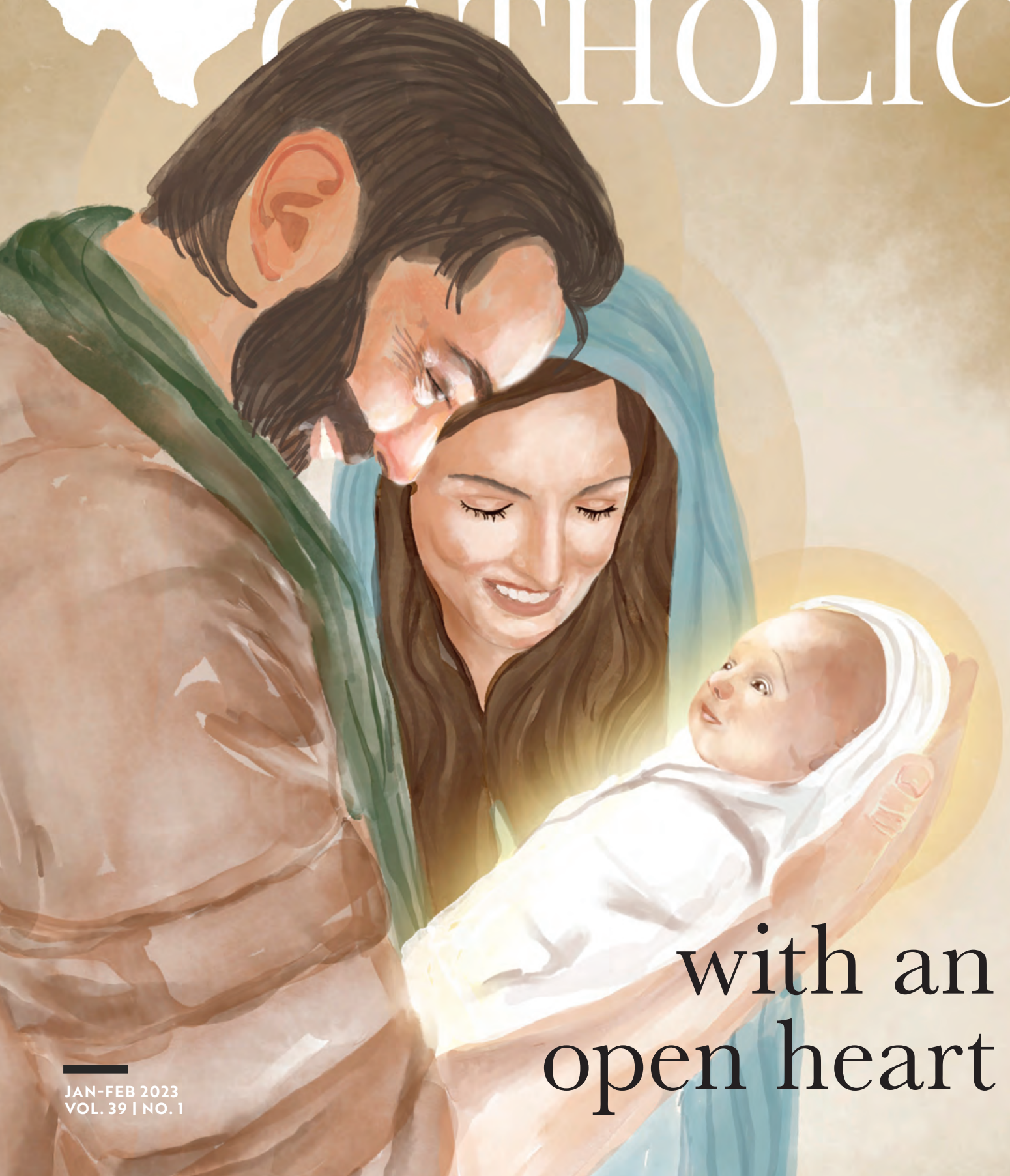


BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



with an
open heart

JAN-FEB 2023
VOL. 39 | NO. 1



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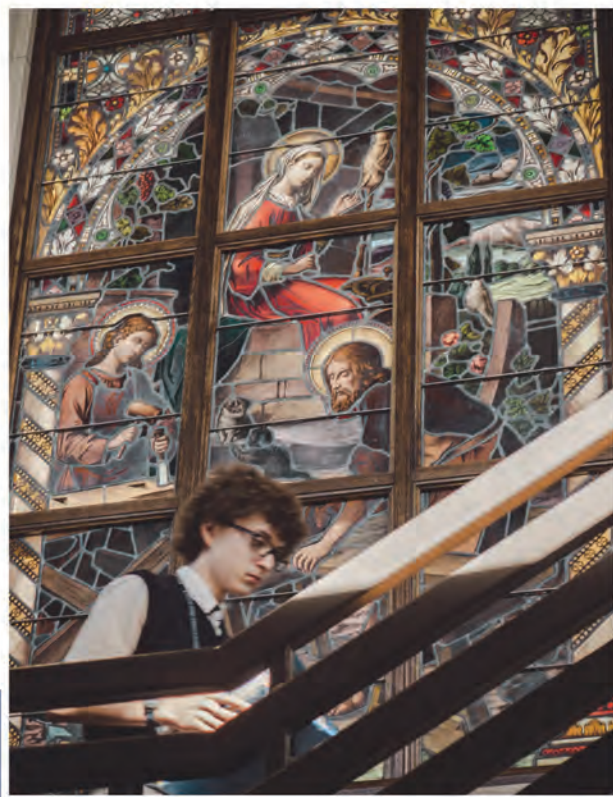
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Enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year has begun!



FAMILY IS THE TRAINING GROUND FOR LOVE, HOLINESS

Some of you have heard me tell of my past experiences as a priest ethicist serving as a consultant in the field of health care. One of my responsibilities was to assist people in preparing their durable powers of attorney for health care especially regarding the Catholic tradition of ordinary and extraordinary means of treatment.

In giving my presentation, someone would inevitably make the statement, “Father, I just do not want to spend my elderly years as a burden to my children.” I would respond, “I understand, but it is too late. You already are a burden to your children and have been so for their entire lives, and they to you.”

As the prophet Sirach says, “My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him; revile him not all the days of his life; kindness to a father will not be forgotten, firmly planted against the debt of your sins — a house raised in justice to you (*Sir 3:12-14*).”

When it comes to our responsibilities and relationships within our families, we frequently make the mistaken presumption that we are not to burden each other as members of the same

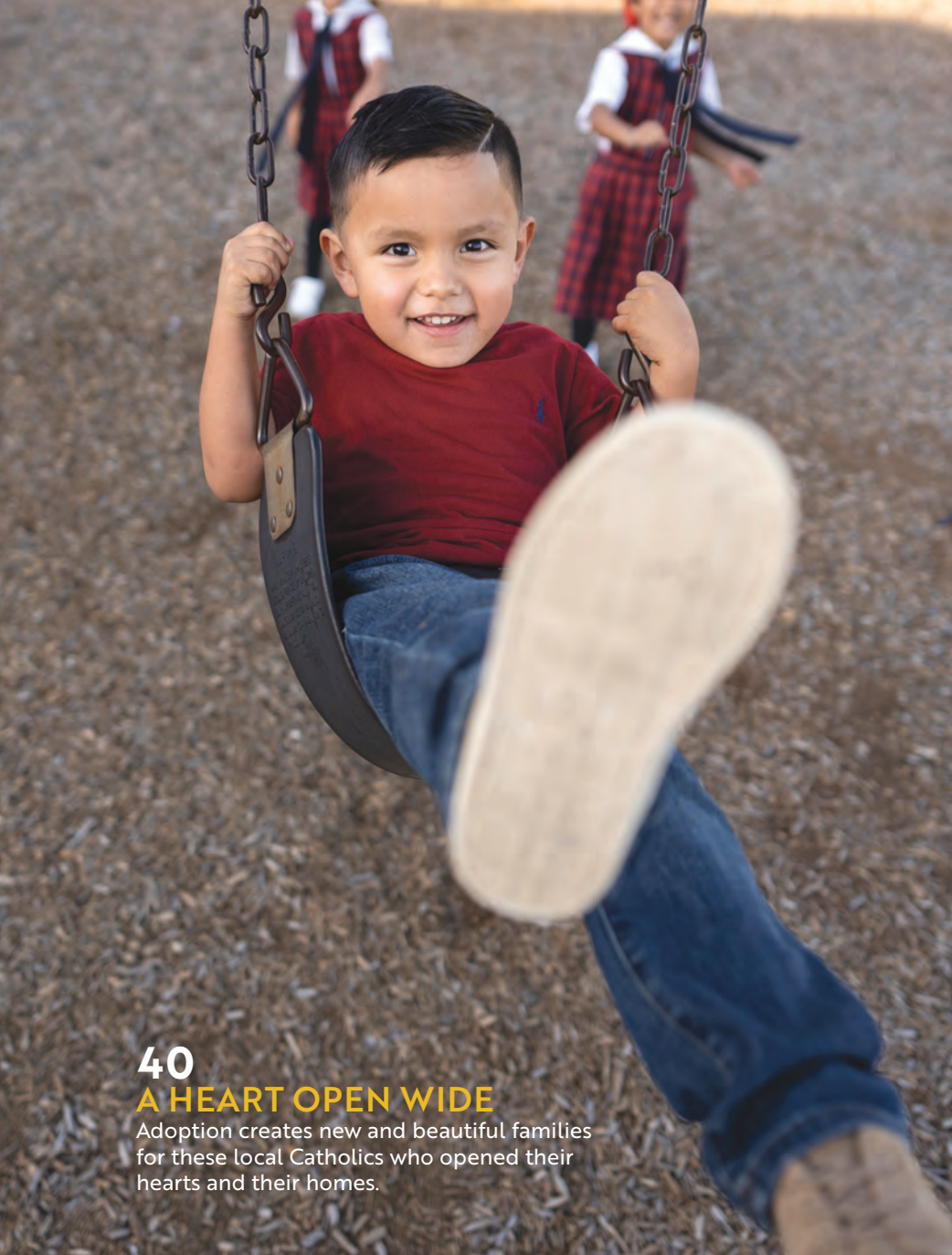
family. The upcoming Feast of the Holy Family clarifies that the redemption of humanity by Christ begins with the redemption of family life through the acceptance of God’s will by Mary and Joseph and the selfless and burdensome love that they offered to each other and to Jesus throughout their lives.

In Luke’s Gospel, we hear how Joseph and Mary, observing the ritual laws, brought Jesus to the temple to present Him to God. At the temple, they encountered two elderly individuals whose great faith lets them see the baby Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promise to save His people.

The righteous and devout Simeon was led by the Spirit to the temple where he recognized Jesus as the source of salvation for all peoples. He also foresaw the controversy Jesus would bring, and the sufferings He and those who believe in Him would face; “Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted — and you yourself a sword will pierce — so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” This prophecy by Simeon that the sword would pierce the heart of the Blessed Mother manifests that it was part of God’s plan that Mary

and Joseph would share in the suffering of Jesus out of their love for Him and their fidelity to God. Part of that suffering would include the rejection of Jesus by many of His own extended family in His hometown of Nazareth who refused to believe in Him. It shows that the burdens involved with marriage and family life are not only part of human nature but that they are vehicles for God’s grace and the redemption of sin.

It is important at Christmas that we also celebrate the Holy Family as an example and intercessor for each of our families, since those to whom we have been given and who have welcomed us into their lives bring us strength and grace. We must not be naïve about families; families can be the source of great joy, but they also can be the source of great suffering and tragedy. The deepest loves and the deepest hurts are those associated with family. We are made by God to be part of a community, like it or not. There is no such a thing as a self-made or autonomous person; we are who we are only as part of a family and a community. Therefore, the Church teaches that it is the family and not the individual that is the fundamental cell of society. ✝



40 A HEART OPEN WIDE

Adoption creates new and beautiful families for these local Catholics who opened their hearts and their homes.

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"Family of Nazareth," original artwork by Maria Diaz.

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HAVE A STORY IDEA?

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

The little leads to the great

In the book *Lift up Your Heart*, Archbishop Fulton Sheen touches on the importance of the minute, the details, and the thousands of seemingly irrelevant actions we make each day.

