the coming birth of the Messiah and highlight the special nature of the Advent season.

## **IRELAND: THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW**

Drawing on a history filled with hardship and persecution, Irish Catholics founded a tradition that continues today.

The custom of the light in the window comprises either a single candle or a trio of candles placed on the windowsill facing the street. The tradition remains popular in Ireland at Christmastime.

Historians trace it back to British persecution of Irish Catholics in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. At the time,



the British legalized what were known as the Penal Laws. Catholics were prohibited from practicing the faith and priests were prevented from celebrating Mass or teaching the faith. Punishments for breaking the law were severe: imprisonment, confiscation of goods, torture, and death.

The political philosopher, Edmund Burke (1729-1797), in his *Tracts relating to Popery Laws*, wrote: "There was not a single right of nature or benefit of society which had not been either totally taken away or considerably impaired."

To continue ministering to the faithful, Irish priests and bishops secretly offered Masses in houses and fields.

Around Christmas, Irish Catholics began lighting a single candle in their windows and leaving their front doors unlocked, as a way to discreetly invite priests into their homes to celebrate Mass or to just simply find shelter and food. Some houses placed three candles in one window to represent Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

After some time, the British became suspicious and questioned the Irish about the practice. The faithful Irish responded that it was a way to welcome the Holy Family during Christmas as they looked for lodging. The British dismissed it as silly superstition and the practice continued being a sign of welcome and hope in Jesus, the light of the world.

#### GERMANY: THE CHRISTMAS TREE

The Christmas tree is another tradition that originates in Germany. Based on a mix of legend and historical sources, the story goes that St. Boniface, an English bishop who evangelized in Germany during the eighth century, once found a group of pagans preparing to celebrate the winter solstice by sacrificing a young man under an enormous tree called "Odin's oak."

Apparently, St. Boniface was pretty good with an axe. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states: "To show the heathens how utterly powerless were the gods in whom they placed their confidence, Boniface felled the oak sacred to the thunder-god Thor..."

Willibald's *The Life of Saint Boniface* tells us that with one blow, "the oak's vast bulk, driven by a blast from above, crashed to the ground, shivering its crown of branches as it fell.... At this sight the pagans who before had cursed, now, on the contrary, believed, and blessed the Lord, and put away their

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Tracing their history back to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany, Advent calendars remain a popular Advent tradition. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



former reviling.”

According to legend, after the mighty oak fell, the astounded pagans asked Boniface how to worship the birth of the one, true God. He pointed at a small fir tree that had miraculously stayed upright in the midst of the debris from the broken oak and said:

*“This little tree, a young child of the forest, shall be your holy tree tonight. It is the wood of peace... It is the sign of an endless life, for its leaves are ever green. See how it points upward to heaven. Let this be called the tree of the Christ-child; gather about it, not in the wild wood, but in your own homes; there it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness.”*<sup>[1]</sup>

In the ensuing centuries, the tradition of using an evergreen tree to celebrate the birth of Jesus spread throughout Germany and Europe.

Today, the tradition of the Christmas tree can be found worldwide, including in St. Peter’s Square. Despite its popularity in secular culture, St. Pope John Paul II stated the Christmas tree remains a symbol of the



(CNS/Karen Callaway, Catholic New World)

“undying life” we receive through Jesus, “God’s supreme gift to humanity.”<sup>[2]</sup>

### ITALY: THE NATIVITY SCENE (CRÈCHE)

St. Francis of Assisi’s long legacy of contributions to Catholicism includes the beloved tradition of the nativity scene or crèche.

This “wonderful sign,” as Pope Francis calls it, traces its origin to Christmas Eve 1223.<sup>[3]</sup> In his apostolic letter *Admirabile signum*, the Holy Father tells us how St. Francis set up his live nativity in the niche of a mountainside overlooking the Italian town of Greccio. When the faithful arrived for Mass that evening, they found a manger full of hay, a donkey, and an ox arranged before a temporary altar.

St. Bonaventure tells us more in *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi*: “The man of God [St. Francis] stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy... then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His Name for the tenderness of his love, he called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.”

In the following centuries, the popularity of the nativity scene skyrocketed, and the devotion became popular across Europe and then overseas. Static and live nativity scenes also began incorporating Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the Wise men, the shepherds, and other characters.

The Vatican, since 1982 (at request of St. Pope John Paul II), has displayed an outdoor nativity in St. Peter’s Square, each year made by a different artisan.

Normally on display in the Advent season, Catholics wait until Christmas Eve to place the figure of the infant Christ in the manger. The nativity remains in place until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord in January.

In *Admirabile signum*, Pope Francis encourages parents to include their children when they set up the crèche in their homes as the tradition is an excellent way to pass down the precious gift of faith.

Sara Paglialunga, rotal lawyer and tribunal judge for the Diocese of Fort Worth, said the “Christmas tradition is still very big in Italy, and one of the most important moments for Italian families is to work together on the nativity scene.”

The native Italian continued, “That

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# the world rejoices

A look at some popular Christmas traditions and where they originated



This tradition also originated in Germany, not in Catholic circles, but in the Lutheran community in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Catholics adopted the practice in the 1920s. The wreath represents the hope of eternal life brought by Jesus.



The Misas de Aguinaldo are a novena of "bonus" or "gift" Masses beginning Dec. 16 and leading up to Christmas Eve that were introduced by Spanish Catholic missionaries more than 400 years ago. They are now a popular custom in Puerto Rico and many Latin American countries.



While the King's Cake (or Rosca de Reyes) tradition is popular in many countries, including the U.S., the custom itself began in France in the Middle Ages. It's an oval-shaped dessert traditionally enjoyed on Epiphany and (in the U.S.) on Mardi Gras.



A very young tradition, las balconeras arose out of the Archdiocese of Montevideo in Uruguay in 2016. Families create posters with the Holy Family and the phrase "Jesus is Christmas" on it. They then hang the posters from their balconies (*balcones*).



The chalking of the door arose in Poland and the surrounding Slavic countries and has been introduced to the U.S. and many other countries. The tradition involves marking symbolic numbers and letters on the doorway of one's home with blessed chalk on Epiphany.



allows parents and kids to get together... while reflecting on the meaning of Christmas. It really is a powerful quality time to spend together.”

### MEXICO: LAS POSADAS

Spanish for “the inns” or “the lodgings,” *Las Posadas* is a lively Christmas tradition commemorating the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of shelter to give birth to Jesus.

The nine-day tradition begins on December 16 and ends on Christmas Eve. It calls for attending evening Mass, followed by a procession of faithful taking to the streets with volunteers playing out the roles of Joseph and Mary and, sometimes, angels. Following a memorized script, they visit pre-selected homes designated as “*posadas*” and the procession sings hymns asking for lodging (*pidiendo posada*) for the Holy Family. They are refused time and again until they reach the final house, where the travelers are invited to enter. Once inside, the faithful pray a Rosary or other prayer and end the night with singing, food, hot beverages, and the breaking open of a star-shaped piñata symbolizing the star that guided the Three Kings to the newborn Christ.

The custom continues in the same way for the remaining evenings, with a different route and house chosen for *posada*. On the last night, Christmas Eve, participants typically attend midnight Mass after the *posada*.

Evidence points to the tradition originating in colonial Mexico when Spanish missionaries obtained papal permission in 1586 to celebrate a novena of Masses called “*Misas de Aguinaldo*.”<sup>[4]</sup> The friars would use *Las Posadas* during this time as a way to teach the indigenous people the story of Jesus’ birth.

As shown by its long history, the tradition of *Las Posadas* doesn’t just build community, it helps pass on that faith from generation to generation.

### PHILIPPINES: THE PARÓL

For Filipinos, the *paról* is a beloved sign of joy and hope as we await and then celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Derived from the Spanish word *farol* (lantern), the *paról* is a Filipino ornamental star-shaped lantern made of various materials and commonly used during the Advent and

Christmas seasons. It dates back centuries to the Spanish colonial period of the Philippines, when Catholics used candles to light the way to churches during the novena of Masses (*Simbang Gabi* or *Misas de Aguinaldo* — a Catholic practice from Spain) leading up to Christmas. After returning home from those Masses, people would hang their lanterns outside their windows.

“For Filipinos, making *paróls* and hanging them outside their windows symbolizes the victory of light over darkness as well as their shared expression of faith, hope, and goodwill during the Christmas season,” said Angelo Penuela, a local Catholic youth minister and music director hailing from Quezon City, Philippines. “Parol-making is a very important part of Filipino tradition, arts, and heritage.”

Early *paróls* were very simple — usually rectangular or oblong and made of bamboo strips and Japanese paper — but over time their expressions became more complex and diverse, eventually obtaining their now-iconic star shapes.

The tradition continues today, both in the Philippines and the U.S.

“Whatever material it’s made of — whether art paper, Manila paper, Japanese paper, or the seashells or the *capiz* (oyster shell), you still see these beautiful *paróls* in every Filipino house,” Penuela added.

### CZECH REPUBLIC: THE JESSE TREE

This popular Advent custom hails from Bohemia (present-day Czech Republic) and originated sometime in the Middle Ages. The oldest depiction of the Jesse Tree was discovered in an illustrated Gospel manuscript in 1086.<sup>[5]</sup> In the ensuing centuries Jesse Trees found their way out of the pages of books and into stained glass windows, paintings, carvings, and hymns.

Eventually, Christians adapted it into the tradition we see today, which involves “placing ornaments, throughout the days of Advent, on a tree or the figure of a tree, each of which points to a biblical ancestor of Our Lord Jesus. It is based on the age-old artistic depiction called ‘The Tree of Jesse,’ which itself derives from a prophecy of Isaiah: ‘There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots’” (11:1).<sup>[6]</sup>

Jesse is the father of King David in the Old Testament. The *Gospels of Luke* and *Matthew* present Jesus as coming from the lineage of David.

### FOOTNOTES:

[1] Fr. William P. Saunders, “The Christmas Tree” in the *Arlington Catholic Herald*.

[2] Pope John Paul II, Angelus address for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, 19 December 2004.

[3] Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter *Admirabile Signum (On the Meaning and Importance of the Nativity Scene)*

[4] Brother Juan Macias Marquez, OP, “Las Posadas,” in the *Dominica Journal*.

[5] Jean Anne Hayes Williams, “The Earliest Dated Tree of Jesse: Thematically reconsidered” (PDF archive) on FSU.edu.

[6] “What’s the Origin of the Jesse Tree,” on St.CatherineRCC.org.

[7] “The Jesse Tree” on LoyolaPress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year.