However, we'd be wrong to judge these as insignificant, he says. Rather, the archbishop explains, the concealment of the Son of God beneath swaddling clothes at Bethlehem and in the appearance of bread and wine at your local parish are proof that God's plan of salvation places great importance on the little, the simple, the minor.

Archbishop Sheen explains that many souls are "hungry to do great things for God," but complain they have no opportunities to apply heroic virtue or to be a martyr. Yet those same people become upset for the whole day when "a meal is late, or a bus is crowded... or the bacon is overdone. They miss their opportunities for loving God in the little things He asks of them."

If we look with the eyes of faith we would understand that the littlest actions and tasks can have great meaning. St. Therese of Lisieux, Mother Teresa, and countless other saints understood that we shouldn't miss those "little" opportunities to climb the "stairway of perfection," as the Little Flower puts it.

Rarely does an individual propel to sanctity through a single heroic act. Most of us climb our way to holiness by sanctifying the little things — the "trifles." As Jesus explains to the disciples, "the person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones" (*Luke 16:10*).

The families in our centerpiece this issue (pgs. 40-49) are a testament to that method of sanctification. These are men and women who through an acceptance of pursuing God's will in the simple, everyday things developed an understanding of God's direction for them in the great things, such as adopting a child (or three!).

May this Christmas season and the little Child in the manger renew our focus on the little ways we can love God.

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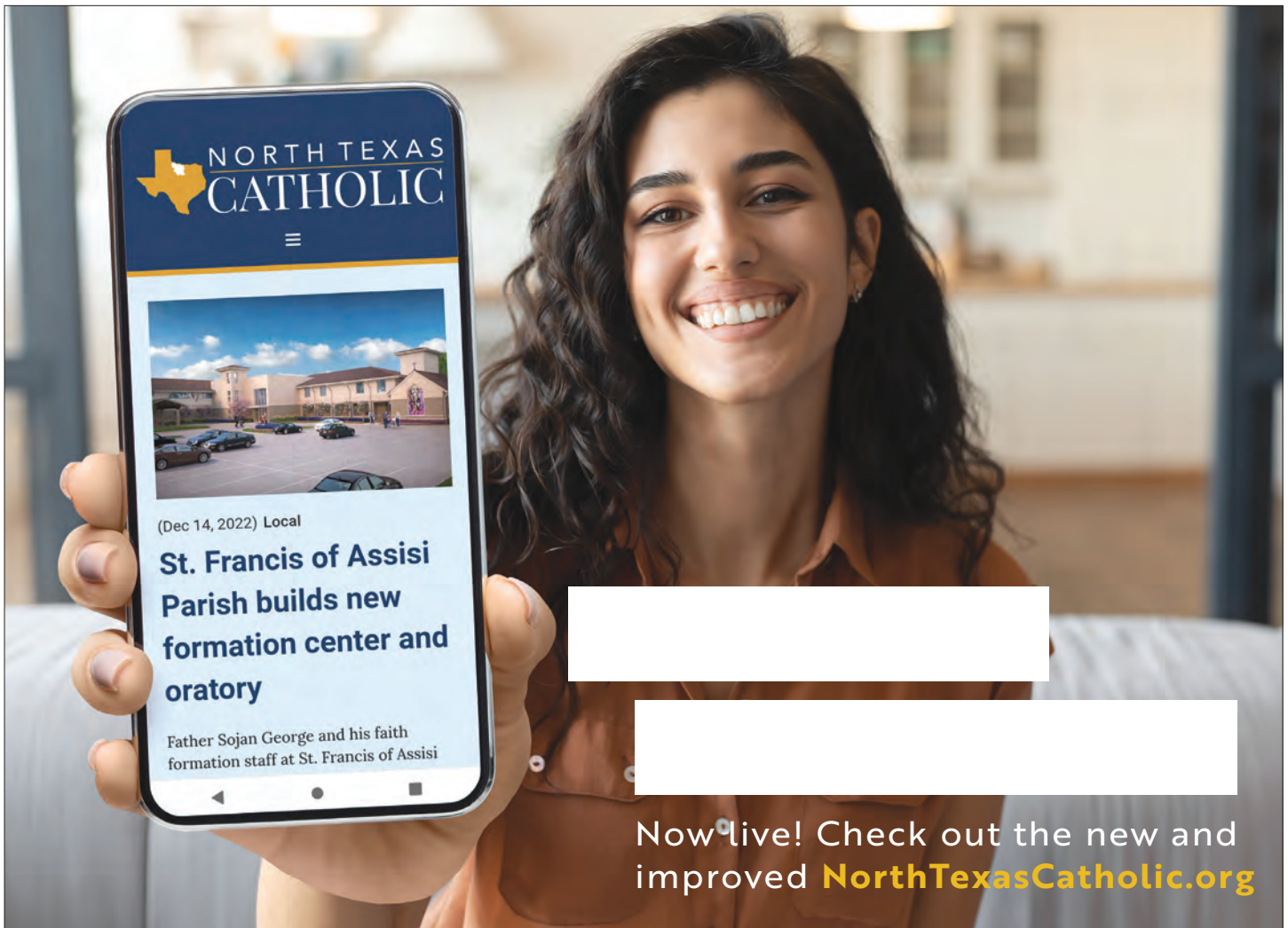
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NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC Magazine (USPS 751-370) (ISSN 0899-7020) is published bi-monthly by the Most Rev. Michael F. Olson, Bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth. For those who are not registered parishioners in the Diocese of Fort Worth, subscription rates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

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NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC

(Dec 14, 2022) Local

St. Francis of Assisi Parish builds new formation center and oratory

Father Sojan George and his faith formation staff at St. Francis of Assisi

Now live! Check out the new and improved **NorthTexasCatholic.org**

 **AROUND THE DIOCESE**

Catholic University president visits Fort Worth schools

FORT WORTH — A new partnership is building between one of the oldest Catholic private universities in the U.S. and Catholic schools in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

On Dec. 9, Dr. Peter Kilpatrick, the new president of Catholic University of America, and several staff members including Provost Dr. Aaron Dominguez visited with Bishop Michael Olson, Superintendent Brinton Smith of the Diocese of Fort Worth schools, and other school leaders. After Dr. Kilpatrick and his staff visited Nolan and Cassata High Schools, they joined diocesan staff and CUA graduates for a dinner at Dickies Arena.



Dr. Peter Kilpatrick, president of Catholic University of America, in Fort Worth on Dec. 9.

NTC/Juan Guajardo

During the event, Bishop Olson shared how a blossoming partnership between the two institutions would be beneficial to society by equipping students

with an education that sends them “forth to evangelize, to teach, to care for the poor, and to foster participation in the common good.”

Views from the Pews

NTC photographers captured the beauty of faith in action throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth as the Church celebrated, prayed, and served during the season of transition from one liturgical year to the next.

Remember and Pray. Parishes and faithful across the diocese marked All Souls Day with blessings of graves, cemetery Masses, and services of light. On Nov. 2, Catholics pray and honor souls being purified in Purgatory.

Baby's First Picture. Catholic teens saw a live sonogram at the Lock-in for Life, which explored the reasons and science behind the pro-life stance. The event was held Nov. 19 at Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in Arlington.

Christ is King. As a visible reminder that Jesus reigns, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, along with faithful from nearby parishes, held a Eucharistic Procession on Nov. 20 from the Keller Pointe to Keller Town Hall and back.

VIEW THE PHOTOS



See more diocesan events and people by visiting the *North Texas Catholic* photo galleries.



NTC/Ben Torres



NTC/Ben Torres



NTC/Ben Torres

Seeds of Life helps young families grow



Seeds of Life opened its Fort Worth location with a drive-through baby clothing giveaway. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FORT WORTH — Pregnant mothers, young dads, and families needing help through a crisis pregnancy or early childhood can now receive aid

in Tarrant and Parker counties. Flourishing Tree Family and Pregnancy Resource Center has left its original location on Bankhead Highway in

Aledo and moved to two new locations, in Fort Worth and Weatherford.

To coincide with the big move, the center also changed

its name.

Now called Seeds of Life, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit remains a pro-life apostolate of the Diocese of Fort Worth and continues providing free and confidential services like pregnancy testing, ultrasound exams, counseling, parenting classes, and material help such as baby formula, diapers, and infant and toddler clothing.

Roxanna Young, the executive director, said the new location on 2920 NW 27th Street in Fort Worth has been “getting a lot of positive responses [from clients]. They love Fort Worth, a lot of them are so close. We have a lot of clients in both areas.”

For those clients who live farther west, the Weatherford location at 522 Palo Pinto Street means they won’t have to go as far east for services.

— *Juan Guajardo*

St. Francis of Assisi expands

 New formation center and oratory underway

GRAPEVINE — Father Sojan George and his faith formation staff at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine anticipate forming the minds and hearts of more of their parishioners with the help of a new 15,000-square-foot formation center and oratory.

The \$5.2-million project broke ground after Bishop Michael Olson blessed the site in June. As of last month, the groundwork and foundation are finished. The project is

estimated for completion by August 2023.

The formation building will contain two floors. The bottom level will be an activity center for youth events with enough room for 100 people.

The top level will include six atriums, or Montessori-style classrooms, each holding up to 25 children. The top floor’s primary purpose is for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a religious formation program for young ones.



A rendering by RGA Architects of the new formation center and oratory.

Also attached to the building will be the Holy Family Adoration Oratory, a 35-foot by 25-foot prayer space seating up to 40 people.

Fr. George said he hopes

the oratory will eventually allow the parish to organize 24-hour perpetual Eucharistic Adoration.

— *Jacqueline Burkepile*

Sister Mary Michael Dittoe, SSMN, teacher and musician, dies at 99

FORT WORTH — Sister Mary Michael Dittoe, SSMN, died on Dec. 8 at the age of 99 at the Our Lady of Victory Convent in Fort Worth. She was the most senior member of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur in Texas.

Born in Dallas but raised in Wichita Falls, she attended the Academy of Mary Immaculate in Wichita Falls before boarding for eight years at St. Joseph Academy in Sherman after the death of her mother.

After graduation, she entered the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, where three of her aunts had professed their vows previously.

In her 81 years of consecrated life, she taught elementary school for about 40 years

in Fort Worth, Denison, Beaumont, Dallas, and Houston. With a degree in music education from the American Conservatory in Chicago, she also taught piano and choir at each assignment. She also served as principal at two schools.

From 1993 to 2005, Sr. Mary Michael was assigned to Santa Rosa Parish in Knox City and St. Joseph Parish in Crowell, where she taught religious education and English as a second language classes. She enhanced the liturgy by playing the organ and directing the choir.

Even when her vision declined, she continued to tutor at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School in Fort Worth. She continued to praise God through her musical gifts, learned to knit, and devoted significant time to prayer.



Sister Mary Michael Dittoe

The full obituary for Sr. Mary Michael Dittoe, SSMN, may be found at NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news.



In speaking to Cambodians, Michael Wanigasekera (right) finds that many have little to no knowledge of Christianity.

Prosper Knight returns to mission fields of Cambodia

PROSPER — Michael Wanigasekera, a member of Knights of Columbus Council 17304, recently returned from a three-week mission trip to the village of Chrey Thom in Cambodia, where he helped to construct wells for drinking water; to establish a library and garden for an elementary school; and to purchase art supplies and sporting equipment for the schools. Council 17304 provided some financial support for his service.

The St. Martin de Porres parishioner lived in Chrey Thom for two years when he served in the Peace Corps.

— Brandon Story

Sacred Heart Cemetery dedicates new resting place



The columbarium at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Wichita Falls allows loved ones' remains to be treated with dignity and respect. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

WICHITA FALLS — Bishop Michael Olson blessed a new columbarium at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Wichita Falls on Nov. 27.

Construction of the new columbarium was completed in early 2022.

It was built with 392 niches on five panels made of stone and granite. The center panel has a beautiful statue of

the Pietà, the Blessed Virgin Mary cradling the body of Jesus before His burial, on top of it.

The historic cemetery was instituted in 1907. All the Catholic parishes in Wichita Falls support the cemetery, but Sacred Heart staff members supervise it.

— Jenara Kocks Burgess

CCFW sees stars. Again.

FORT WORTH — For the 12th consecutive year, Catholic Charities Fort Worth earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator, validating its long track record of responsible stewardship. Charity Navigator evaluates more than 195,000 charities each year to identify the most effective and financially healthy charitable organizations.



Josh Audi, CCFW chief financial officer, said only 3 percent of charities earn four stars from Charity Navigator.

He explained that Charity Navigator “provides a high-level overview that is accessible to everyone ... it helps people understand the

financial health of a charity.”

Audi said about 93 percent of CCFW’s funds are directed toward programs with only 7 percent used for administration and fundraising.

“The policies we have established help us be better stewards of God’s gifts,” he said.

Audi also noted that CCFW’s internal research and evaluation team contributes to the effectiveness of its programs as well as its financial health, providing CCFW’s program leaders with valuable data and feedback to evaluate the efficacy of its services.

– Mary Lou Seewoester

#iGiveCatholic generously

FORT WORTH — During #iGiveCatholic 2022 on Nov. 29, more than 2,000 donors gave a total of \$834,393 to support the 49 parishes, schools, and ministries in the diocese that participated in the U.S. Catholic Church’s Giving Day.

The amount raised more than doubled last year’s total of \$402,000.

Wendy Collins, director of stewardship and parish relations for the Advancement Foundation, explained that awareness of #iGiveCatholic has been growing each year since the diocese joined the

fundraiser in 2020, and parishes, schools, and ministries are promoting the giving day with activities including social media livestreams, a phone bank, or even a talent show.



St. Andrew Catholic School topped the leaderboard for funds raised, followed by Most Blessed Sacrament Parish.

St. Jude Parish in Mansfield participated for the first time and met its goal of \$82,000, securing a third-place finish. Funds will cover putting asphalt on a parking lot and installing security cameras.

CLERGY ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

REV. JOSÉ RUIZ ANDUJO, SJ

Has been appointed to **Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House**, effective July 1, 2022.

REV. MIKE FRENCH, SJ

Has been appointed to **Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House**, effective July 1, 2022.

REV. ASCENCIÓN REA LAGUNAS, CORC

Previously Parochial Vicar at Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, has been **recalled** by his religious order, effective Oct. 31, 2022.

REV. MIKOLAJ SCIBIOR

Has been appointed **Priest-in-Residence** at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, effective Sept. 19, 2022.

REV. ELISEO HERNANDEZ VILLAREAL, CORC

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, effective Nov. 8, 2022.

Fr. Kereszty, O. Cist., dies

IRVING — Father Roch Kereszty, O. Cist., a founder of Cistercian Abbey in Irving, died Dec. 14.

Born in Hungary in 1933, he entered the Cistercian Order in 1951 at the Monastery of Zirc. After Communist authorities disbanded the Cistercian motherhouse, he lived as a refugee in Western Europe and continued his formation.

On Sept. 18, 1960 he made his solemn profession of vows in Lilienfeld, Austria and was ordained

to the priesthood on Oct. 2, 1960 in the private chapel of the Bishop of Sankt Pölten, Austria.

He and other refugee monks, invited to Texas by the late Bishop Thomas Gorman of the Dallas-Fort Worth Diocese, established a monastery in 1961 and Cistercian Preparatory School in 1962.

An esteemed theologian, he taught courses in theology at the school until retiring in 2013, and he continued to teach theology at University of Dallas and serve as a spiritual director.



Fr. Roch Kereszty, O. Cist.

Nolan students participate in procession



NTC/Kevin Bartman

FORT WORTH — More than 700 Nolan Catholic students, teachers, staff, and parents observed the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception with a Mass and Eucharistic procession from Hartnett Arena to the football field. Once at the field, Father Maurice Moon led students in Adoration. At the end, the students received Benediction.

Olga Watson, director of campus ministry, said students were prepared ahead of time with their theology instructors addressing the context, roots, and importance of Eucharistic processions.

“We were quite impressed with the level of reverence that our students displayed, and the number of parents and grandparents who joined for Mass and the procession,” she said.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2023

Catholic Schools week is Jan. 30 to Feb. 3. Check out our coverage online.



Angels we have heard



NTC/Juan Guajardo

FORT WORTH — On Gaudete Sunday students at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic School entertained hundreds of parents and parishioners with a Christmas show featuring various traditional Advent/Christmas songs. After the show, parishioners enjoyed a *pastorela*, a traditional Mexican play depicting the shepherds following the Star of Bethlehem to adore the Christ Child.

ICC students celebrate Solemnity with Bishop Olson

NTC/Juan Guajardo



DENTON — Immaculate Conception Catholic School students celebrated the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson on Dec. 8, 2022. Afterward, they enjoyed a special visit from the bishop as he toured the campus and visited with students.



SCAN FOR MORE PHOTOS

Creativity honors Creator



Kaylie Nguyen wins MCA art contest

ARLINGTON — Kaylie Nguyen, who graduated earlier this year from St. Joseph Catholic School in Arlington, is a 2022 winner of the Missionary Childhood Association’s National Christmas Artwork Contest.

Kaylie was one of 24 winners honored at a recognition program Dec. 2 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

Kaylie said, “I chose to show Mary looking up to show she was seeking guidance from God to raise Jesus, and she has Jesus in her arms for comfort and care.”

The background in dynamic



Kaylie’s artwork was selected from thousands of entries as a winner in the 2021-2022 MCA Artwork Contest. (MCA/Kaylie Nguyen)

blues and purples was to indicate majesty while the gold shows Mary is sacred and holy, the young artist said.

She decided to enter the contest last fall after hearing about it in religion class from Sister Theresa Mai, OP.

Sr. Theresa said she talks about the contest to students

as a way for them to learn about missions and to use their art in a way that honors God.

For an entry form, visit: fwdioc.org/mca-national-christmas-artwork-contest.

– Sandra Engelland

Monsignor Kieran Harrington and Kaylie Nguyen



A harmonious collaboration



Difficult times inspire award-winning hymn

ARLINGTON — Two longtime musical collaborators in the Diocese of Fort Worth used the travails of living through the COVID-19 pandemic as inspiration to compose a hymn that was awarded second place by the Association of Catholic Publishers in the Song of the Year category for the 2022 Excellence in Publishing Awards.

Kevin Keil and Kate Bluett received the honor for co-writing “Amid the Storm.” Keil wrote the music while Bluett was lyricist. Keil is director of liturgy and music at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Arlington and Bluett lives in The Colony.

The award is significant recognition for Keil and Bluett, who have been writing songs together for more than a



Kevin Keil and Kate Bluett’s hymn “Amid the Storm” earned a national award. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

decade, dating back to when they both attended Holy Cross Parish in The Colony.

“The one that won the award, ironically, is one I passed on about 10 years ago,” Keil said. “I gave a couple starts to try to do something, but nothing was

working. And then I looked at it again about a year ago or so. And suddenly I had a melody, and the words came off the page with the tune. I guess the rest is history.”

— Lance Murray



Find the full versions of our Around the Diocese stories at NorthTexasCatholic.org



Father Jonathan Wallis, second from left, breaks ground on the new parish hall while Father Vijaya Raju Mareedu, SAC, holds the binder with prayers of blessing. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Cisco Catholics break ground on parish hall

CISCO — Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco broke ground on a new parish hall Nov. 19 after a Mass celebrated by Father Jonathan Wallis, vicar general for the Diocese of Fort Worth. Father Vijaya Raju Mareedu, SAC, pastor of the parish, and Father Jesuraj, SAC, parochial vicar of St. Michael Parish in Bedford, concelebrated the Mass.

Fr. Mareedu, who has served the Eastland and Palo Pinto County parishes since 2018, described the parish hall as the “dream of Cisco” for years. Land adjacent to the church, which dates to 1921, was purchased in 2014 for the purpose of a future parish hall.

The new hall will accommodate about 200 people and have a large kitchen. The parish presently uses a repurposed rectory, built in 1927, as its parish hall.

Our Lady of Guadalupe



NTC/Rodger Malison

FORT WORTH — Parishes and schools across the diocese honored Our Lady of Guadalupe. Here, Paola Lopez portrays the Virgin Mary and Shane Silvestre portrays Juan Diego during a procession from All Saints Church to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church through north Fort Worth. See our photo gallery of Our Lady of Guadalupe festivities.



SCAN
ME

In Memoriam

Jennifer Pelletier, former superintendent, leaves a legacy

When she served as superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Fort Worth, Jennifer Pelletier was known for her passion for students and staff and her willingness to go to great lengths to support them.

Pelletier died in hospice in Irving on Nov. 6, surrounded by family and close friends after a three-year battle

with cancer. She was 49.

Born to Chuck and Patricia Pelletier in Fort Worth, she attended Holy Family Catholic School and Our Lady of Victory Catholic School. Her parents founded the Mother and Unborn Baby Care Center of North Texas.

After graduating from Arlington Heights High School, Pelletier earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Dallas in Irving.

She taught and served in administration at Catholic schools before being named diocesan school superintendent in 2015.

Melissa Kasmeier, assistant



Jennifer Pelletier

superintendent of Catholic schools, was principal at St. Andrew Catholic School when Pelletier arrived. Kasmeier recalls Pelletier's enthusiasm for education and faith.

Kasmeier notes that Pelletier implemented the learning support program to help students with learning difficulties, started the New Teacher Institute, began summer principal retreats, helped start 4-H programs, and connected school faculty and staff with diocesan resources and catechesis instruction.

— Sandra Engelland

FULL STORY ONLINE

Scan the QR code to read Jennifer Pelletier's full obituary.



a joyful journey

Monsignor Juan Rivero, retired pastor and diocesan administrator, reflects on his 50 years as a priest

By Susan Moses

Although Monsignor Juan Rivero is nearing a milestone anniversary, he claims to have given “no thought” to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination.

Family may come to celebrate, he said, or they may postpone the celebration by a month or more.

His priesthood is profoundly important to him, but not the festivities. He was ordained on Dec. 24, 1972 — an “awkward date” for gathering, he said, explaining that families have plans and clergy are busy celebrating Christmas Vigil Masses.

Msgr. Rivero entered the Legionaries of Christ in 1963 in his native Mexico. His seminary studies took him to Ireland for two years, where he perfected his English, as well as to Spain and Italy.

He was ordained to the priesthood in 1972 at Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

After serving as a priest in Mexico and Miami, Msgr. Rivero learned of the great need for bilingual priests in the Diocese of Fort Worth, and he sent then Bishop Joseph Delaney a letter of interest. He came to the diocese in 1982 and was incardinated as a

diocesan priest for the Diocese of Fort Worth in 1985.

In his 40 years in the diocese, Msgr. Rivero has served in eight parishes and held several administrative positions, including vicar for priests, vicar general, and the first director of Hispanic Ministry.

Now retired, the former pastor said he grew attached to the communities where he served and still misses the people of the parishes. “It’s hard to say goodbye. It’s a joy to be around them,” he remembered.

Celebrating the sacraments and parish life have been the highlights of his priesthood. “It’s a joy to journey with [the people] in their successes and failures and challenges,” he said.

He continues to celebrate Mass when a parish priest is unavailable, and he receives requests to marry or baptize the second or third generation of faithful from his prior parishes.

WARM WELCOME

In parishes where he served, from Immaculate Conception in Denton to Holy Angels in Clifton, Msgr. Rivero wanted to know the parishioners, which requires intentional effort, especially in larger churches. His habit was to prepare for Mass early and then visit with parishioners in the pews

before Mass so they would be relaxed and feel welcome.

“People hate grouchy priests,” he said, pointing out that in his homilies and in the confessional, he “welcomes [parishioners] where they are” and tries to reflect that “God is not judgmental. This happy God is not a grouchy God.”

His longest assignment — from 2000 until his retirement in 2015 — was as pastor of St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Granbury and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Glen Rose. During some of those years, he also served as vicar for priests, dean of the South Deanery, and parochial administrator of Holy Angels and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Morgan.

He managed his varied responsibilities well because he “always found really good people, willing to help” at each parish and apostolate throughout the diocese. “I don’t like to micro-manage; I like to delegate. You want to include people as much as you can, make them feel they are part of the community,” he said.

SERVING THE DIOCESE

Msgr. Rivero helped lay the groundwork for important ministries that still thrive in the Diocese of Fort Worth.