Passersby walk in front of *paróls* on display along a street in Manila. Parol are star-shaped Christmas lanterns patterned to resemble the Star of Bethlehem. They are displayed in houses, offices, buildings, and streets around Christmas. (NOEL CELIS/AFP via Getty Images)

Some modern Jesse Trees also depict important prophecies and events leading up to the birth of Jesus. According to Loyola Press, “The ornaments of the Jesse tree tell the story of God in the Old Testament, connecting the Advent season with the faithfulness of God across 4,000 years of history.”<sup>[7]</sup>

Chris Vaughan, diocesan director of Marriage and Family Life, said his family uses a Jesse Tree each Advent to help the children visualize salvation history.

“The incarnation of our Savior Jesus Christ did not just come at a random time and place,” he explained. “The story of salvation history tells the story of God’s saving plan from the beginning (Adam and Eve) up until the present moment. A big part of that story is God the Father preparing a people and place to receive His Son. The Jesse Tree recounts those major moments with symbols that we can

use to teach our kids the magnificent plan of God.”

### EPIPHANY (THREE KINGS DAY)

We Catholics don’t stop celebrating on Christmas Day, we continue with the Feast of the Epiphany.

And this one has a rich, but complicated, history. For the Western Church (which includes most of us in the United States), the Epiphany commemorates the manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God to the three Magi, together with His Baptism in the Jordan and the miracle at the wedding feast at Cana.

While the traditional date for Epiphany is January 6 for the Western Church, the Church in the U.S. celebrates it on the first Sunday of the new year. The Eastern Catholic Church, following the Julian calendar, observes the feast on January 19.

Having been around since the third

century, it should come as no surprise the celebration of the feast varies dramatically from culture to culture, but remains family-oriented.

Children in Spain, Portugal, the Philippines, and many Latin American countries, for instance, leave their shoes out to receive gifts and sweets on “Three Kings Day” symbolizing the visitation of the Magi.

Catholics in the Western Church also mark the Epiphany by “chalking the door” — a blessing in which one inscribes the initials of the three wise men and the numbers of the year over the lintel of the house.

In many countries, Catholics celebrate Epiphany with a King’s cake or “Rosca de Reyes,” an oval-shaped dessert baked with a small figurine of the baby Jesus inside. The cake represents the Wise Men’s search for the infant Jesus. 🇺🇸



# GOOD FOR YOUR SOUL

A look at Catholic apps and podcasts that can boost your faith life in the new year

By Walker Price

Answering the question of whether or not smartphones have been a net good for society is a difficult one.

On one hand, they have brought the four corners of the world closer than they have ever been before, providing a medium for human connection the value of which has become vividly apparent over the last year-and-a-half. But on the other, many of us have become rather addicted to them.

We wake up each morning, perhaps even to an alarm set on our phones, and are immediately spellbound by social media and/or the news, only wriggling ourselves free when we return to bed at night.

It doesn't have to be this way, however. Smartphones are tools after all, and it is up to us to decide whether a tool is used for good purposes or for ill.

If you're like me, then one of your goals for this new year is committing yourself to a routine of prayer; to strive towards St. Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing."

Our smartphones, and other similar devices such as tablets, can be truly powerful helpers in this endeavor, thanks to wonderful Catholic apps and podcasts

meant to encourage us to grow in holiness and knowledge of our faith. Hopefully this list, which is by no means exhaustive, will aid each of you towards those ends.

## TOP CATHOLIC APPS

**Laudate (Free):** Out of all the apps here, I would wager this is the one a great deal of you are already familiar with. Personally, Laudate was the first Catholic app I remember downloading.

It has remained a staple of devotion for good reason. The app offers many aids for Catholic prayer life: daily Bible readings, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Order of Mass, a guide for praying the Rosary, preparation for Confession, multiple versions of the Bible, and even links to Catholic media such as EWTN. The interface is straightforward and easy to use as well, which is always a plus.

**Hallow (In-app purchases):** Truly a program for structuring one's life upon a robust foundation of prayer, Hallow is the most all-encompassing





## Top Podcast: Bible in a Year

of these apps. It is elegantly presented and possesses a dazzling array of features; if I were to try and touch on them all, it would take up the rest of this article!

In addition to the free-of-charge offerings (like a daily audio Rosary, daily *lectio divina*, Gregorian chant for meditation, and homilies by the well-known Father Mike Schmitz), for a fee of \$4.99 a month even more features are unlocked. These include the Stations of the Cross, various meditations for sleep, the scriptural Rosary, and much more. If you are searching for an app the mission of which is to integrate prayer into your life in every possible way, look no further than Hallow.

**iBreviary (Free):** Next comes a more single-purpose app: iBreviary. As its name suggests, it is an electronic version of the Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Daily Office or the Breviary.

Everything from the Office of Readings to Morning and Evening Prayer, including the

daytime prayers of Terce, Sext, and None (midmorning, midday, and midafternoon) are present. Even though Laudate includes the Liturgy of the Hours, iBreviary goes further in adding the Commons of various memorials and occasions within the Church, like the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Office for the Dead, just to name a couple. Like Laudate, iBreviary also provides a missal and daily readings from Scripture.

**The Word Among Us (Subscription):** This app is an electronic version of the print magazine by that name. According to the publication's website, "The Word Among Us is intended to assist people in reading, mediating on, and understanding Scripture and to provide sound, practical advice for Catholics on the living out of the Christian life..."

For a subscription fee of \$1.99 a month through the app, you can access the digital version of the magazine, the daily readings, as well as the Order of Mass. There are also free digital-exclusive articles which can be accessed within the app.

### TOP CATHOLIC PODCASTS

**Pints with Aquinas:** Hosted by the notable Catholic apologist Matt Fradd, "Pints with Aquinas" is a relatively laid-back, yet theologically weighty show perfect for those who are serious about digging deeper into the Catholic faith, and maybe even having a laugh along the way.

Structured mostly around interviews with theologians, priests, religious, and laypeople with a story to tell, each episode revolves around a central theme, some of which are: logical arguments for God's existence; insights on spiritual warfare from an exorcist; and how Eastern and Western Catholic tradition can enrich one another, among many others.

**The Word on Fire Show:** This weekly podcast is hosted by Bishop Robert Barron, who is likely most known for his fantastic YouTube videos discussing Catholicism and various aspects of popular culture. "The Word on Fire Show" is an accessible and illuminating podcast covering a wide range of topics.

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date



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Bishop Barron possesses a unique ability to present deeply philosophical concepts and arguments in a way that is simultaneously relatable and thought-provoking. Engaging with matters relevant to Catholics navigating modern society (which is all of us), Bishop Barron tackles subjects such as addressing combative internet culture, promoting Catholic education, and the importance of forgiveness.

**The Bible in a Year (with Fr. Mike Schmitz):** Aimed at increasing Biblical literacy among Catholics, “The Bible in a Year (with Fr. Mike Schmitz)” takes the listener on a scriptural journey through the entire Bible in 365 daily episodes.

Fr. Schmitz’s warm and welcoming personality draws you in immediately as he reads through the day’s passages of

Scripture, followed by a prayer of thanksgiving and a reflection on the significance of the readings. Think of it as a guided *lectio divina*, of sorts.

Hugely popular, the podcast hit 125 million downloads from January 1 to October 1, 2021 and along the way earned the honor of #1 podcast in Religion and Spirituality, according to Apple.

The Bible in a Year team has more surprises up their sleeves. Starting on January 1, 2022, the team will release a Spanish version of the podcast.

**Catholic Answers Focus:** Perhaps some of you are familiar with the radio program “Catholic Answers,” which serves as a forum for discussion regarding any questions people of all faith and intellectual backgrounds may have regarding Catholicism. “Catholic Answers Focus” seeks to serve a similar role, acting as a resource for Catholics who wish to deepen

their understanding of their faith, so as to better defend it. Hosted by Cy Kellet and other expert guests, the weekly podcast is an invaluable tool for learning the “why” behind Church teaching.

**GROW IN FAITH IN 2022**

I hope that something on this list piqued your spiritual interest. So often our initial commitments stirred up by the beginning of the new year fall away as swiftly and as easily as we made them, once the struggles and doldrums of everyday life begin to reassert themselves.

Here’s to hoping that each of us makes good use of the tools God has given us in His Providence to do all we can to make sure that doesn’t happen. It starts with making decisions. Instead of greeting the day with stress and worry and anxiety, perhaps each day’s first words will be those of Morning Prayer: “Lord, open my lips. And my mouth will proclaim your praise.” 🇺🇸

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# Called to serve. Again.

**HE IS:** Father John Martin, pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Pilot Point for three years. He also served as parochial vicar at St. Francis Assisi Parish in Grapevine.

**GROWING UP:** His parents taught him about God and morality, but they did not attend church. Watching a televised Mass as a boy introduced him to the beauty of the Catholic liturgy.

**CALLED TO SERVE:** He enlisted in the U.S. Marines and served nine years. When he was stationed in Okinawa, Japan, he studied the faith and was baptized and confirmed at the Easter Vigil Mass in 1988.

**CALLED FOR MORE:** He felt the call to become a priest but was told he was “too old.” He worked for more

than 20 years in quality assurance for Bell Helicopter, but still felt the occasional tug to a religious vocation. His pastor at St. John the Apostle Parish encouraged him to contact the vocations office.

Two years later, he entered Sacred Heart Seminary in Hales Corner, Wisconsin.

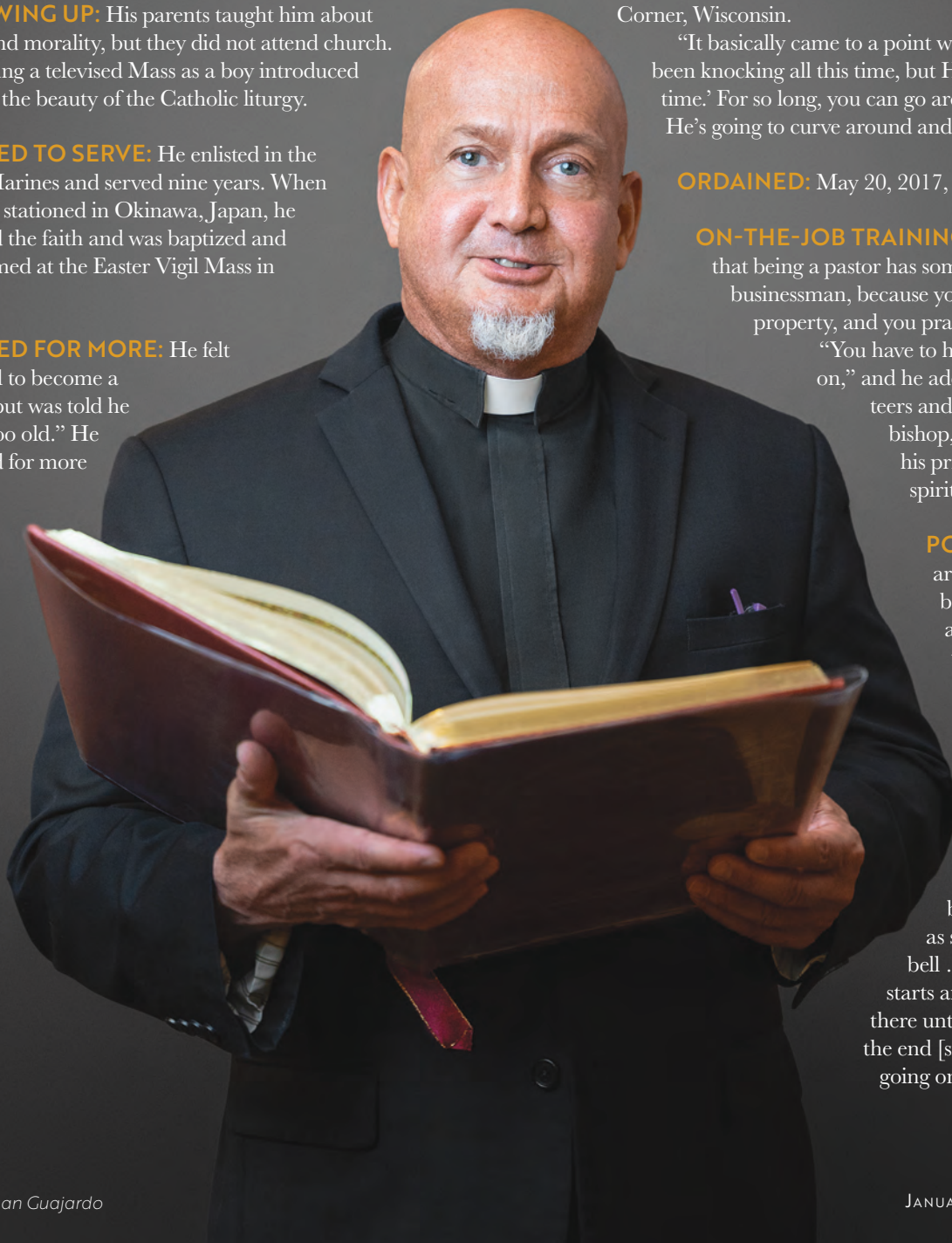
“It basically came to a point where I saw the light. He’s been knocking all this time, but He was like, ‘Now’s the time.’ For so long, you can go around His plan, but then He’s going to curve around and come at you head on.”

**ORDAINED:** May 20, 2017, at St. Patrick Cathedral.

**ON-THE-JOB TRAINING:** Fr. Martin admitted that being a pastor has some similarities to being a businessman, because you oversee a budget and property, and you practice time management. “You have to have a team you can rely on,” and he added the parish volunteers and staff, plus a supportive bishop, enable him to maintain his priestly life of prayer and spiritual reading.

**POWER UP:** Fr. Martin arrives 60 to 90 minutes before each Mass to pray, and he prays the Rosary with parishioners immediately before Mass.

**NEED TO KNOW:** At Mass, “heaven is really coming down and commingling with earth. God is really present, and we need to be conducting ourselves as such. When you ring that bell ... that’s when the Mass starts and every little action from there until you walk out the door at the end [signifies] something real is going on.” 🇺🇸







*(NTC Photo Illustration/Juan Guajardo)*

with  
the  
eyes of faith

By Susan Moses

When Father Samuel Maul was a high school student, he wrestled with questions about the Eucharist. In his head, he knew the Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharist is the body and blood, soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he wanted to understand it; not just accept it on a superficial level. He thought, “If I want to be serious about my faith, then the Eucharist needs to become the central aspect of my life.”

He began attending daily Mass at St. Michael Parish in Bedford before school each morning, and he remembers staring at the Eucharist very intently and wondering, “What is this and who are you?”

After about a year, he heard God speak to him during the prayer of consecration, “If you want to understand these words, you need to say them.”

“That solidified my trajectory toward the priesthood ... this journey to understanding who it is that Christ is and what it is that He has given us in the Eucharist, and how does He make Himself present to us,” he recalled.

Ordained to the priesthood on May 22, Fr. Maul smiled as he

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# Anima Christi, sanctifica me

Father Sam Maul.  
(NTC Photo Illustration/  
Juan Guajardo)

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explained the Eucharist can't really be completely understood, because it's a mystery.

### THE MYSTERY

*"How many of you say, 'I should like to see His face, His garments, His shoes.' You do see Him, you touch Him, you eat Him. He gives Himself to you, not only that you may see Him, but also to be your food and nourishment."*

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (347-407)  
*Archbishop of Constantinople*

Since the Last Supper, the Church has affirmed the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Scripture, centuries of writings of the saints, and the magisterium have held this mystery as central to our Catholic faith.

As Bishop Michael Olson said in his homily on the first Sunday of Advent, "In the Eucharistic prayer at every Mass, the heavens are opened, and God comes down. In Holy Communion the heavens are opened, and God comes down."

Jesus, who gave Himself to us on the cross, gives Himself to us in the Body and Blood of Holy Communion at every Mass.

"We can't grasp the entire reality of what it means to be part of the Eucharistic feast," said Fr. Maul at a recent presentation on the Real Presence at St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills, where he serves as parochial vicar.

At the presentation, Fr. Maul explained that Jesus is present to us in all seven sacraments, in prayer, and in Scripture. When two or more are gathered in His name, Jesus promises He is with us. When the priest acts *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ, by offering Mass, forgiving sins, and other acts of sanctification and guidance, Jesus is there.

"But He is so radically present to us in the Eucharist that the signs do not point to a deeper reality, rather, the signs themselves become the reality," said Fr. Maul.

The Eucharist nourishes our life and places us in intimate Communion with Him and with one another.

In a November interview with EWTN anchor Raymond Arroyo, Bishop Olson said, "Precisely the whole point of being Catholic is that we receive the gift of the Eucharist that transforms us and makes us the Church. In the sense it calls every one of us to conversion, it enables us to respond to God's grace, as God desires us to do, that we might decrease and He might increase."

### OUR RESPONSE

*"Jesus does not demand great actions from us, but simply surrender and gratitude."*

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX (1873-1897)  
*Carmelite nun and Doctor of the Church*

Father John Robert Skeldon, rector of St. Patrick Cathedral, said it's important to realize that God's gifts — salvation, the Eucharist — can't be earned.

"It's completely unmerited, freely given, gratuitous. It's a gift of God. I think that always has to be first and foremost in our minds in understanding our relationship to God, through which especially the sacrament of the Eucharist is so powerfully understood: the gift of God incarnate, Jesus Christ, giving of His body and blood for the sake of love, out of love for every single one of us, throughout time and throughout space," he said.

Our response to the gift, Fr. Skeldon said, should follow the wisdom of St. Thérèse.

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## The Miracle of Lanciano

In the eighth century, a priest in Lanciano, Italy, was experiencing doubts about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In the middle of saying Mass, he said the words of consecration ("This is my body," "This is my blood") and saw the bread and wine transform into real human flesh and blood. The blood coagulated into five globules (later believed to be representative of the five wounds of Christ). Word of the miracle quickly spread, the local archbishop launched an investigation, and the Church approved the miracle.

The flesh is still preserved to this day. Professor of anatomy Odoardo Linoli conducted a scientific analysis of the flesh in 1971 and concluded that the flesh was cardiac tissue, the blood appeared to be fresh blood (as opposed to blood that was 1200 years old), and that there was no trace of preservatives.

You can visit the miraculous flesh and blood in the Church of San Francesco in Lanciano, Italy.

From "5 Extraordinary Eucharistic Miracles that left Physical Evidence" by ChurchPop.com.





## The Corporal of Bolsena

A priest who had been experiencing doubts about transubstantiation was celebrating mass in Orvieto, Italy. Soon after he had consecrated the Eucharist, the host started bleeding onto the corporal (a liturgical cloth on which the Eucharistic elements are placed) on the altar. The priest, the story goes, ran to the pope who was visiting the town and confessed his sin of doubt. The corporal remains on display in the Cathedral of Orvieto.

Some historians, however, question the veracity of the story, since the first accounts of it don't appear until about a hundred years after the miracle supposedly took place. Nonetheless, the corporal remains an object of veneration.

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“Our responsibility, it seems to me, is our surrender — giving ourselves over to God — and our thankfulness.” Although it sounds simple, the priest admitted “which of course at the end of the day is everything.”

“What we receive, freely given, we in turn have to freely give away as well. So, we become a vessel, or a vehicle, a conduit of the grace received,” said the rector.

Fr. Skeldon has reflected on why the *Gospel of John*, unlike the other Gospels, does not include the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper but has the unique scene of Jesus taking on the role of a servant to wash the Apostles' feet.

By the time St. John wrote his Gospel, the Eucharist would have been well established since the earliest Christians had been celebrating Mass for two generations. Fr. Skeldon posits that St. John described the foot washing to reinforce the meaning of the Eucharist.

“I think John is sort of interpreting ‘What does the Eucharist mean?’ And it's this powerful, powerful portrayal of selfless service. And not counting the cost,” he said.

He continued, “What does the Eucharist mean? The Eucharist is this summons to entering into the fullness of the life of God in Christ, which is self-sacrificial love.... It's a summons to ongoing conversion and transformation of life.”

### FUELED AND FRUITFUL

*“The Eucharist is my highway to heaven.”*

**BLESSED CARLO ACUTIS (1991 – 2006)**  
*Italian teen who created a website documenting Eucharistic miracles*

When Jamahal Hamilton receives the Eucharist, he “feels like my faith tank has been filled for the day.”

The Holy Family parishioner entered the Church at the Easter

Vigil service in 2021, after a period of spiritual searching that began with a life-threatening stroke.

At Mass, he listens to the Liturgy of the Eucharist and imagines he's present at the Last Supper and Jesus is calling him to discipleship.

With his faith tank filled, the Knight of Columbus volunteers in the parish, in the community, and on the job. He drives for Uber and prays with many of his customers.