Monsignor Juan Rivero creates a welcoming atmosphere at Mass. In this photo, he stands at the doors of St. Joseph Church in Cleburne. (NTC/Ben Torres)

The year he arrived in Fort Worth, he was asked by Bishop Delaney to lead the Cursillo Movement, which was established in the diocese but met in Dallas. The bishop had purchased a former Baptist church in north Fort Worth that Msgr. Rivero helped renovate to become the Cursillo Center (now the Diocesan Formation Center).

At its height, Msgr. Rivero was hosting programs 48 weekends a year at the Cursillo Center, offering retreats in English, in Spanish, for youth, for adults, and for families. He recalled, “On Mondays, you end up looking like talcum powder, but that was OK because it was worth it.”

During that time, he was asked to launch the Office of Hispanic Ministry. He pointed out the “Office of Hispanic Ministry” didn’t have an office; instead, it operated from “wherever you were.”

He deferred credit for establishing the ministry, saying he found “people of

tremendous faith” in established groups within parishes, and he merely coordinated them.

He said, “It wasn’t me; because it’s in the people.”

He has observed that he hears more Spanish as he conducts his day-to-day activities in the region and suggested the need for Hispanic Ministry is even more important today.

On March 27, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI conferred the ecclesiastical title of honor of “Monsignor, Chaplain to His Holiness” on Msgr. Rivero at the request of then Bishop Kevin Vann.

Bishop Vann commended the priest for his overall dedication, for helping the bishop develop a spiritual program for priests, and for directing the Cursillo Movement and Office of Hispanic Ministry.

The retired pastor demurred that the honor reflected any special accomplishments.

“I’m still a priest,” he said, stating that the title demonstrated the “generous, grateful nature” of Bishop Vann.

HAPPY HOME

When not serving as a supply priest, Msgr. Rivero appreciates a “peaceful life” at his home near Cleburne, with horses and llamas for neighbors. He takes pleasure in the company of his two labradoodles, and he grows onions, tomatoes, herbs, and cucumbers, enjoying “what the crickets don’t eat.”

As he grows older, he’s curtailed his grand camping adventures, but he camps at a nearby lake from time to time.

Looking back on his vocation, which began in Mexico City and led to Fort Worth, he said, “You never know where the Lord will lead you, guide you, or the different circumstances you will face in your ministry. It’s so diverse.

“God is good. The fact that I am here is the proof in the pudding.” 🇺🇸



Father Stephen Hauck, pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish in Prosper, receives congratulations and a gift from Bishop Michael Olson during the jubilee celebration luncheon on Nov. 3, 2022. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

time flies

Diocesan priests celebrate ordination anniversaries with gratitude and joy

By Sandra Engelland

Priests don't always know the impact they have had in the lives of others this side of heaven, but they can be grateful for the opportunities to serve and celebrate what God has done and is doing.

That was the message from Bishop Michael Olson to priests from across the Diocese of Fort Worth who gathered Nov. 3 for a celebratory luncheon at the Fort Worth

Club to honor more than two dozen priests celebrating ordination anniversaries from 5 years to 60 years.

"Anything we do regularly can become mundane," Bishop Olson said. "But moments like this where we can come together as priests renew a sense of gratitude for what the Lord has done for us."

Bishop Olson reminded them that the



Father Tim Thompson, pastor of All Saints Church in Fort Worth, talks with other priests celebrating their ordination anniversaries. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

SEE THE PHOTOS



Scan the QR code to view the photos from the Nov. 3 jubilee celebration.



Father Wilson Lucka, TOR, pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Azle, is congratulated by Bishop Michael Olson during the Nov. 3 jubilee luncheon. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Lord’s calling to make them an instrument should “engender in us a great sense of gratitude to humbly serve.”

HELPING OTHERS DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

Monsignor Raymund Mullan was celebrating 60 years in the priesthood, with much of that time coming as pastor at St. Mary in Graham and St. Theresa in Olney.

Msgr. Mullan said, “At the age of 17,

I knew with certainty that this was what I was meant to do.”

He said that presiding at Mass and hearing confessions were some of the most meaningful moments for him as a priest.

Father Tim Thompson, who was celebrating 40 years since his ordination, said, “All ministry is good and can be a great experience.”

Fr. Thompson has spent much of his ministry in Denton at St. Mark Parish and Immaculate Conception Parish. He

said he sensed God’s calling while in high school.

Some of the most powerful moments in his ministry have been meeting with people facing death and being there to comfort them and their families in those final moments.

Father Ken Robinson, celebrating 30 years of priestly service, grew up in a Baptist home and converted to Catholicism while a student at Baylor University. After graduation, he sensed God calling him to the priesthood while a parishioner at St. Rita Church in Fort Worth.

Pastoral care and all it entails is Fr. Robinson’s favorite part of being in the priesthood. Most of his years of serving were spent as pastor of Sacred Heart in Muenster and St. Francis of Assisi in Grapevine.

Although he is now retired, he serves as chaplain at St. Francis Village in Crowley, a senior living community.

“You never really retire as a priest,” he said.

Father Thu Nguyen also was celebrating 30 years as a priest, with pastoral

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assignments at St. George in Fort Worth, St. Jude in Mansfield, and St. Paul the Apostle in River Oaks, and a special diocesan assignment as director of liturgy and worship.

Fr. Nguyen said that much of his focus has been on the Eucharist, which can “bring us closer to God.”

He discerned his calling right after high school.

“I asked myself, ‘What’s the meaning of life?’ and ‘Why am I here?’” he said. The answer was clear: become a priest and help others draw closer to God.

BRINGING LIFE, LOVE, AND JOY

Father Kyle Walterscheid, celebrating 20 years since his ordination, said he really appreciated the decade he spent working with seminarians and young men discerning a religious vocation when he was on special assignment to the diocesan office of vocations.

While discerning God’s calling, some men decided they were called elsewhere, and Fr. Walterscheid got the chance to see them become great husbands and fathers. Others became priests and are now serving around the diocese.

In recent years, he has been pastor at St. John Paul II Parish in Denton serving primarily college students, strengthening them in their faith. What has been true in his own life can be true for others too.

“When you follow the calling of what God wants you to do, it transforms your life,” Fr. Walterscheid said. “You do a lot of things you never thought possible that bring a lot of life and love and joy.”

Father Wilson Lucka, TOR, also celebrated 20 years in the priesthood. Where he grew up in southern India, he lived close to a Franciscan monastery. His interactions with the clergy there inspired him to become a priest.

He said he enjoys serving as the first pastor at Holy Trinity in Azle, which was established as a parish in 2019.

Also celebrating 20 years was Father Emmet O’Hara, SAC, who serves at St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford. As a young man attending the ordination of a friend, he felt the Holy Spirit drawing him to the priesthood. He most appreciates

2022 PRIESTLY ANNIVERSARIES

60 YEARS

- MSGR. RAYMUND MULLAN
- REV. DON DONAHUGH

55 YEARS

- REV. JERRY WARD

50 YEARS

- MSGR. JUAN RIVERO
- REV. CHARLES CALABRESE

45 YEARS

- MSGR. JOSEPH PEMBERTON

40 YEARS

- REV. TIMOTHY THOMPSON

35 YEARS

- REV. DANIEL PATTEE, TOR

30 YEARS

- REV. KEN ROBINSON
- REV. THU NGUYEN

25 YEARS

- REV. MEL BESSELLIEU
- REV. EUGENE NYONG
- REV. ARIEL SANCHEZ, CORC

20 YEARS

- REV. KYLE WALTERSCHEID
- REV. WILSON LUCKA, TOR
- REV. MATTHEW SANKA, SAC
- REV. EMMET O’HARA, SAC

15 YEARS

- REV. JOSE IGNACIO OLVERA, CORC
- REV. RAYMOND MCDANIEL
- REV. JONATHAN WALLIS

10 YEARS

- REV. MICHAEL MOLONEY
- REV. ALPHONSUS TRI VU, CRM
- REV. BRIJIL LAWRENCE, SAC
- REV. CHRISTOPHER STAINBROOK, ORD

5 YEARS

- REV. STEPHEN HAUCK
- REV. JOHN MARTIN

Mass, preaching, and visiting the sick.

Father Matthew Sanka, SAC, said he discerned his calling while attending a Catholic high school in Tanzania.

Celebrating Mass, visiting the sick, and ministering to college students have been the most meaningful to him as a priest. He serves as pastor at St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville where he works with students from Tarleton State University.

Father Stephen Hauck, pastor at St.

Martin de Porres in Prosper, served as emcee at the event where he celebrated five years in the priesthood.

He grew up in St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, where he discerned his calling. He said he appreciated guidance from Fr. Walterscheid while he was a seminarian.

“I very much love being a diocesan priest and the day-to-day living out of our priesthood,” Fr. Hauck said. 🇺🇸



FROM LEFT: Sister Clara Vo, Sister Mary Jean Warmuth, Sister Ginny Vissing, and Sister Patricia Ste. Marie prepare to present the gifts on Nov. 27. (NTC/Ben Torres)

GO WITH God

Wichita Falls bids farewell to Sisters of St. Mary of Namur,
who return to serve in Fort Worth

By Matthew Smith

On a day bittersweet yet ripe with opportunity for new beginnings, Father Alexander Ambrose, HGN, pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish perhaps summed up best the mood of the day and the impact of four long-serving Sisters of St. Mary of Namur who will soon relocate to Fort Worth.

“You helped guide our people on the right path by praying for them to be God’s loving children,” Fr. Ambrose said. “You made a difference in the lives of people, and you helped save souls.”

Noel Filer, a former student of the sisters, agreed.

“Beyond strengthening us on our earthly

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Bishop Michael Olson honors four Sisters of St. Mary of Namur at a Mass at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church in Wichita Falls. (NTC/Ben Torres)



SEE THE
PHOTOS



Scan the QR code to view the photos from the Nov. 27 Mass in Wichita Falls.

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journeys, I know that there are people in heaven right now because of you,” Filer told the departing sisters. “No matter what your physical address is you will always be home with us because you’ve taken up residence in our hearts and we will love you for always.”

Bishop Michael Olson on Nov. 27 celebrated a Mass in honor of Wichita Falls’ four remaining SSMN sisters: Sister Patricia Ste. Marie, Sister Clara Vo, Sister Ginny Vissing, and Sister Mary Jean Warmuth.

Bishop Olson, in a lighthearted moment, joked of the sisters’ 117-year ministry in Wichita Falls.

“I have been duty bound to tell you that none of the sisters here with us today were part of that original group,” the prelate said.

Bishop Olson spoke, too, of the sisters’ “quiet defiance” stretching from the founding of their order more than 200

years ago in Namur, Belgium, during a time of religious persecution and prohibition of religious congregations to their arrival in New York during the Civil War. The sisters tackled such challenges undaunted, going on to spread their ministry — establishing schools and mission endeavors along the way — to other states, including Texas, as well as other countries.

“The sisters in their quiet defiance to indifference have always called us to be faithful,” Bishop Olson said. “Their perseverance through the years has helped sustain our own perseverance.”

He continued, “The sisters persevered through very challenging times in our culture and have come to remain faithful while also being mindful that this world is not all that there is. That our lives here are in preparation for the world that the Lord has prepared for us.”

At the behest of Father John Goessens of Henrietta, Wichita Falls



Therina Lucero, left, hugs Sister Ginny Vissing at a reception for the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, on Nov. 27. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Mayor Charles Bean, and others, the sisters established the Academy of Mary Immaculate in 1905, which was renamed Notre Dame High School in 1965. In 1928, the sisters founded a second school called Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1928 which closed in 1972. Notre Dame High School closed in 2021 after which the four remaining sisters remained active in parish ministry.

The sisters, Fr. Ambrose said, brought meaningful blessings and great help to Our Lady Queen of Peace before and after Notre Dame closed.

“They were all active in our parish for many years and brought wonderful benefits to us and the community,” Fr. Ambrose said.

“Sr. Patricia Ste. Marie helped with adult formation, RCIA, and different Bible study classes we had.

“Sr. Clara Vo was in charge of flowers and decorating. She was also the cantor at daily Mass and helped [with the Mass].

“Sr. Mary Jean Warmuth helped with a number of our charitable projects such as our Advent food drive that helps more than 150 families. She would oversee arranging and packing food donations and making sure they got to the

different families.”