He said, “Before I joined RCIA, I didn't understand what the Eucharist meant. After I got baptized, I understand what it means to Catholics. It's a pretty big deal. God is present in the Eucharist. How else can we actually be that close to Jesus?”

He said, “God saved me. I have to give back because I receive this amazing thing.”

### CHERISH THE GIFT

*“For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; ... the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.”*

**ST. JUSTIN MARTYR**  
(c. 100-165)  
*Early Church Father*

Father Fernando Preciado claimed he could talk “hours and hours” about the Eucharist. “I would never finish about the Eucharist,” he said. “All that we are depends on this sacrament.”

The pastor of St. Francis Cabrini Parish in Granbury and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Glen Rose wants to

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From “5 Extraordinary Eucharistic Miracles that left Physical Evidence” by ChurchPop.com.



# Corpus Christi, salva me

Father John Robert Skeldon. (NTC Photo/Juan Guajardo)



*Sanguis Christi, inebria me*



Father Pedro Martinez's chalice. (NTC Photo Illustration/Juan Guajardo)

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share his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He encourages a few practices during Mass to more deeply appreciate this “best, most important food of the day.”

“Come early, take your time to pray in silence. Kneel before Jesus to say, ‘You are my everything. You are my Lord,’” said the pastor, who recommends attending daily Mass if possible.

According to Fr. Maul, after the priest or Eucharistic minister says, “The Body of Christ,” the faithful’s “Amen” should mean more than just, “I agree.” He explained, “Amen is a ‘yes’ to the life I’m being called to in the reception of this gift.”

Fr. Preciado added, “After you receive Communion, you are the most holy people. Not because you are, by yourself, but because you receive the body of Jesus Christ. How long the holiness is in our lives depends on you.”

Kneeling in sacred silence is important after Holy

Communion, according to Fr. Preciado. “Jesus is not just in the tabernacle or on the altar, He’s in your body. It’s a time to hug



Him and ask Him whatever you need and say to Him your worries.”

Fr. Maul added that Eucharistic Adoration is an extension of the Eucharistic celebration and gives “ample time for the Christian faithful to gaze upon the mystery of Christ’s love, with ample time to allow the mystery to penetrate our hearts.”

Last but not least, said Fr. Maul, is to go to Reconciliation. “Be in a state that’s ready to receive the heavenly gift. . . . We let go of our own selves in order to receive Christ in His totality.”

## DEEPEN OUR FAITH

*“Once you understand the Eucharist, you can never leave the Church. Not because the Church won’t let you, but because your heart won’t let you.”*

**ST. TERESA OF KOLKATA (1910-1997)**  
*Founder of the Missionaries of Charity*

According to an oft-cited 2019 Pew Research study, only 63 percent of Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more frequently believe that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ during the consecration.

Broaden the results to include all

self-described Catholics, and just 31 percent believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Adding to this dismal situation is the decline in Mass attendance, which worsened during the first year of the coronavirus pandemic and still hasn’t completely recovered.

Fr. Maul thinks the decline in Mass attendance is not the problem — it’s the symptom. The root problem is a lack of understanding of the Mass and the Eucharist.

He said, “If people lived a year of their life without the Eucharist, and their lives didn’t change at all, and they didn’t feel the necessity to come back, what did they think the Mass was beforehand? And why was [the Eucharist] not the central aspect of their lives?”

Fr. Preciado estimated that attendance at his parishes is at about 70 percent of pre-pandemic levels. He said, “The Mass, for me, is the most, most beautiful gift we have in our lives. If the people understand what we have, they’ll be back.”

Perhaps those missing from Mass never knew or have forgotten the treasure available at every Mass. The same survey found that only

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## The Hosts of Siena

On August 14, 1730, while the Catholics of Siena, Italy, were attending a special festival for the eve of the feast of the Assumption, thieves entered the Church of St. Francis and stole a golden ciborium containing hundreds of consecrated hosts.

Two days later, someone noticed something white protruding from

the offering box at another church in Siena. The priests opened the box and found the missing hosts inside, entangled in cobwebs and dirt. After being cleaned as much as possible, the hosts were placed in a new ciborium and taken back to the Church of St. Francis for prayers of reparation and veneration.

Since the hosts were dirty, the

priests decided not to consume them but let them simply deteriorate. Over the next few decades, everyone was amazed to see that the hosts did not deteriorate, but actually appeared fresh.

The hosts remain in this state today, 291 years later, and can still be seen in the (now) Basilica of St. Francis in Siena, Italy.

From “5 Extraordinary Eucharistic Miracles that left Physical Evidence” by ChurchPop.com.



### From Page 45

58 percent of weekly Mass-goers know Church teaching on transubstantiation.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops hopes to deepen the faithful's understanding and belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation with a recent document, "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church," and plans for a three-year Eucharistic revival.

Bishop Olson is a member of the USCCB committee on doctrine, which wrote the 31-page document which discusses the centrality of the Eucharist to the life of the Church.

The document was approved at the fall meeting of the U.S. bishops in November.

The bishops voted for a National Eucharistic Revival to begin on the Feast of Corpus Christ, June 16, 2022, and culminate with a national congress in Indianapolis on July 17-21, 2024.

They anticipate the revival will include events at the parish level, such as Eucharistic Adoration, processions, and

teachings on the Eucharist. Regional revivals will follow, leading to the Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, a multi-day event modeled after World Youth Day.

In the interview with Arroyo, Bishop Olson expressed his hope that "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church" will "inspire in people a recognition of the need for the Eucharist that we have, that it transcends us."

Furthermore, the bishop continued, by a national emphasis on the Eucharist, the faithful will realize "that [the Eucharist] is something that Christ gives us, His sacrifice, His very body, blood, soul, and divinity to transform us; that brings communion with Him, with the Trinity, and with our neighbor. It enables us to love as Christ loves." 🇺🇸



## The Miracle of Chirattakonam

On April 28, 2001, during Eucharistic adoration at St. Mary Parish in Chirattakonam, India, three red stains suddenly materialized on the host. The priest didn't know what to do and placed the host back into the tabernacle.

A few days later he retrieved the host to examine it again, and the

red stains had arranged themselves to look like the face of a man crowned with thorns (Jesus?). He quickly found a photographer and had pictures taken of the host. The monstrance containing the miraculous host is kept in the church to this day.

From "5 Extraordinary Eucharistic Miracles that left Physical Evidence" by ChurchPop.com



Father Fernando Preclado. (NTC Photo Illustration/Juan Guajardo)

# Aqua lateris Christi, lava me



## The Miracle of Santarém

A woman living in Santarém, Portugal, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was distressed that her husband was unfaithful to her, and she decided to consult a sorceress for help. The sorceress told her the price of her services was a consecrated host.

She went to Mass at the Church of St. Stephen and received the Eucharist on her tongue, removed the Eucharist from her mouth, wrapped it in her veil, and headed to the door of the church. But before she got out, the host began to bleed.

When she got home, she put the bloodied host in a trunk. That night, a miraculous light emanated from the trunk. She repented of what she had done and the next morning confessed to her priest. Her priest came and retrieved the host and took it back to the church.

After an investigation and approval of the miracle, the church was renamed Church of the Holy Miracle, and the bloodied host remains on display to this day.

From "5 Extraordinary Eucharistic Miracles that left Physical Evidence" by ChurchPop.com



# THE EUCHARIST

## Spark and flame of our faith

In my early 20s I was lucky enough to have a group of friends to attend Mass with every Sunday. I often sat next to a woman named Kelly, and on one occasion after we returned from receiving Communion, she was kneeling and quietly weeping. I leaned close and whispered, “Is everything OK?” She nodded and said, “Yes, I just feel Jesus cleansing me of my sins.”

I was astounded; I had never felt anything close to that after receiving Communion. It was clear to me in that moment that there was more to understand and experience with Jesus in the form of bread and wine.

This started me on my lifelong quest to have a deeper faith, a richer understanding, and a stronger devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Transubstantiation is at the core of our belief in the Eucharist. The substance of bread and wine changes into the substance of Jesus — His body, blood, soul, and divinity.

Jesus is not symbolically in the bread and wine. He is not hanging out on the altar during Mass only to leave after the closing song. Rather, “The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 1377*). This is why we use the word transubstantiation; the substance is transformed.

We encounter the presence of God in

many ways. We can meet Him in creation, when we pray, in the poor, and wherever two or three are gathered in His name (*Matthew 18:20*). At Mass we encounter Jesus in four distinct ways: in the Word of God; in the people gathered; in the priest (*in persona Christi Capitis*); but above all of these ways, “He is present . . . most especially in the Eucharistic species” (*CCC 1373*).

In the Eucharist we experience Jesus in the fullest way we can encounter Him. Jesus is central to everything we believe as Catholics. He is God, the second person of the Trinity. He became human to reconcile humanity to God to correct the separation caused by sin. The Paschal Mystery, that is, the suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, is the event that conquered the power of sin and death.

Baptism and faith bring us into the family of God. Confirmation completes Baptism and seals the gift of the Holy Spirit within us. The sacrament of Reconciliation connects us to God’s mercy and forgiveness. The sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony are how we live out our vocation. And Anointing of the Sick brings comfort, healing, and provisions for the journey to heaven. But, in the Eucharist we receive Jesus Himself and experience intimate communion with God. Nothing can replace going to Mass

and receiving Communion.

Recent studies by Pew Research and Catholic Leadership Institute show that belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist among Catholics is lower than we might think. For those attending Mass weekly, the percentage of respondents who

believe the bread and wine is actually transformed into Body and Blood is somewhere between 63-72 percent depending on the study. But for people who attend Mass monthly or seldom, the numbers dip to between 13 and 25 percent.

One could be tempted to think this is not all that important, but this is extremely troubling. This is central to our faith, and, more importantly, this is an unprecedented offering of self from God.

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life’” (*CCC 1324*). This means the Eucharist is where faith begins and where it leads. It is the spark of our faith and the flame. It is the “sum and summary” (*CCC 1327*). Why is Holy Communion these things? Because it is Jesus!

You may be in a similar situation as I was when I sat next to Kelly as a 20-year-old, in need of a lot of growth in faith and understanding of the Eucharist. Here are a few things I have done over the last 35 years to grow in this area of faith.



Jeff Hedglen



A view of the Most Blessed Sacrament during Adoration for young adults at Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

## PRAY FOR MORE FAITH IN THE EUCHARIST.

I heard in a homily once that the closest we are to Jesus is right after receiving the Eucharist because Jesus is inside of us, body, blood, soul, and divinity. We were encouraged, when we kneel and pray after receiving, to offer to Jesus our most important intentions. I decided to take advantage of this idea and I dedicated the next year to praying for a deeper faith in the Eucharist every time I received Communion.