Sr. Ginny, Fr. Ambrose said, served for years as the parish’s DRE and music and choir director.

Filer spoke of Sr. Ginny’s positive impact on herself and countless other youth. Filer praised Sr. Ginny’s musical prowess but also couldn’t help but smile at those memories.

“We truly had our own singing nun,” Filer said. “I’ll never forget watching Sr. Ginny playing the piano. As she felt the music we all wondered if she was going to bounce right off the bench while she played.”

2001 Notre Dame graduate Courtney Abubakar expressed gratitude for the sisters’ role in her life.

“Anytime you saw them they were smiling and would be kind,” Abubakar said. “You knew they genuinely cared and the presence I got from them was very consistent and comforting. My Notre Dame education was foundational to my Catholic faith and life. I’m a teacher now because of a teacher I had at Notre Dame.”

During a post-Mass reception, the names of all the sisters who have served since 1905 were read.

Parishioner Joe Cluley characterized

Sr. Mary Jean as a “living example of Christ” and “one cool nun who is also on YouTube.”

A former Notre Dame student herself, Sr. Mary Jean returned to teach at her alma mater in 1987 where she taught first grade, among other duties.

“She is known for her relationships with students,” Cluley said. “Many of whom return to visit her after first grade and even after graduating high school.”

Parishioner Hannah Jellison joked that she became Sr. Clara’s driver on demand and as such holds precious memories of their time together.

“It was my honor to have been given the chance to help you in your ministry and vocation,” Jellison told Sr. Clara.

Former Notre Dame teacher Jack Abel spoke of the impact Sr. Patricia’s Scripture teachings had on students.

“You and your fellow students have been a gift to this church community and even beyond,” Abel said.

Sr. Mary Jean spoke of work yet to be done.

“I loved working with the children and am sad to be leaving,” Sr. Mary Jean said. “But we will all get involved in things in Fort Worth and wait to see where the Holy Spirit leads us next.” 🇺🇸

FOUR DECADES AND counting

Bishop Olson, parish community celebrate
Deacon Harry Heinz' 40 years in ministry

By Matthew Smith

During a Nov. 5 St. Michael Parish Mass celebrating Deacon Harry Heinz' service, Father Balaji Boyalla, SAC, jokingly announced Dcn. Heinz's years with the Bedford parish as 100. The actual number falls a bit short of the century mark at a still-impressive 40 years, making Dcn. Heinz the Diocese of Fort Worth's longest-serving active deacon.

Bishop Michael Olson, who celebrated the Mass, praised the role of deacons in general and Dcn. Heinz in particular.

"I particularly give thanks for the ministry and friendship of Dcn. Harry Heinz," Bishop Olson said. "Dcn. Harry has brought a gift — especially in perseverance of service."

The prelate characterized the diaconate as a bridge ministry between laity and clergy.

"So that we don't forget or overlook those who would otherwise fall through the cracks," Bishop Olson said. "Dcn. Harry has exemplified that particular ministry, which

is different from that of a priest, and Harry is a true deacon."

Bishop Olson spoke of the "immeasurable" weddings, Baptisms, homilies, and outreach efforts performed by Dcn. Heinz.

Dcn. Heinz' tenure as parishioner and as a deacon stretches back to Father Michael Irwin, St. Michael's second pastor, and a time before the church's current building existed.

"We were meeting at Harwood Junior High School while this church building was under construction," Dcn. Heinz said. "On St. Michael's Feast Day in 1979 they dedicated this building."

For Fr. Boyalla, who arrived at the parish a little over four years ago, Dcn. Heinz' experience and wisdom has meant much.

"Everyone knows Dcn. Harry," Fr. Boyalla said. "He's a friend, a teacher, and an inspiration to us all."

Fr. Boyalla spoke of Dcn. Heinz baptizing parishioners and later their children and even grandchildren.

"Dcn. Harry received a gift of life from God, but in turn he became a gift to the people of this parish," Fr. Boyalla said. "When I came here and he explained the history of the parish, I felt already he was someone I could depend on, and it was so. I depended on him a lot and knew, if I didn't know something, I could always ask him."

A New Jersey native, Dcn. Heinz moved to Texas in 1979 — two years after St. Michael was established — having been transferred by his job at American Airlines, and went on to become a deacon in 1982.

The diaconate wasn't part of his plan.

"I didn't want to go into the diaconate program," Heinz said. "I fought it."

Dcn. Heinz's grandfather was among the founders of the New Jersey parish Dcn. Heinz grew up in and in which his father served as an usher for years. Dcn. Heinz also became involved with his hometown church, but not as a deacon.



Bishop Michael Olson preaches the homily during Mass on Nov. 5 for the 40th ordination anniversary of Deacon Harold Heinz (right) who has served as a deacon at St. Michael Parish in Bedford since 1982.



Deacon Harold Heinz distributes Communion during the Nov. 5 Mass at St. Michael Parish in Bedford. (NTC/Ben Torres)

“A friend of mine was being ordained as a deacon and invited me to one of his classes, which was interesting, so I went back a second time,” Dcn. Heinz said.

The Monsignor running the classes several times suggested that Dcn. Heinz should consider becoming a deacon, only to be turned down repeatedly.

“Finally, I told him to just talk to my wife,” Dcn. Heinz said. “She told him, ‘If he wants to go, go ahead.’ So I went into the program.”

The move to Texas interrupted Dcn. Heinz’ studies about a year into his program. Fortunately, after Fr. Irwin learned that Dcn. Heinz had started the process in New Jersey, he quickly convinced Dcn. Heinz to enter the formation program here. Or not so quickly. None

of the dates available worked out until Dcn. Heinz finally signed on for a program in Longview.

“He had a full-time job, discerning, his training, and raising our kids,” said Millie Heinz, Dcn. Heinz’ wife of 58 years. “A lot of juggling. But it all worked out and I think it was meant to. You make it work out.”

Dcn. Heinz agreed.

“Just being there for people,” Dcn. Heinz answered, when asked what being a deacon has meant to him. “One thing is marriage preparation. Especially being able to take a couple married outside the Church and getting their marriage worked out to bring them back into the Church, back home. Also, funeral services, to be there to give some consolation to the families.” 🇹🇽



Steadfast Servant

At 91, Deacon "Tacho" Perez inspires Wichita Falls parish with his dedication to God and others

By Susan Moses

“You’re not hungry.”
An odd remark to begin a conversation while you are eating your lunch.

Back in 1980, Juan Porras was a young man, fairly new to his job at Lone Star Gas Company in Wichita Falls. Anastasio “Tacho” Perez was

well-established, having already put in two decades at the utility.

As the conversation continued, Porras soon realized that Perez wasn’t commenting on his appetite. Instead, Perez shared his observation: Porras showed no desire to advance in the company and performed only the minimum requirements of his job.

“He encouraged me to lift up my mind, to better

◀ Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Wichita Falls has been a second home to Deacon Anastasio "Tacho" Perez, who began attending in the 1930s. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

myself each day," said Porras, who said the lunchtime conversation began a 40-year friendship. "He taught me that all good things come through work."

As their friendship grew, Perez invited Porras to come to church with him. Later, Perez encouraged him to become an altar server, which Porras still does today.

"I respect him as an elder, as a teacher. He helped bring me back to the Church," said the Our Lady of Guadalupe parishioner.

Porras is on a different path than he was as a young man, "through him and through God," he said gratefully.

LIVED ADVICE

Perez lived by his own advice.

Not only did he ascend from a ditch digger to a qualified welder during his 41-year career with Lone Star Gas, but he grew in his faith, eventually becoming a deacon, which was a daunting task for a working father of six who did not attend high school.

After sixth grade, Perez dropped out of school and worked in restaurants and sold newspapers to help earn money to support his family and his ailing mother. He later enrolled in a continuing education program at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls and earned a G.E.D.

He and his wife, Rosa, married and attended Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. There, Perez nurtured his faith with the sacraments, retreats, and lay ministry classes. He was in the first group of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion trained and installed by the church in 1975.

When he was in his late 50s, he accepted an invitation to enter the diaconate formation program.

The academic work soon became overwhelming. Perez recalled, "I

struggled with it. I wasn't too educated. I told my wife, the first six months we were there, 'I think I'm going to drop out. I don't think I'm going to make it.'

"But my wife said, 'I've got faith you will make it. I'll help you. You don't worry about that.'

"She always helped me. She went with me. So we made it," he said.

With his determination and hard work, his wife's support, and the grace of God, he was ordained a deacon in 1995 and assigned to serve at his home parish.

STILL SERVING

Becoming a deacon was hard work, but being a deacon is pure joy, according to Dcn. Perez.

In January he will celebrate his 92nd birthday, and he's still serving, which makes him the oldest active deacon in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

He has been central to the life of the parish, serving at weekend Masses, officiating at funerals and Rosary vigils, visiting the sick, providing counseling and marriage preparation, instructing RCIA candidates, and bringing Communion to the homebound.

During the initial period of the coronavirus pandemic, the parish limited his diaconate service to minimize his potential exposure to the virus. The restrictions frustrated Dcn. Perez, although he understood they were for his protection.

Currently, he serves at Sunday Mass, officiates at funerals and vigils, visits the sick, and attends a weekday spiritual group for seniors, having passed the leadership role to another member.

"When they call me, I'm always ready to go and serve. Whatever the priest wants me to do, I'll do it," he said.

Fluent in English and Spanish, he likes to preach when the pastor allows.

Eleazar Olguin, an acolyte at the parish, marveled that Dcn. Perez preaches with no notes, just from memory. "He has a lot of faith, and always teaches the love of God," Olguin said.

Where he really shines, according to Olguin, is with funerals and visitations.

"When someone has lost a family member, a son, a wife, he always has the words to comfort them. They feel love from him that comes from the Lord," he said.

Dcn. Perez has no plans to retire, because "I'm still pretty healthy. I can see good. I walk good. I enjoy it very much. The deacon is really a server, so that's what I'm doing."

"God still has a purpose for him," said his daughter Christine Perez, who lives with her father and does most of the driving.

Deacon Brad Samuelson, who served with Dcn. Perez at Our Lady of Guadalupe after his 2020 ordination, called Dcn. Perez "The Guy."

"Dcn. Tacho is everything to everybody and knows everyone. If you haven't been touched by him, it means you just got there," said Dcn. Samuelson, who now serves at St. Rita Parish in Fort Worth.

"He's a true servant and a natural evangelist," he added.

Dcn. Samuelson said that Dcn. Perez taught him the importance of being present. "His presence provides a comfort for the people," he explained. "People love to see him up on the altar, proclaiming the Gospel."

A deacon says the words of dismissal at Mass, such as, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."

"He's certainly done that," said Dcn. Samuelson. 🇺🇸

fond farewell

Father Balaji Boyalla, SAC, to begin three-year term as rector of Gloria Dei region of Pallottine priests in January

By Susan Moses

Father Balaji Boyalla, SAC, needs extra-large suitcases for his flight when he travels to India to assume the role of regional rector of the Gloria Dei Region of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, also known as Pallottine priests.

In those bags, the pastor of St. Michael Parish in Bedford will pack what he describes as an “incomprehensible” amount of love that he received during his almost 15 years in the Diocese of Fort Worth, along with encouragement and support from his parishioners, brother priests, and Bishop Michael Olson.

Fr. Boyalla was elected to lead the Gloria Dei Region, based in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. Its 43 priests serve in 11 parishes, three schools, and three orphanages in India, as well as in the dioceses of Fort Worth and Detroit, plus Canada, Italy, Germany, and South Africa.

The three-year term was not something Fr. Boyalla sought, but after the election he responded, “They trust in me, so I trust in God, and God will lead as He has planned for me.

“I firmly believe these things would not happen unless there is God’s hand. That is why I cannot say no, but I take it as my big responsibility towards my priests,” he explained.

The Gloria Dei Region was created in 2020 when the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province divided due to

growth in the number of Pallottine priests in India. Fr. Boyalla will be its second regional rector, and he begins his term Jan. 6.

Globally, approximately 2,300 priests and brothers comprise 12 provinces and eight regions of Pallottines, with ministry in 45 countries.

TEXAS TIME

Fr. Boyalla easily recalls the day he arrived in the Diocese of Fort Worth: August 22, 2008. Originally assigned to Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth, the priest was concerned his short stature and accent might brand him an outsider.

His two years at the parish “boosted up my spirits and encouraged me,” he said, noting that parishioners laughed at his jokes even when he suspected they might not have understood him.

Monsignor Joseph Pemberton, then pastor, instilled a practice that has become an enduring priority for Fr. Boyalla: visiting the sick and homebound.

Fr. Boyalla explained, “They have given their money; they have given their talent; they have washed the clothes of the priest; and they have cleaned the rectories ... so many things. But when they don’t get anyone to see them, they feel very lonely ... That is the greatest gift that you can give to people is visiting the sick, giving Communion, giving the sacraments.”

When he began an eight-year assignment in 2010 at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Mineral Wells and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Graford, “They just embraced me with welcoming hands. Such

a wonderful experience.”

He met personally with each family at the parishes, and he said he would have been content to stay even longer than Father John Nagle, who served as pastor there for 40 years.

During his years in Mineral Wells, he oversaw the construction of a new church hall, named for St. Vincent Pallotti, and a Marian prayer garden.

In 2018, he experienced a little trepidation when he was appointed pastor of St. Michael Parish in Bedford. “How would I manage such a big parish?” he wondered. Again, he experienced an “outpouring of love,” and he credited an excellent staff with running the day-to-day activities of the vibrant parish.

At each location, building a spiritually strong community took precedence for Fr. Boyalla. Visiting the sick and encouraging religious vocations were also priorities.

NEXT CHAPTER

His years in North Texas helped prepare Fr. Boyalla for his new role, he said. He has “grown into a mature priest” and learned qualities of leadership from former Bishop Kevin Vann, Bishop Olson, and his priest mentors.

He especially appreciates the trust Bishop Olson placed in him by appointing him dean of the 11 parishes in the Southwest Deanery and by naming him pastor of St. Michael.

“His trust made me more responsible,” said Fr. Boyalla, who was ordained a priest in 1999.



Parishioners at St. Michael Parish in Bedford had a reception honoring their pastor after the Dec. 10 Mass. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

When Fr. Boyalla assumes the leadership role, his priority will be ensuring “all priests are happy in their vocation and ministry.”

Most priests in the Gloria Dei Region are young, and he wants to mentor them to “become good leaders, good spiritual leaders. To find true contentment in their vocation and priestly ministry.”

He plans to listen, to understand, and to guide them “with a heart of compassion and kindness.” In doing so, he said, he will also learn from them.

Father Vijaya Raju Mareedu, SAC, has experienced Fr. Boyalla’s leadership firsthand. Fr. Mareedu is the pastor of St. John Parish in Strawn, St. Francis Xavier Parish in Eastland, Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco, and St. Rita Parish in Ranger

When Fr. Mareedu, also from the Gloria Dei Region, arrived in the diocese in 2018, Fr. Boyalla served as a guide to navigate the culture shock of 9,000 miles.



Father Balaji Boyalla, SAC, delivers the homily at a 2019 First Communion Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

The “small dynamite,” according to Fr. Mareedu, was a role model on how to build community, plus a caring friend — qualities that will make him a good regional leader. “He reaches each individual, understands each individual, and gives time to the other. He sees the good in each person and brings out their talents.”

Fr. Boyalla stated other objectives

during his term will be to ensure that priests, parishes, and ministries have adequate resources; to encourage vocations; and to help the region’s approximately 40 seminarians become good priests.

Fr. Boyalla observed that the current culture has more opportunities and

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Father Balaji Boyalla, SAC, during the Prayer of Consecration, Dec. 10 at St. Michael Parish. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

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enticements to distract or derail young people from discerning a religious vocation. “The world is so attractive, which can easily lead them away from spiritual life. That really pulls us away, and sometimes won’t allow us to see the greater reward in being a priest,” he said.

As for Fr. Boyalla, he is “very happy to be a priest,” and added, “Only a happy priest can make parishes happy.”

HASTA LUEGO

Fr. Boyalla became a U.S. citizen in 2019, and he hopes to return to the Diocese of Fort Worth when his term (which could be extended an additional three years) ends. “I hope, if it is God’s will, I would like to come back after finishing my term,” he said.

In the meantime, he departs with

a heart full of love and gratitude. He said, “I want to first of all thank God for the opportunity to be part of the diocese and different parishes, and to be part of the lives of so many parishioners and friends.”

And to those parishioners and friends, “I don’t know how I can really thank them for their love. I never experienced such a kind of love in my life. I did not know I touched so many people in so many ways.

“My prayers will be always there for the diocese, which includes all the parishes,” he said.

Fr. Boyalla mentioned four ways that the faithful of the diocese can support him in his new role: prayer for his leadership, encouragement of local Pallottine priests, financial resources for Gloria Dei Region’s missions in India (GloriaDeiPallottines.com has a donation link), and prayer for the region’s mission work. 🇺🇸

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 29, 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 **\$834,393** to support the works of love and mercy in our 49 participating organizations. Each gift will allow 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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FROM LEFT: Johanna Brewington, manager of major gifts for Catholic Charities Fort Worth, with David and Margaret Taylor and Gene Lamis, who are volunteers and donors to Catholic Charities. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Roadblocks removed by CCFW donors

By Mary Lou Seewoester

Last fall, a woman participating in a long-term program with Catholic Charities Fort Worth hit a major roadblock. She was working nights, attending school during the day, and was just months away from an associate degree in nursing — an education level that would dramatically improve her financial situation. Then she and her entire family caught COVID-19, which resulted in being unable to pay a \$365 utility bill.

That’s when Johanna Brewington, CCFW manager of major gifts, called Gene Lamis, a St. Andrew parishioner and volunteer with CCFW’s Game Changers program. Lamis contacted someone on his team of 20 on-demand donors, and the utility bill was paid.

“That amount literally was a game changer to keep her in school and help the family get back on track,” Brewington said. “It was a situational need that our program didn’t have the resources for, so we reached out to a Game Changer who

said, ‘Yes, I can do that.’”

In 2022, Game Changers donated more than \$59,200 to 46 clients. Of that amount, about \$53,200 came from Lamis’ donor team.

Brewington said Game Changers is for clients already enrolled in one of CCFW’s long-term programs and who are working with a case manager on budgeting, stable employment, and goal setting to move out of poverty, permanently.

“Game Changers provides specific emergency financial assistance to help [clients] remove a barrier and stay on track to financial self-sufficiency,” she said.

The program has paid for items such as beds for a client’s children who were sleeping on the floor, tires so a community college student could get to school and work, a wheelchair, a washer and dryer, refrigerator, and even a used car. Clients also received \$10 gas cards when high gasoline prices made it costly to drive to in-person meetings with case managers.

Brewington said these basic needs create stress and are barriers to financial

stability for clients already working hard to make ends meet.

“Something that I could easily do financially is a complete roadblock for someone else,” Lamis stressed.

He said that after praying for “direction and clarity” on how he could serve God, an idea came — to build a team of committed donors willing to help with client emergencies. So, when a client encounters an unexpected financial barrier, CCFW doesn’t have to search for funds.

Lamis told the donors, “I’ll call you only once in 2022 and I’d like you to say, ‘yes’ to \$1,000-\$2,000 to help a Catholic Charities client.”

Each month, Brewington presents several scenarios of unplanned needs to Lamis, who then asks two donors to share the cost of those needs.

He has never heard no from a donor. “Everyone understands what Catholic Charities is doing and wants to be a part of helping,” Lamis said. “Their generosity is remarkable.” 🇺🇸



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GIVING

Members of local ministries share ideas
for how to help those in need

By Susan McFarland

It's the season... to give, to love, to let go of the old year while welcoming in the new. This time, while pondering which New Year's resolutions might make it past February, let's focus on ways to keep the Christmas season alive year-round.

Along with eating healthier, exercising more, and losing weight, we as Catholics can place a greater emphasis on loving our neighbors; after all, the spirit of giving shouldn't just be seasonal.

If you feel your actions are insignificant, just remember this quote by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who left us a beautiful example of how to give and to love: "Do ordinary things with extraordinary love."

To make it a little easier for you, the *NTC* created a list of some of the opportunities to serve others within the diocese and to use as a reference for those who need help.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

As inflation continues and prices soar, many people just can't keep up. Prices of food, electricity, and rent are

climbing, leaving many people stressed out and seeking ways to get bills paid. For some, living paycheck-to-paycheck works — until there is an emergency.

One idea that seems like a way out, getting a payday or title loan, is only a trap that leads to more hardship down the road, according to Victor Craig, diocesan council president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

To help families with financial assistance, St. Vincent de Paul aids those who have fallen upon hard times with two programs — the Council Loan Program (CLP), a short-term assistance program that can help people avoid sliding into a deeper crisis and/or becoming homeless, and the Mini-Loan Conversion Program (MLCP), to help rescue people who have high interest payday loans. Both programs offer a short- and long-term approach toward climbing out of the debt cycle.

"Inflation has hurt all segments of the population. For people on fixed incomes or those that make just enough to get by, that pressure really adds a burden, especially on the elderly or disabled," Craig said.



Volunteers with SVdP do home visits to get to know their neighbor and their needs better, something that cannot be accomplished in the same way behind a desk at an office.

“When we encounter our neighbors in need, we show Christian love. We bring them spirituality and promote the love and the hope of Jesus Christ to those suffering,” Craig said. “We tell them to hang in there... Hope is a powerful emotion; you’ve got to give people hope.”

Craig said if SVdP cannot help, they collaborate with other resources for referrals, which rings true to the group’s motto: “No work of charity is foreign to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.” He also referenced *1 John 3:18*, “Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”

STEPHEN MINISTRY

Those who are experiencing grief, loneliness, divorce, disability, job loss, or other life difficulties are encouraged to reach out to this ministry, which is available at many local parishes.

“Christ caring for people through people” sums up the philosophy of Stephen Ministry in a Catholic parish, according to the organization’s

website. “We are the caregivers, and God is the Caregiver.”

The name of the organization comes from *Acts of the Apostles*, as Stephen was among those chosen to provide caring ministry to those in need. People who have a servant’s heart and love caregiving are encouraged to seek more information about this ministry.

Miles Smith, Stephen Ministry lead at St. Michael Parish in Bedford, said people who join this organization volunteer for years, with many never leaving.

The group is unique because those called to serve go through an extensive training program that lasts for months, equipping them to serve knowledgeably. The team, along with the pastor or parish priest, provides ongoing care for more people than the pastor could provide alone.

CHRIST CHILD SOCIETY

“Challenging poverty one child at a time” is the motto for this 501(c)(3), which is a chapter of the National Christ Child Society. Incorporated in May 2018 and an active apostolate of the diocese, the organization promotes literacy and

▲ Volunteer Anna Treadway hands a tote bag filled with crayons, Catholic-themed coloring sheets, and other activities to a young boy, as fellow members of the Christ Child Society pass frozen meals and activity kits to families of the Flower Mound Mobile Home Park in this 2021 photo.

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In this July 2022 photo, volunteer Berene Spivey helps expectant mother Kyleigh Hinson choose items in the supply closet of the Gabriel Project. The Gabriel Project is a service of CCFW. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

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helps with financial needs.

Suzanne Jasinski, board president, said the goal of the group is to bring families together and help children feel good about literacy.

“We want all of our children to build their own personal library,” Jasinski said. “Most of us have had that luxury but many of these children do not.”

To help, the group holds book fairs, helps with tutoring, and has family-friendly literacy events.

In partnership with Loreto House, a Catholic-led pro-life pregnancy center in Denton, volunteers assemble bags filled with activities and books for infants and toddlers that encourage a love of reading at an early age, as well as provide parent/infant bonding opportunities.

The group is ever evolving. Along with giving away books, they provide basic needs for students such as shampoo or laundry detergent, give layette bags to new mothers, and team up with Gabriel Project to give diapers, wipes, and newborn clothing to expectant moms. “It’s a baby shower in a bag,” she said.

The care doesn’t end with children. Because teens sometimes get overlooked, Christ Child Society provides “teen bags” with girly stuff such as nail polish and hair scrunchies and guy stuff such as hair gel or cologne, as well as snacks. The group also puts together foster home comfort bags with new pajamas, stuffed toys, and other comforts.

“Find a need and fill it” is how the group evolved, Jasinski said.