## GO TO ADORATION.

Spending time before Jesus in Eucharistic form, whether in a tabernacle or exposed in a monstrance, has an impact that is hard to explain. When I first started going, this seemed a foreign and strange

spiritual practice, but I was determined to grow in my faith, so I went and just sat there looking at Jesus.

Adoration is not complicated. St. John Vianney described the prayer form like this: “I look at Him and He looks at me.” You can sit in silence, pray a Rosary, or read the Bible or a spiritual book. What is important is just being in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. His presence is powerful, even if we do not feel anything.

## GO TO AN EXTRA MASS DURING THE WEEK.

I was never a daily Mass person, but then the opportunity arose for me to attend at least one more a week, and I did it. After a year or so of doing this, my experience of Mass changed. I began to see not a collection of parts to move through,

but one complete moment of prayer. My participation moved from waiting for the parts “I liked most” and “what did I get out of it” to meeting Jesus in Word and Sacrament.

These simple changes to the practice of my faith have increased my faith in the Eucharist. I have even had one experience of being moved to tears during Adoration, though I have yet to “feel Jesus cleansing me of my sins.” Ultimately the goal is not a specific experience, but a deeper one. Jesus waits for us in the Eucharist. Let’s meet Him there. 🇺🇸

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Jeff Hedglen is the campus minister at the University Catholic Community at the University of Texas-Arlington.





a sign  
of God's love

Julia Marincel chats before an Advent Mass for the deaf community at Saint Rita Parish on Dec. 5. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

# Interpreting Masses for the deaf community has changed Julia Marincel's life "in a very real way"

By Susan Moses

To make it to the NBA, a basketball player practices thousands of free throws. To play with the New York Philharmonic, a violinist practices thousands of scales.

In her first year as a professional sign language interpreter, Julia Marincel struggled to interpret a priest who gave what Marincel described as "theologically deep" homilies.

Determined to improve, she painstakingly practiced by interpreting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph by paragraph, until she felt proficient with the text. It took her more than a year to work her way through the 2,865-paragraph, 825-page book.

Good enough is not good enough for Marincel.

She has been interpreting Mass, religious education, and other events for the Diocese of Fort Worth since 2015, but her skills are still growing. She said, "I want to do the best that I can. I don't want to just say 'good enough' and leave it at that."

Marincel didn't intend to make a career of interpreting for the deaf. She began learning American Sign Language in high school and continued with college courses because she enjoyed it, although she expected to become a teacher.

But "God has interesting plans," she recalled.

While studying American Sign Language, the cradle Catholic met deaf Catholics and attended Church events with the deaf community. Although the Diocese of Fort Worth instituted deaf ministry nearly 50 years ago, she realized many Catholics were not so fortunate. Some deaf Catholics had a limited understanding of the basic tenets of the faith due to limited access to interpretation.

Marincel realized the need, and her passion ignited.

"I love it more now than even when I started. Being able to connect with people in a Catholic setting, to be able to give them God's word. To be able to convey the message, the connection, is really the big

thing," she said, explaining her joy in her job.

She continued, "I think the main thing is being able to work with different people every day and being able to respect them as who they are."

Marincel's first love is to interpret in religious settings, and her weekends are busy signing Masses for the Diocese of Fort Worth and the Diocese of Dallas.

During the workweek, Marincel's assignments are in business and educational settings. She interprets college courses, on-the-job training, medical appointments, and more, but she schedules time to attend daily Mass most days.

She's also proficient in Spanish, and she has interpreted Baptisms, weddings, and retreats from Spanish into American Sign Language.

## UNLIKELY ADVOCATE

Marincel claims to be the "shyest and quietest" among her six siblings, who grew up attending St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Lewisville. In fact, a personality test pegged her as 97 percent introvert, and she admitted that in new situations, she prefers to observe.

However, Connie Martin, diocesan coordinator of deaf ministry and special needs services, remembered Marincel "jumped right in" and volunteered to help interpret when she visited a deaf community event for the first time as a student in 2013. "She never hesitated to try," Martin remembered.

Marincel admitted her eagerness to participate in deaf ministry is "proof that God has a sense of humor." Or evidence that passion pushes timidity aside.

Martin said the deaf community of the Diocese of Fort Worth "loves Julia," and the feeling is mutual. A deep connection has formed because they share a language and a faith, said Marincel, who appreciates "their encouragement, their patience with me as I've been an interpreter."

Besides learning signs from the community, she's gained some life lessons during her work with the deaf.

The 27-year-old said, "The people

that I've worked with in the deaf community have been at their faith for many more years than I have." She's observed "different tidbits of wisdom they have — I see them living it out in their lives, or they have given to me. They kind of push me in the right direction."

Also, she said, working with the deaf has helped her grow more honest and genuine, plus helped her develop a better sense of humor when encountering challenges. She said, "Ever since I started going to Deaf Community Mass, I see that I could have a different perspective on life. When there's a difficult situation, you can let it get you down or you can keep going and let it make you stronger."

But the biggest benefit from interpreting Mass has "changed my life in a very real way," according to Marincel.

She said before she was a sign language interpreter, "I could just show up to Mass and be present." But when she prepares to interpret a Mass, she carefully studies the readings beforehand. "I have to think about what the Gospel means. And if there's some message God wants to communicate with me through the Gospel, I won't be able to miss it."

On the other hand, signing the homily is the "fun part," she said. Usually, interpreters are not provided with the text ahead of time, so "we just keep up. It's not scripted. We fly with it."

In her six years of interpreting for the diocese, she has some special memories. She interpreted a wedding, then a few years later interpreted the Baptism of the couple's child.

Other favorite events have been interpreting retreats for deaf young people, "and honestly every Mass," she said.

Now, the student has become a teacher, and she has taught sign language to other students, including her brother, seminarian Michael Marincel.

And as for the future, Marincel strives "to increase my skills and learn more about God" so that she's prepared for "what God really wants, what would be the best for my own growth and for everyone else. It will be a journey, I'm sure." 🍀





## Time to Love

With two children and a third on the way, Tele and Lara Fernandes describe the feeling of parenting preschoolers as sometimes being “in the whirlwind.”

Yet they make time to worship, time to serve, and time for family, bearing in mind that “each of us, by our love and care, leaves a mark on the life of others,” as Pope Francis writes in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*).

Issued five years ago, the document addresses the complexities and realities of family life at all stages.

The pope calls the family a “living reflection” of the communion of love present in the Holy Trinity, quoting St. John Paul II: “Our God in His deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family, for He has within Himself fatherhood, sonship, and the essence of the family, which is love. That love, in the divine family, is the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Father has declared an “*Amoris Laetitia* Family” year, so the *NTC* is expanding its regular feature *The Domestic Church* to explore how local families live with faith and love.





**FAITH TAKES ROOT:** Tele was raised in Kuwait, in a culturally Catholic family. When he was a student at the University of Texas at Dallas, a cousin invited him to the Catholic student organization. There his faith flourished as he learned about Catholicism, developed deep friendships, and visited different parishes for Mass.

Lara was raised Catholic, but she didn't receive the sacrament of Confirmation until she was in her 30s. As a teenager, "I was confident in my relationship with God," she explained, but she wanted more time to understand the Church. "When I went back to the Church and it was my choice, it made my faith stronger."

**THE RIGHT MATCH:** Having a spouse that shared their beliefs and traditions was important to both of them, and they met on CatholicMatch.com.

**MORE THAN MASS:** When they met, Lara and Tele were in their 30s and had "established individual faith lives, and we were conscious about trying to add to that as a couple," she explained. Until their second child was born, the couple was quite active on the Diocesan Mission Council.

Retreats, including Christ Renews His Parish, have boosted their faith.

Currently Tele serves as a Eucharistic minister and Lara makes hats and blankets for a pregnancy center.

**PARENTHOOD PLUS:** Lara said having children has provided more ways to appreciate each other. "Tele is a fantastic father," said Lara. "Seeing him with our kids strengthens our marriage and it makes me appreciate him more."

**TWOSOME TIME:** The couple takes advantage of the children's early bedtime to reconnect in the evening.

They occasionally take a vacation day together and enjoy a lunch out, a park visit, or a movie while the kids are at school.

**BLESSED AND THANKFUL:** Although he had many cousins and friends, Tele grew up an only child, which has made him especially grateful for his family. He said, "Every day I wake up and thank God for this family. It's been incredible."

**GOD THE FATHER:** Becoming a parent has taught the couple truths about God. Lara recalled holding newborn Charlotte and thinking, "She doesn't even know how much she's loved." Later, she realized the same could be said of God's love for us, which she called "beyond the realm" of our understanding.

**PASS ON THE FAITH:** The couple realizes they are the primary models and teachers of the faith for their children, so they intentionally set an example of prayer, service, and worship.

They say morning prayer together and take turns saying grace before meals, so Sebastian, and soon Charlotte, actively participate.

Lara finds creative ways to live liturgically. For example, the Advent calendar offers a daily work of mercy, and they fill the manger with acts of kindness.

**DAY BREAK:** Both parents work full time, and they have realized the value of starting their day with Scripture and prayer. Lara said, "My patience is better. Everything is better."

"It makes a big difference," agreed Tele, who likes to pray the Rosary when he commutes to the office.

**UNEXPECTED INSIGHTS:** Parenthood teaches many lessons, including some you don't want to learn. Lara said with a laugh, "If you want to know the things you don't like about yourself, your children will do that exact thing."

**FAMILY FIRST:** Tele said, "As you're raising kids, you can't do it alone. You need family and community — to help, to spend time with."

**UNIVERSAL CHURCH:** Tele has lived in India, Kuwait, Oklahoma, and Texas, and he appreciates that he could find a Catholic Church everywhere. Lara remembered a trip to India where Mass was celebrated in Konkani, but she pulled up the readings on her phone and followed along.

She said, "I like the idea that every day across the world, millions, maybe billions, of people are contemplating the same readings — that connection."

**LIFE LESSONS:** As their children grow up, Tele said he hopes home life teaches them about God's love and forgiveness. "In the family you practice love and forgiveness all the time, probably every hour," he said.

Lara said, "Mostly, I want them to have a relationship with God. I have personally always felt like He's present in my life... Having God as your anchor, you're always coming back when that is solidified as your truth."