“We have fun when we get together,” she said. “And we always welcome new members.”

The group is an affinity ministry of St. Philip the Apostle in Flower Mound but would like to branch out and create groups at other parishes.

THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Need a roof repair or a wheelchair? How about a warm coat or food? The Knights of Columbus empower Catholic men to live their faith at home, in their parish, at work, and in their community.

Chris Stark, general agent

Knights of Columbus members Roy Shelton (left) and Jack McGeough unfold a wheelchair after donating several to Catholic Charities Fort Worth.



for the Diocese of Fort Worth, said there are four contexts for the group's action: faith, family, community, and life.

For faith, the Knights support seminarians with its RSVP program. For every \$500 given to a seminarian by the Knights locally, the Supreme Council will refund the council or assembly \$100. For family, the organization helps families with food, prayer nights, and parish and family activities.

Knights are called to serve others. For community, service is provided to the parish, the homeless, the addicted, and the elderly. Preparing for disaster, providing coats, helping fix roofs, and sponsoring community activities are other ways they help.

And for life, the Knights of Columbus Ultrasound Program provides ultrasound machines to pregnancy help centers. More than 1 million moms have seen their unborn children thanks to this program. They also help with special needs children, Christian refugee centers, and pregnancy support centers.

"We have such a vast array of programs," Stark said.

The Knights of Columbus is always looking for men to join them. Stark got involved after being confirmed as a Catholic in 2013.

"When I found out about the Knights in RCIA, I thought, 'If I am going to be a part of the Church, I'm going to be a part of this,'" he said.

Stark said charity donations go 100 percent to the cause.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Catholics and non-Catholics alike have heard about Catholic Charities Fort Worth. Although the organization is guided by the social justice tenets of the Catholic faith, being a Catholic is not required to give or to receive services such as help with rent, mortgage, utilities, childcare, food

insecurity, and transportation.

The organization got its start in 1910 when a small group of women attended the annual St. Patrick's Day celebration at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Fort Worth.

"They went united by a purpose — to petition [Dallas] Bishop Edward Dunne to allow them to begin a 'work of mercy' ... and a 'voice for the voiceless,'" according to their website.

Their work continues. And they are busy; workers and volunteers typically receive 500 calls per week. Earlier this year the number was between 800 and 900, and at one point the organization received 1,100 calls during a one-week period, according to Courtney Walker, Community Care program manager.

"We always need help on our call lines," Walker said. "A warm heart on the end of the line, someone who can pray or provide resources."

Those in need can reach the Community Care team at 817-534-0814 from 8 a.m. to noon, Monday through Thursday. The staff has locations in Fort Worth, Colleyville, and Arlington.

"The biggest needs that we see are rent and utilities," Walker said. "If a person is used to earning an income, they may be a good candidate for one of our long-term programs to establish savings and help plan their future."

Allie Phillippi, engagement manager, said another big need is for transportation drivers and Gabriel Angels, caring volunteers who support the mother's choice of life through prayer, ongoing friendship, and encouragement. Phillippi is not Catholic but is a Christian and loves her role with CCFW.

"If you boil it down, we are all followers of Jesus and want to help our neighbors. It doesn't matter what background we are, we are all here to help," she said. 🇺🇸

GIVE YOUR SUPPORT

Join or donate to the featured organizations today!

Catholic Charities

CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org

FOR LOCAL INFO: Email

Volunteer Services at volunteer@ccdofw.org or call 817-289-3871.

Christ Child Society

NationalChristChild.org

FOR LOCAL INFO: Email office@NationalChristChild.org to find

out more about local chapters.

Knights of Columbus

KofCFortWorth.org

FOR LOCAL INFO: Reach out

to Knights at your parish or visit KofC.org to become a member.

St. Vincent de Paul

SVDPfww.org

FOR LOCAL INFO: Reach out

to your parish office to find out if they have an SVdP council, or email SocietySVDPfww@gmail.com.

Stephen Ministry

StephenMinistries.org

FOR LOCAL INFO: Reach out to

your parish office or contact Miles Smith, Stephen Ministry lead, at St. Michael Church: msmith@smcchurch.org.

NTC Ben Torres

REJOICE!

FOR THE LORD HAS COME TO US

Humanity is the true gift
of Christmas

By Mary Regina Morrell

Recently I read a sentiment about Christmas that I have heard often over the years, from family, friends, and even strangers as they go about their Christmas shopping: “I hear that in many places something has happened to Christmas; that it is changing from a time of merriment and carefree gaiety to a holiday which is filled with tedium; that many people dread the day and the obligation to give Christmas presents is a nightmare to weary, bored souls; that the children of enlightened parents no longer believe in Santa Claus; that all in all, the effort to be happy and have pleasure makes many honest hearts grow dark with despair instead of beaming with good will and cheerfulness.”

Many of us would shake our heads in agreement, and imagine that the sentiments

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Who is that baby in the manger, and what does He want?

By David Mills

The lesson of Christmas? The answer is there, in that manger. Whatever you ask, whatever you worry about, whatever you need, you find it in the Christ-child. You find your answer in the one who “for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,” as we say in the Creed every Sunday.

That’s the basic Christian belief. That’s one way of explaining what the angel said to the shepherds that first Christmas night. “Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”

Think about what that means. That baby is Christ: The eternal second Person of the Trinity, the Son of the Father, the one who with the Father and the Holy Spirit created the world and every moment keeps it in existence. That baby is the Lord: the one to whom we owe everything and who gives us all the good things we have. That baby is the Savior: the one who becomes one of us and dies as one of us to save us from the huge mess we’ve made of our lives and our world.

That Savior who is Christ the Lord lies in the manger, a newborn baby. Helpless, vulnerable, having to be fed and clothed, needing his diapers changed. Yet God. As Queen Lucy says in *The Last Battle*, the last of C. S. Lewis’ Narnia Chronicles, “In our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world.” St. Augustine says: “He was created of a

mother whom He created. He was carried by hands that He formed.”

Well, yeah, you may be thinking. Of course. That’s the whole point of Christmas. But I’m not sure we always really see and feel the whole point of Christmas.

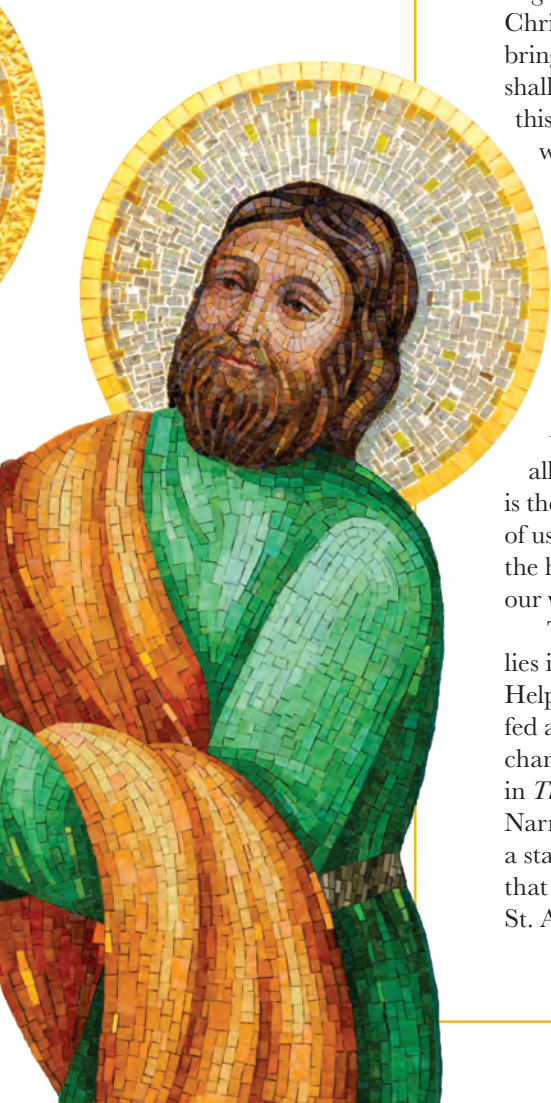
I think sometimes even we Christians think of our faith either as a kind of added benefit or as a kind of repairman. We have our basic lives and things are going okay. We can get by with just our lives (we think). We live our lives most of the time as if we didn’t know Jesus, because Jesus doesn’t pay the bills or play for the Steelers.

When we’re thinking like that, and it’s really easy to think like that, Christianity can only do two things for us. It gives us some extra stuff we can enjoy, like services to go to and people to hang out with. It also helps us when our lives break down. We lose a loved one, say, and we call in the Faith to comfort us and tell us we’ll see him again.

Jesus is someone we meet at church, which is great, and then we say goodbye. He’s someone we call when life goes south, which is also great, and then we say goodbye.

I have to admit I can do this. I’ve got to get through life so I put my head down and drive forward like a running back trying to push it in on fourth and goal from the six yard line with ten seconds left in the game. I’m not looking up at Jesus because I have to get across that line and lots of big people are trying to

Continued on Page 38



MORRELL, continued

above were from someone, like us, who has experienced the contemporary morphing of Christmas into a marketing holiday.

Surprisingly, the quote is from the 1934 work *A Plantation Christmas*, written by Southern author and Pulitzer Prize-winner Julia Peterkin. I never imagined that Christmas, almost 89 years ago, would be a similar source of dread and obligation as it is for many today. Living at light speed is obviously not the only reason we lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas.

In 1914, five months into WWI, Pope Benedict XV suggested a temporary cease fire to the fighting for the celebration of Christmas. Soldiers in the trenches took heed, though their countries would not make it official.

A story on history.com relates: “Starting on Christmas Eve, many German and British troops sang Christmas carols to each other across the lines, and at certain points the Allied soldiers even heard brass bands joining the Germans in their joyous singing.

“At the first light of dawn on Christmas Day, some German soldiers emerged from their trenches and approached the Allied lines across no-man’s-land, calling out ‘Merry

Christmas’ in their enemies’ native tongues. At first, the Allied soldiers feared it was a trick, but seeing the Germans unarmed they climbed out of their trenches and shook hands with the enemy soldiers. The men exchanged presents of cigarettes and plum puddings and sang carols and songs. There was even a documented case of soldiers from opposing sides playing a good-natured game of soccer. . . .

“During World War I, the soldiers on the Western Front did not expect to celebrate on the battlefield, but even a world war could not destroy the Christmas spirit.”

While more than a century has passed since the Christmas Truce of 1914, and the passing of years has certainly not improved our cultural Christmas, our growing spiritual maturity should enlighten us to the true gift of Christmas, demonstrated by soldiers so long ago — our humanity.

God deemed humanity gift enough to be incarnate on the first Christmas as the Christ child, who taught us how to be human, how to be in relationship with God and others, how to love and create peace in the world.

Christmas is the celebration that reminds us of how we were gifted. The rest of the year is the time when we are called to live the gift. ✚

MILLS, continued

stop me.

To the extent that’s true of you, what do you do? What’s the lesson that the lesson of Christmas teaches?

Different saints and teachers describe it in different ways, but basically: Seek to be holy using all the tools the Church gives us. St. Pio of Pietrelcina puts it pretty bluntly in one of his notebooks. “The heavenly babe suffers and cries in the crib so that for us suffering would be sweet, meritorious and accepted,” he says.

“He deprives himself of everything, in order that we may learn from him the renunciation of worldly goods and comforts. He is satisfied with humble and poor adorers, to encourage us to love poverty, and to prefer the company of the little and simple rather than the great ones of the world. . . . Even from the moment of His birth He reveals to us our mission, which is to scorn that which the world loves and seeks.”

He calls us to heroism. But so does that baby in the manger, who is the world’s Great Hero. ✚

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





NTC/Juan Guajardo

In God's hands

HE IS: Father Jim Ngo Hoang Khoi, CRM, Pastor of Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in Wichita Falls. He has also served at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Fort Worth.

EARLY YEARS: Born to a traditional Catholic family in North Vietnam, he fled in 1954 to South Vietnam with his parents and four siblings to escape communism.

AN ORDERED LIFE: He joined the Congregation of the Mother of the Redeemer at age 13 and took vows as a religious brother several years later.

He said, “The community formed us; we have been in that routine. I thank God for that. When you enter the community of religious life when you are young, you get a lot of experiences and formation, education.”