Tele added, "You want them to have faith when Mom and Dad are not there." 🍷

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**THEY ARE:** Good Shepherd parishioners Lara and Tele Fernandes, with Charlotte and Sebastian, at their home in Grapevine. (NTC/Ben Torres)



# Presenting the Lord

(Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com)

Each February 2, forty days after the celebration of Christmas, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, also known as Candlemas. On this occasion, the Church blesses the candles to be used in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, as well as those candles used by the lay faithful in their homes for private devotion.

The story we remember on this feast is the first public act of our Savior after His Nativity — His entrance into the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. In the first form of the “Blessing of Candles and the Procession,” the priest mentions the dual character of the feast.

Outwardly, Jesus was being presented by His Blessed Mother, Mary, and St. Joseph in the Temple to fulfill the Law of Moses found in *Leviticus*. On the other hand, Our Lord is running toward His people to meet them. At the Temple he meets the prophet Simeon and the prophetess Anna.

The personal stories of Simeon and Anna are beautiful and, like so many stories found in *St. Luke's Gospel*, people who might appear marginal or seem on the fringes of their environment are brought into the light by their encounter with Jesus.

In reading the text of the Gospel for today's feast, details of Simeon's and

Anna's life are rather scant. We really know nothing of Simeon except that he was a very old man, and when Anna appears to speak words of prophecy over the infant Christ, we know very little about her except that she was an old woman and a widow. Yet, whatever the unknown details of their lives might be, Simeon's words when he holds the Christ child in his arms are powerful. On the one hand, they express the fulfillment of the “hope of all nations.” And, on the other, his words express a moment when people who might appear marginal or on the fringes are brought into the warmth and radiance of Our Lord.

Jesus is the sign and the promise for those who are Gentiles, those who feel they are on the outside, that He is there and will be there for those who think or feel they do not belong. They think or feel this way for a variety of different reasons: social, economic, or, simply, they believe, (albeit falsely), that they are too broken even for Jesus. In whatever circumstance, Christ is the one who brings them into His light.

If anyone reading this article is wondering or thinking, “What does this have to do with priesthood and encouraging young men to prayerfully consider their vocation?” I would simply suggest you listen to or read the prayers of the feast

and read the Gospel, focusing on what Our Lord is doing.

Christ, even as an infant, goes in search of His people. He goes in search of those people who might be or are on the margins or fringes of their environment due to the numerous circumstances that would lead them to be underappreciated, undervalued, or unwelcomed, and in each circumstance Our Lord brings them to Himself.

The priest, who acts in the person and name of Jesus, must daily resolve himself to go in search of those who would be considered and deemed marginal. Be that a person who has been treated unjustly, a person whose inherent dignity has been harmed, or even a person who believes they are too far beyond the reach of Christ. Priests are called to bring Our Lord and His light.

The young man who is praying and thinking about following Jesus in this way, as His priest, must have this same resolve like our Lord to go in search of His people — for our Lord, “who is the light of all nations” has come that all “might have life and have it more abundantly.” 🇺🇸



Fr. Matthew Tatyrek





Anayansi Camargo en un ensayo del Club Folklórico de Nolan Catholic High School de Fort Worth el lunes 11 de octubre de 2021. (NTC/Ben Torres)

# BAILANDO con significado

Ballet folklórico inspira estudiantes a mantener vibrante su fe y cultura

Por Violeta Rocha

**A**l bailar el ballet folklórico, la música marca el ritmo de sus pasos y los repentinos gritos de algarabía animan su baile, pero hay un sonido que a Kate Sánchez le emociona en particular. Es el sonido de sus zapatos, que reforzados con clavos en la suela, golpean el piso al compás de variados temas típicos mexicanos.

Cada zapateo representa más que un baile o una mera actuación. Según ella, éstos representan su esfuerzo

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y aporte para mantener vibrante un legado que “lleva mis raíces” y del que se enorgullece.

Sánchez, de 16 años, junto a otros ocho integrantes, forman parte del Club Ballet Folklórico “La Vikina,” de Nolan Catholic High School de Fort Worth. El club fue formado en el 2019.

“Bailar es un talento con el que Dios nos ha bendecido”, aseveró Sánchez, resaltando la unidad que existe en el grupo. “Es un ambiente muy alegre y... muestra la cultura mexicana en una escuela católica donde hay diversidad”, ella agregó mientras que señalaba con gozo a los integrantes del grupo que no tienen raíces mexicanas.

“El sueño sería definitivamente que tuviéramos una clase que se ofreciera como parte del plan de estudios de la escuela,” resalta María Beltrán, moderadora del carismático club que se reúne cada lunes después de la escuela.

“Gracias a poder servir como la moderadora del grupo he podido conocer a mis estudiantes a un nivel más profundo y personal”, comentó al referirse a sus alumnos nuevos y a los que ya se han graduado. Beltrán recuerda además la dedicación de la alumna fundadora Génesis Soto, quien se graduó en el 2020.

Ella asegura que la tenacidad y la disciplina del grupo, aunado “al gozo de disfrutar de la música y los bailes folklóricos son contagiosos e inspiradores”.

Alex Alemán, de 16 años, es el único varón del grupo, y señala que su mamá, que es originaria de Chihuahua, le sirvió de inspiración. “Ella también participó en un grupo de ballet folklórico en su escuela y yo quiero continuar ese legado”, dijo.

A través del baile, “hemos conocido la diversidad de México”, explicó Alemán.

“Cada estado tiene unas tradiciones completamente diferentes, pero a la vez se trata de la misma cultura”, dijo emocionado de poder representar “a mi escuela y mis raíces mexicanas”.

Anastasia “Stasi” Flores, de 25 años, se graduó de Nolan Catholic High School en el 2014. Tan pronto se formó el Ballet Folklórico “La Vikina”, no dudó en ofrecerse como voluntaria para ayudar al



Bailarinas del club folklórico de Nolan Catholic High School. (NTC/Ben Torres)

grupo como coreógrafa.

“Me interesa mucho ayudar a ‘La Vikina’ porque resalta la importancia del ballet folklórico. Es una visión que ya es una realidad, está viva, y continúa creciendo...hay tanto que celebrar en la cultura hispana, y es fantástico traer esa cultura a la escuela a través del baile”, ella dijo.

Flores explica que en el Norte de Texas hay un gran número de grupos independientes de ballet folklórico, pero muy pocas escuelas que lo integran en su plan de estudios oficial, “así que es hermoso poder ser voluntaria con estos chicos. Veo gran pasión en los estudiantes de Nolan; tienen entusiasmo y orgullo de su cultura”.

Flores tiene una licenciatura en artes, con especialización en danza y ballet clásico, de la Universidad del Norte de Texas y tiene su propia empresa de danza.

Alemán admira y valoriza el trabajo de Flores por sentirse aún “parte de la familia de Nolan y que pueda regresar a ayudarnos. Los alumnos y los maestros aprendemos mucho de ella...bailamos

en un ambiente católico. Se siente armonía y paciencia a la hora de aprender algo nuevo”, señaló.

## COMENZANDO CON PASOS SÓLIDOS

En la Escuela Católica de Santa María Goretti de Arlington 10 niñas que cursan el 2do. y el 8vo. grado y que tienen diferentes raíces culturales contagian de alegría a todos con el color llamativo de sus holgados vestidos, su gran sonrisa y el espíritu festivo que plasman en cada paso de ballet folklórico en su escuela.

“El grupo es muy diverso con respecto a las edades y su trasfondo étnico - no todos sus integrantes tienen raíces hispanas. La pasión al baile es multicultural”, explica Martha Zavala, moderadora del Club de Ballet Folklórico de Santa María Goretti, el cual se reúne cada martes, después de la escuela.

Zavala es maestra de español y señala que en su propia clase incorpora la enseñanza de bailes folklóricos “por ser muy típico en



La alumna de tercer grado Camila Méndez practica su baile folklórico en el Colegio de Santa María Goretti el 26 de octubre de 2021. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)



Las alumnas de tercer grado Caroline Peterson, Grace Yal y la alumna de segundo grado Addie Lazo bailan durante un ensayo del ballet folklórico en el Colegio de Santa María Goretti el 26 de octubre de 2021. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

cualquier festejo cultural de nuestros países latinoamericanos”, dijo, explicando que no sólo han explorado los bailes originarios de México, pero también los de Ecuador, Perú y algunos otros países de Latinoamérica.

El Club de Ballet Folklórico nació como una propuesta para actividades después de la escuela. “Fue muy bienvenido cuando se abrió porque nunca había habido un ballet folklórico en Santa María Goretti”, recordó Zavala. Ella agradece el trabajo de Ashley Martínez, madre voluntaria que enseña las coreografías, gracias a que en su juventud

estudió ballet folklórico.

Zavala apunta que son muchos los frutos que se pueden observar en el grupo, tales como la fraternidad, la empatía y la unidad.

“Las mismas niñas que fueron parte del ballet folklórico en sus inicios son quienes enseñan ahora a las niñas que llegan, y las hacen sentir bienvenidas desde el primer día... las niñas pequeñitas son felices teniendo amigas que están en el 8vo. grado, eso es la mayor alegría para ellas. Definitivamente se crea una linda fraternidad entre todas”, concluyó. 🇺🇸

## 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 al 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 ha sido informado de un abuso:

- ▶ 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](http://fwdioc.org/safe-environment)







# Acercánd

**C**uando tenía veinte años tuve la suerte de tener un grupo de amigos con los que iba a Misa todos los domingos. Me sentaba a menudo al lado de una mujer que se llamaba Kelly. En una ocasión, después de recibir la Comunión y regresar al banco, ella estaba arrodillada y lloraba en silencio. Me acerqué a ella y susurré: “¿Está todo bien?” Ella asintió con la cabeza y me dijo: “Sí, siento que Jesús me limpia de mis pecados”. Me quedé asombrado. Yo nunca había sentido nada así después de recibir la Comunión. En ese momento me quedó claro que tenía que comprender y experimentar más con el misterio de Jesús en forma de pan y vino.

Esta experiencia me inició en la búsqueda por el resto de mi vida de alcanzar una fe más profunda, un entendimiento más rico y una devoción más fuerte a Jesús en el Santísimo Sacramento.

La transustanciación es la esencia de nuestra creencia en la Eucaristía. La sustancia del pan y el vino se transforma en la sustancia de Jesús: Su cuerpo, sangre, alma y divinidad.

Jesús no está simbólicamente en el pan y el vino. No está colgado en el altar durante la Misa sólo para irse después del canto final de despedida. Más bien, “la presencia eucarística de Cristo comienza en el momento de la consagración y dura todo el tiempo que subsistan las especies eucarísticas” (*Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica 1377*). Por eso, usamos la palabra transustanciación; la sustancia se transforma.

Encontramos la presencia de Dios de muchas maneras. Podemos encontrarnos con Él en la creación, cuando oramos, en los pobres y dondequiera que dos o tres estén reunidos en Su nombre (*Mateo 18, 20*). Encontramos a Jesús en la Misa de cuatro formas distintas: en la Palabra de Dios, en el pueblo reunido; en el sacerdote (en la *Persona de Cristo*); “Pero, sobre todo, Él está presente muy especialmente bajo las especies eucarísticas” (*CIC 1373*).

El Bautismo y la fe nos llevan a la familia de Dios. La Confirmación completa el Bautismo y

# onos, paso a paso

sella el don del Espíritu Santo dentro de nosotros. El Sacramento de la Reconciliación nos vincula con la misericordia y el perdón de Dios. Los sacramentos del Orden Sagrado y el Matrimonio son la forma en que vivimos nuestra vocación. La Unción de los Enfermos trae consuelo, sanación y nos prepara para el viaje al cielo. En la Eucaristía recibimos a Jesús mismo y experimentamos una íntima comunión con Dios. Nada puede reemplazar ir a Misa y recibir la Comunión.

Los estudios recientes realizados por Pew Research y Catholic Leadership Institute muestran que la creencia en la presencia real de Jesús en la Eucaristía entre los católicos es menos de lo que pensamos. Según la encuesta entre los fieles que asisten a Misa semanalmente, el porcentaje de las personas que creen que el pan y el vino se transforman en el Cuerpo y la Sangre está entre un 63 y 72 por ciento. Sin embargo, para las personas que asisten a Misa una vez al mes o con poca frecuencia, las cifras se reducen a entre 13 y 25 por ciento.

Uno podría tener la tentación de pensar que estos datos no son tan importantes, pero esta realidad es extremadamente preocupante. Esta creencia es fundamental para nuestra fe y, aún más importante, es que se trata de la ofrenda de Sí mismo sin precedentes por parte de Dios.

El *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* dice: “La Eucaristía es ‘fuente y culmen de toda la vida cristiana’” (*CIC 1324*). Esto significa que la Eucaristía es donde comienza la fe y hacia donde conduce. Es la chispa de nuestra fe y la llama. Es “el

compendio y la suma de nuestra fe” (*CIC 1327*). ¿Por qué es la Sagrada Comunión estas cosas? ¡Porque es Jesús!

Es posible que usted se encuentre en una situación similar a la que yo estaba a los veinte años cuando me sentaba junto a Kelly. Tenía gran necesidad de mucho crecimiento en la fe y de una mayor comprensión de la Eucaristía. A continuación, deseo compartir con ustedes lo que he hecho por más de 35 años para crecer en esta área de la fe.



Jeff Hedglen

## ORAR POR UNA MAYOR FE EN LA EUCHARISTÍA

Una vez escuché en una homilía que cuando más cerca estamos de Jesús es justo después de recibir la Eucaristía porque Jesús está dentro de nosotros, cuerpo, sangre, alma y divinidad. El sacerdote nos animó a los feligreses a que cuando nos arrodillemos y oremos después de recibir la Sagrada Eucaristía, ofrezcamos a Jesús nuestras intenciones más importantes. Decidí aprovechar esta idea y dediqué el siguiente año a rezar por una fe más profunda en el Sacramento de la Eucaristía cada vez que recibiera la Comunión.

## IR A LA ADORACIÓN

Pasar tiempo ante Jesús en forma eucarística, ya sea en el tabernáculo o expuesto en la custodia, tiene un impacto que es difícil de explicar. Cuando comencé a ir a la Adoración esto parecía una práctica espiritual extraña y foránea, pero estaba decidido a hacer crecer mi fe. Así que iba y me sentaba allí a mirar a Jesús.

La Adoración no es complicada. San Juan Vianney describió esta forma

de oración así: “Lo miro y Él me mira”. Puede sentarse en silencio, rezar un rosario, leer la Biblia o un libro espiritual. Lo importante es simplemente estar en presencia de Jesús en la Eucaristía. Su presencia es poderosa, incluso si no sentimos nada.

## IR A UNA MISA ADICIONAL DURANTE LA SEMANA

Nunca fui una persona de Misa diaria. No obstante, me surgió más tarde la oportunidad de asistir al menos a una Misa más cada semana y lo hice. Después de hacer esto por alrededor de un año, experimenté la Misa de manera diferente. Comencé a verla no como un conjunto de partes por las que uno va pasando, sino como un solo momento completo de oración. Mi participación pasó de ser una espera de las partes de la Misa “que me gustaban más” y ver “qué sacaba de ellas” a encontrarme más profundamente con Jesús en la Palabra y el Sacramento.

Estos simples cambios en la práctica de mi fe acrecentaron mi fe en la Eucaristía. He tenido incluso la experiencia de ser conmovido hasta las lágrimas durante la Adoración, aunque debo decir que todavía no he llegado a “sentir que Jesús me está limpiando de mis pecados”. En última instancia, el objetivo no es una experiencia específica, sino más profunda. Jesús nos espera en la Eucaristía. ¡Encontrémonos con Él allí! 🇺🇸

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Jeff Hedglen es el Ministro del Campus Católico de la Universidad de Texas en Arlington.



# CUANTOS MÁS, • mejor

Caridades Católicas Fort Worth se asocia con las parroquias de la diócesis para lograr un mayor impacto en nuestras comunidades

Por Susan Moses

**A** la hora de echar una mano a los más pobres, las necesidades sobrepasan siempre la capacidad de atenderlas. Para obtener el máximo impacto de los programas de caridad y el ministerio social, Caridades Católicas Fort Worth (CCFW) está trabajando en colaboración con las parroquias de la diócesis. Hasta ahora, los resultados son muy prometedores.

Kasey Whitley, la directora del Ministerio Social Parroquial de Caridades Católicas Fort Worth, y su equipo recorren toda la diócesis para reunirse con los párrocos, líderes ministeriales y voluntarios con el fin de trabajar juntos y encontrar la mejor manera posible de servir a las personas y familias al margen de la sociedad.

Denise Koch, coordinadora de alcance social de la Parroquia de San Felipe el Apóstol de Lewisville, ha sido testigo en los tres años que lleva en este cargo cómo se ha ido fortaleciendo la relación de la parroquia con CCFW.

“Lo que hizo Caridades Católicas fue ayudarnos a tener mejor comprensión de cómo debería llevarse el ministerio social y

enseñarnos a desarrollarlo, hacer ajustes y a manejar las expectativas de la gente”, dijo Koch. Ella se comunica con CCFW varias veces al mes.

Koch añade que el colaborar con Caridades Católicas y otras organizaciones de asistencia comunitaria, le ha servido para aprender a imitar las mejores prácticas de servicio y le han ayudado a determinar quién es elegible para recibir ayuda. Además, le ha ayudado a evaluar las necesidades de los clientes, examinar la sostenibilidad de sus esfuerzos y trabajar en colaboración con otras organizaciones para encontrar más recursos.

Koch, que venía de un puesto de gerencia empresarial en American Airlines, calificó a Caridades Católicas Fort Worth como un “instrumento fundamental para aprender cómo se hace” y señaló que el ministerio social de la parroquia es hoy día más sistemático, más responsable y sólido. Incluso, puede ser a veces creativo. Señaló como ejemplo el decirle a un cliente que una vez que encontrara empleo, la parroquia igualaría sus ingresos del primer mes.

## HACIENDO MÁS JUNTOS

Según Whitley, las parroquias y



De izquierda a derecha: Pamela Morris, especialista en asistencia financiera; Kasey Whitley, Directora del Ministerio Social parroquial; Allison Moore, Coordinadora del Proyecto Gabriel y Defensora de Ángeles; María Barahona, asistente social de casos del Proyecto Gabriel. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Caridades Católicas Fort Worth aportan diferentes fortalezas a su objetivo común de ayudar a “los más pequeños entre nosotros”. Las parroquias tienen conocimiento acerca de las necesidades de la comunidad, cuentan con voluntarios comprometidos y tienen visibilidad en el vecindario o la ciudad en que se encuentran. Por otro lado, CCFW brinda recursos para asistencia a corto plazo, así como estrategias basadas en datos reales para eliminar la pobreza, que incluyen programas para ayudar a los clientes a alcanzar sus objetivos laborales, educativos y financieros necesarios para ser autosuficientes.

El primer paso de esta alianza colaborativa es que una parroquia remita una persona a Caridades Católicas, si dicha persona tiene necesidades mayores de las que la parroquia puede satisfacer. Caridades Católicas adoptó un sistema electrónico para tramitar las referencias directas de las parroquias, que es más sencillo y eficiente que las llamadas telefónicas.

Whitley estimó que el 90 por ciento de sus referencias parroquiales este año han sido electrónicas.

Whitley dijo que, por lo general, Caridades Católicas responde al referido en un plazo de tres a cinco días y luego se comunica con la parroquia para dejarle saber si la agencia puede ayudar al cliente. De no ser posible, la agencia podría sugerir otros recursos comunitarios.

Otro beneficio de la colaboración se puede medir en términos de dólares y centavos. Digamos que el carro de un cliente se averió y la persona no puede ir a trabajar y como consecuencia se enfrenta al desalojo de su vivienda. La parroquia y Caridades Católicas pueden trabajar juntos para brindar asistencia complementaria. Los fondos de Caridades Católicas se limitan a menudo a la asistencia de servicios públicos o la vivienda, pero los recursos de la parroquia tienden a ser más flexibles y en este caso podrían ayudar con la reparación del automóvil.

## PROGRESO CONSTANTE

Formar socios de referido parroquial con las parroquias de la diócesis es un proceso lento y deliberado, señaló Whitley, ya que cada parroquia tiene sus propias necesidades y recursos. Caridades Católicas personaliza su enfoque para cada parroquia en particular. Además, Caridades Católicas evalúa con frecuencia los datos generados por sus socios parroquiales y ajusta el programa para hacerlo más efectivo.

La organización sin fines de lucro comenzó el programa piloto de socios de referido parroquial hace aproximadamente dos años, y su objetivo es que el 80 por ciento de las parroquias estén a bordo en el 2023.

Las parroquias han referido este año más de 800 clientes a Caridades Católicas, que ha distribuido más de \$500,000 para satisfacer esas solicitudes.

“Podemos servir más de esta

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manera”, explicó Whitley. “Cuando delegamos y empoderamos a las personas en las parroquias para que hagan parte del trabajo preliminar de obtener información de los clientes y determinar su elegibilidad, entonces podemos acudir y servir más. Podemos entonces hacerlo de una forma más rápida y mejor”.

Si se fuera a nombrar delegados a todos los voluntarios del ministerio social de la Parroquia de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, no habría suficientes insignias.

La parroquia de Keller tenía un sólido programa de ministerio social cuando Patricia González se convirtió en la directora de alcance social en agosto del año en curso. Hasta 200 voluntarios se presentaban a menudo para preparar emparedados mensuales para las personas sin hogar, y la mayoría de sus feligreses participa en las campañas de recolección de alimentos, el programa de árboles de ángeles en la Navidad, el recogido de alimentos no perecederos y artículos de aseo personal, y muchos otros.

“El éxito de una oficina de alcance social depende de dos piezas vitales: un fuerte cuerpo de voluntarios ... pero también el apoyo de su liderazgo”, dijo González, y alude a la filosofía del Padre James Flynn: “Si hay una necesidad, él quiere satisfacer esa necesidad”.

Whitley visitó la parroquia a principios de este año para “una reunión muy, muy activa con una enorme cantidad de sinergia e intercambio de ideas”, recordó González. “Lo que no me di cuenta de que estaba buscando era cómo podíamos complementar los servicios de Caridades Católicas y asegurarnos de que las necesidades de los clientes que vemos podemos satisfacerlas”.

A corto plazo, González dijo que los voluntarios del ministerio social de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton están mejor informados para saber qué tipo de asistencia financiera puede brindar CCFW y qué hacer para referir a los clientes al programa de servicios de Caridades Católicas para las familias trabajadoras.

González dijo que la parroquia y la agencia pueden trabajar juntas para ayudar a “que los clientes puedan salir del

modo de crisis y lleguen a un punto donde puedan comenzar a tomar decisiones más racionales y mejores”.

La directora de alcance social espera que la asociación con Caridades Católicas Fort Worth ayude también a lograr algunas de sus metas futuras. Ella espera que la parroquia se convierta en un “armario para bebés” del Proyecto Gabriel, un programa de Caridades Católicas destinado a ayudar a las madres embarazadas en crisis.

“Un programa de asistencia social exitoso es aquél que sostendrá la mano de un cliente en cualquier etapa en que se encuentre, ya sea una madre joven con un embarazo no planificado, ya sea alguien con niños de edad escolar ... o un adulto mayor con ingresos muy limitados”, comentó González.

Whitley continúa reuniéndose con el ministerio de alcance social de la Parroquia de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton para compartir ideas y su base de conocimientos. Por ejemplo, Whitley sabía de una parroquia que desarrolló un fuerte ministerio del Proyecto Gabriel y recomendó que González se comunicara con ellos para obtener más ideas.

## SOCIO SILENCIOSO

A medida que Koch coordina el ministerio social de la Parroquia de San Felipe el Apóstol, ella aprovecha la sabiduría y la ayuda de Caridades Católicas, otros grupos de asistencia de la comunidad y la guía del Espíritu Santo.

Ella dijo: “Honestamente, le rezo al Espíritu Santo antes de ayudar a alguien, le pido que me guíe y me dé las herramientas que necesito para poder ayudarlos en la forma que Él desea. Se trata a veces de simplemente amar a esa persona en el lugar que se encuentra en la vida”.

“Tengo personas sin hogar que acuden a nosotros y les digo ‘Eres un hijo de Dios y eres hermoso’. Y los trato con dignidad, amabilidad, respeto y amor”.

Cuando se trata de ayudar a los necesitados, las parroquias de la diócesis y Caridades Católicas Fort Worth tienen una larga historia de ser compasivos, generosos y misericordiosos. Al agregar el programa de los socios de referido parroquial a su manual de operaciones, han agregado ser “estratégicos”. 📍

# EMMANUEL Y LA EUCARISTÍA

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



 @BpOlsonFW

Esta edición de *North Texas Catholic* se centra en el misterio de la Eucaristía. La Navidad es un tiempo muy apropiado para reflexionar sobre la Eucaristía, ya que celebramos la Natividad del Hijo de Dios y del Hijo de María, Jesucristo, el Verbo hecho carne. En el Evangelio de Mateo encontramos el relato del nacimiento de Jesús: “He aquí que la virgen concebirá y dará a luz un hijo, y le pondrán por nombre Emmanuel, que traducido significa ‘Dios con nosotros’” (*Mateo 1, 23*). La celebración de la Eucaristía en Nochebuena nos recuerda siempre con viveza el misterio de Dios hecho Hombre, Emmanuel, Dios con nosotros.

La Misa de Medianoche de la Natividad del Señor es particularmente la celebración de una cálida alegría en medio del frío y la oscuridad que nos recuerda de la manera más hermosa que Cristo es la luz del mundo que brilla intensamente en la oscuridad, la oscuridad de nuestras vidas y del mundo. De manera especial, la colocación y bendición de la figura del Niño Jesús en el pesebre nos sitúa en el portal de Belén a todos los reunidos en la Misa de Medianoche. Nos ayuda a cada uno a estar espiritualmente en el pesebre con el Niño Jesús, la Santísima Virgen María y San José, y recordar quién estuvo allí en esa misteriosa noche hace tantos años.

Los pastores estaban en las afueras y en los campos, las cuevas y los valles. La periferia de la sociedad rara vez se aventuraba a ir a la ciudad. Los pastores están atentos porque no tienen su propio lugar, por lo que tampoco tienen en sus vidas un lugar libre para Dios. Así que, mientras vigilan, Dios les revela plenamente a través del Niño Jesús su lugar en la vida de Dios, en vez del lugar de Dios en la vida de ellos.

¿Quién no está atento y quién elige no pertenecer al establo? Herodes, los burócratas del Imperio Romano, los miembros corruptos del liderazgo religioso, los dueños de las posadas y los demás que están demasiado ocupados y preocupados para pertenecer a nadie. Todos ellos permanecen indiferentes a Dios.


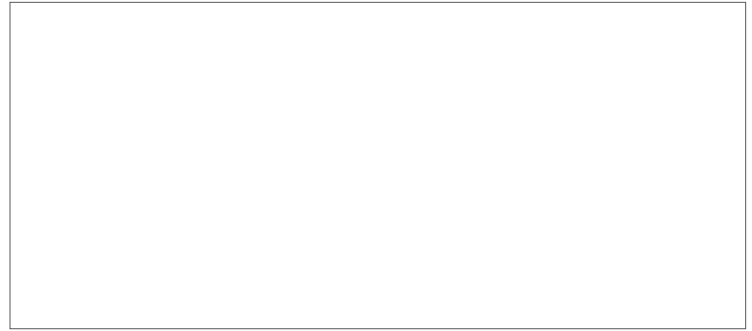
Los filósofos, los expertos y los que ya tienen un espacio libre para Dios en sus vidas se pierden el canto de los ángeles y el nacimiento del Niño Jesús. Mantienen un espacio libre para Dios, pero eligen no pertenecer a Él, sino tratarlo como un huésped ocasional al que invitan cuando están aburridos. Están dormidos u ocupados con negocios malvados que se tramitan en la oscuridad de la noche; la misma oscuridad en la que la luz del Niño Jesús ahora brilla con tanto esplendor.

La razón misma, sin la ayuda de la fe, no nos permite esperar el misterio de la victoria de Dios en el Niño Jesús indefenso que conquista a la humanidad con un amor vulnerable. La razón, sin la ayuda de la fe, fomenta el aislamiento y el egoísmo en cada uno de estos grupos que optan por no pertenecer al establo. Éste es el egoísmo que oscurece la inteligencia de los seres humanos y que los lleva a perder su identidad de pertenencia a Dios y entre sí como hijos suyos. Prefieren lamentablemente el encanto de la autonomía. Esta oscuridad todavía impregna gran parte de nuestro mundo hoy. Sin embargo, la Luz de Cristo Niño resplandece en medio de la oscuridad en la Navidad.

Entonces, la humanidad caída recibe a su Salvador en un pesebre, un lugar donde los animales van por instinto en busca de alimento. Sin embargo, el mismo Niño Jesús crecerá y, como hombre, alimentará nuestra humanidad caída con el banquete redentor de Su Cuerpo y Sangre, la Eucaristía, el Sacramento al que verdaderamente podemos pertenecer.

Nuestro don de pertenecer a Dios mediante Cristo requiere que no sólo tengamos un lugar libre para Él, sino que abracemos en nuestra debilidad Su lugar para nosotros. Exige que nos involuemos en Su divinidad a través del don de la gracia bautismal; y requiere que seamos nutridos y transformados en el banquete de Su amor sacrificial, la Eucaristía. “Y he aquí que yo estaré con ustedes todos los días hasta el fin del mundo” (*Mateo 18, 20*). ✝





“God loves  
those who find  
joy in giving.”

- Pope John Paul II

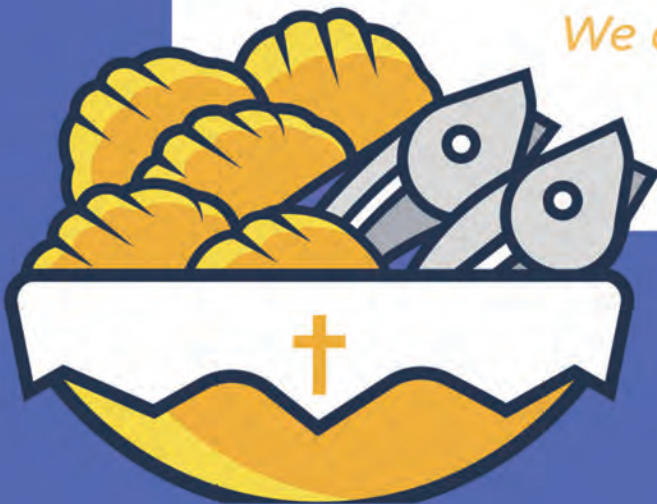
### We can't thank you enough for your generosity!

Thanks be to God for the outpouring of generosity for the parishes, schools and ministries of the Diocese of Fort Worth during #iGiveCatholic. On November 30, we joined with thousands of other Catholic organizations on this Day of Giving to unite the faithful across the country.

Because of your generosity, we were able to raise over \$373,000 to support the works of love and mercy in our parishes, schools and ministries. Each gift made will play a critical role in allowing us to serve the faithful in our community and build the body of Christ.

*We are grateful to each of you!*

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**SAVE THE DATE: NOVEMBER 29, 2022**

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