A NEW HOME: About 170 members of his religious order, or roughly half, fled Vietnam aboard fishing vessels on April 30, 1975, as Saigon fell to the communists. Rescued by U.S. Navy ships, the congregation lived in refugee camps before eventually being reunited in Carthage, Missouri.

Looking back, Fr. Khoi reflected, “The collapse of South Vietnam is a chance God used to spread our congregation.”

BROTHERLY LOVE: As a brother, he enjoyed helping priests with parish activities, primarily working with youth and the choir.

However, he felt a desire to be able to celebrate the sacraments. Although he would listen and advise people, he couldn't offer Reconciliation. Also, he would organize retreats, but he had to arrange for a priest to celebrate Mass.

When his superior suggested he become a priest, he agreed. “It's two ways: the community called me, and I responded to God's call. I think that's in God's will.”

ORDAINED: June 9, 1991.

“I'm very pleased, very happy to be a priest because when I work with the parishes and movements, I can help with the sacraments. Definitely a more meaningful ministry.”

KEEP ON TRACK: Fr. Khoi credits “God's help” with remaining faithful for his decades of ministry. “He did it. Every day I pray for my life; I pray for my faithfulness; I pray for the devotion I need to have.”

MUSIC MAN: Fr. Khoi joined his parish choir at 11, and he majored in music at Missouri State University. He plays “not

perfectly” the saxophone, flute, piano, and organ, and he sings and conducts music.

TWO HOMES, TWO FEET: Having lived 27 years in Vietnam, Fr. Khoi knows the culture and speaks Vietnamese fluently. But 48 years working and studying in the U.S. have enabled him to relate to American parishes.

“I have two feet: one in Vietnam; one in U.S.A. So I thank God for that benefit,” he said.

FUTURE PLANS: “I have no plan for myself. I was sent out; I will be called in. That depends on the congregation. I don't request anything; I don't deny anything — so that is a very peaceful day. You don't worry about what you are going to do.

“God will plan for me. Everything is in His hands. We are entrusted to Him. If we worry about how to plan for ourselves, we will get stuck.

“We try to follow His plan and pray that His plan can be done.”

LAST WORD: “I put myself as an instrument that God can use. The instrument needs to connect to the source. I put myself in the middle. I try to connect to God as much as I can through the formation I got from my community.” 🇺🇸

A young boy with short dark hair, wearing a red t-shirt and blue jeans, is swinging happily on a black plastic swing seat. He is looking upwards and to the right with a joyful expression. The swing set is made of blue metal frames and black chains. The background is a bright, sunny day at a school playground with trees and a clear blue sky.

adoption

A GREAT WORK

Four-year-old ►
Marcus plays on the
swings at St. Peter
the Apostle Catholic
School, where he is a
student.

ption

ARK OF LOVE



NTC/Juan Cuqjardo

The (countless) blessings go both ways when families welcome an adopted child into their lives

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

The birth of Jesus is the ultimate story of love. It's also the way God shows us the beauty of adoption.

Mary's pregnancy is unplanned and scandalous according to marriage customs of the day. She's asked to bear a child who belongs to God.

Instead of disgracing his betrothed, Joseph listens to the angel who visits him in a dream, assumes the role of father, and claims Jesus as his own. He protects Him, mentors Him, and loves Him. By bringing Mary and her child into his home, Joseph teaches us that adoption creates families and honors God. His lineage is an intricate part of fulfilling the prophecy of where the Messiah would be born.

Forced to journey from Nazareth to a city of strangers, Mary and Joseph encountered many closed doors in town before finding shelter in an outlying stable. After He is born, Jesus is placed in a feeding trough for animals.

The Holy Family is raised and formed by a couple in a difficult situation living in the peripheries of society.

That's not unlike the plight of the 107,000 foster care children in the U.S. eligible for adoption.

"It's common for children to be placed in a series of foster homes — the average being four to seven," cited Jennifer Lanter, vice president of communications and education at the Gladney Center for Adoption in Fort Worth. "Each time a child moves, it's a new trauma for them — a new school, new set of parents, new rules."

One of the premier agencies for adoption in the country, the Gladney Center has brought children and parents together for 135 years. The center works with 150 families annually through its domestic infant adoption, international adoption, and New

Continued on Page 42



▲
Susana Jackson and her husband, Daniel, pose with their children Terrell, 14, and Grayson, 8.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 41

Beginnings program that connects parents with youngsters in the foster care system who are immediately available for adoption. Most are over age seven and were removed from the home because of abuse and neglect.

“Adoption can prevent abuse and neglect,” Lanter asserted. “If someone is struggling to [become a] parent and considering adoption, it’s never too late. Adoption is a wonderful way to grow a family.”

There are 140,000 adoptions each year in the United States. Americans adopt more children than all other countries combined. Here are the stories of some North Texas Catholics who opened their homes and hearts to vulnerable children looking for a forever family.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

After a childhood troubled by abuse, neglect, and abandonment, Susana Jackson did the impossible. Instead of repeating the cycle of violence and substance abuse experienced in her own family, the one-time foster child made a promise to herself. Jackson vowed to make



a difference in the world.

“I was not going to let someone else live the childhood I had,” insisted the finance council member at St. Rita Parish in Ranger. “God placed on my heart, very early in life, that I was meant to adopt a foster child.”

She never wavered from that commitment and ensured her husband, Daniel, agreed with her decision before the couple married. By 2016, the pair were licensed foster parents and a two-year-old boy placed with them captured their hearts.

Born to a drug-addicted mother who



had other medical issues, Grayson lived in nine different foster homes, was underdeveloped, and wouldn't talk when he arrived on the Jacksons' doorstep.

"His mother beat him every time he cried so at the age of 9 months, he spent three weeks in the hospital because of his injuries," Jackson said, sharing the details of the boy's early years. After an older sibling reported the physical abuse, the woman surrendered her rights.

From the safe, comfortable setting

Continued on Page 44

▲ Terrell and Grayson play checkers against their parents on Dec. 1, 2022 at their home in Eastland. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



From Page 43

of his new home, the toddler flourished, learning letters, numbers, and other pre-schooler skills. His quick progress stunned caseworkers.

“He was a totally different child and affirmed for us that he was in the right place and was our forever after,” explained the CPA who adopted the youngster with her husband in 2016.

Today Grayson is a happy, healthy eight-year-old living a very different life from the one he had as a baby.

To support and advocate for other at-risk children, the Jackson family hosts the annual Kathleen Jackson Boots and Bags event near Ranger. Named for her husband’s late mother, who helped the couple care for their foster children, the charity raises money for the Children’s Advocacy Center in Eastland County. The nonprofit investigates child abuse cases and offers caring outreach to victims.

Building a life after her own broken childhood was difficult, Jackson admitted.

She sought God in a lot of different places before finding the Catholic Church.

“I think my healing really came from the Catholic Church,” explained the convert who was impressed by the prayerful reverence of parishioners at Mass. “I remember saying, ‘God, I’m going to fix me and I’m going to need your help to do that.’ It’s hard to have that strength.”

During the Boots and Bags fundraiser, Jackson shares her story of abuse and survival and encourages others to adopt from the foster system.

“If you change one person’s life, you’re impacting generations,” she pointed out. “Even with one child, you’re changing the world.”

ADOPTED WITH LOVE

When Lesley Boelter looks at her daughter and son, the adoptee’s thoughts turn to her birth mother. If the high school freshman had terminated her pregnancy in 1975, the director of religious education at St. Rita Parish in Ranger wouldn’t exist, nor would her children or

▲
Lesley Boelter is shown with her daughter Carolina, son Jacob, and husband, Allen, at their ranch in Ranger. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



their future offspring.

“If you stop one life, you don’t know how many lives you impact down the line,” she observed. “Seeing my kids, and knowing those lives might not have happened, is heartbreaking.”

But Boelter’s birth mother, who was also adopted, chose life and delivered a baby girl on November 18, 1975. Her adoption from Fort Worth’s Edna Gladney Center when she was a week old helped an infertile couple complete their family. An older brother was adopted in 1969.

“My parents were strong Southern Baptists and rooted in faith. They always told me I was adopted with love,” said the Catholic convert who had the opportunity to meet both of her birth parents as an adult.

Growing up in an attentive, loving home, Boelter played softball, competed in livestock shows, and graduated from Texas Tech University. She had a close relationship with her father who never minded driving the 4H Club member to stock shows in San Antonio and Houston.

“The life I’ve had was different from a lot of kids. I grew up with cattle, horses, and parents who would drop anything for us,” said Boelter, who lives on a ranch with her husband, Allen. “I’ve had a really good life. I’m beyond blessed.”

The catechist uses her adoption as a teaching tool. Every decision made in life has a ripple effect.

“I always tell my kids there are things you can never undo. Don’t make split-second decisions,” Boelter cautioned. “Think of the impact it will make on the rest of your life.”

GOD CHOSE US

At the age of 53, Veronica Garcia is relishing motherhood. The experience is one she never expected.

“It’s the best feeling,” enthused the new mom. “It’s so rewarding to love a child who needs loving.”

The St. Peter the Apostle parishioner and her husband, Jose, have permanent custody of her four-year-old nephew, Marcus. Born to a drug-addicted mother, the baby lived a few months with his maternal grandfather before being placed with a foster family. That’s when Garcia was asked to care for the baby by Marcus’ mother, her half-sister.

“He’s my nephew so I wanted to give him a good chance at life. My husband, who has older children, was willing to start parenting all over again,” Garcia said. “He knew Marcus needed our help.”

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▲
“I grew up with cattle, horses, and parents who would drop anything for us,” said Lesley Boelter with gratitude for her adoptive parents. Now, her two children are experiencing that same outdoor lifestyle since the Boelters took over care of the family ranch in 2020. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



▲
Marcus plays outside St. Peter the Apostle Catholic School with a couple of fellow students on Dec. 2. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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What followed was a year of background checks and home visits by Child Protective Services as well as foster care meetings.

“It was a lot of work but when that little boy looks at you with love in his eyes and he knows he’s safe, that’s a blessing,” she continued. “Our goal is to adopt him, and I want to do it soon, but it’s expensive.”

Garcia believes more foster parents should consider adoption. Relocating a child to different foster situations is disruptive and damaging, in her opinion.

“With a young baby it may not matter but when a child is three or four and forced to move to different homes, it will have ill effects,” she said.

The aunt turned “mama” wants Marcus to be happy and grow up in a stable environment. The preschooler at St. Peter Catholic School loves the Texas Rangers and sings “God Bless America” at every opportunity. It’s something he learned at the baseball games.

“We tell him God chose us to be his parents,” Garcia said. “He knows he’s loved.”

A NEW EXPERIENCE

Michael and Julia Zepeda, both family practice physicians, always knew they would adopt at some point. “We have friends who were adopted and realized what a life-changing event that can be,” explained Dr. Michael Zepeda. “We prayed about it.”

Already the parents of two biological children, Sebastian and Athan, both students at All Saints Catholic School, the couple began the application process when their younger son was two. They contacted a Christian pro-life agency and started filling out questionnaires about the type of child they wanted but quickly decided “to leave a lot of that up to God.”

Hoping to welcome an orphan that didn’t have other family members, the Zepedas turned to international adoption and were eventually paired with a baby girl in Hungary. Abandoned at birth, two-year-old Emily lived in an orphanage where she was cared for by nurses and attendants in a group setting. To complete the adoption, the Zepedas lived in Hungary for the summer with the little girl.

Emily has some developmental delays, but her new parents expect the toddler to



Courtesy/Garcia family

◀ Marcus with his adoptive parents, Veronica Garcia and Jose Martin Garcia, on Dec. 11, 2022.

thrive with parental love and the resources available in this country.

“Our boys prayed with us about the adoption for a long time and were finally happy to meet their sister,” Dr. Zepeda said, noting the arrival of the COVID pandemic slowed down the process. “They help take care of her and she interacts with them.”

Having a daughter is a new experience for the seasoned dad.

“When God opens a door and you walk through it, there are blessings on the other side you don’t necessarily know about.”

GOD HAS A PLAN

Working in a Mesa, Arizona, school for children with emotional disabilities, Catherine Neis saw exactly how adoption can change a life. So when the educator and her husband, Noah, had difficulty starting a family, they decided to open their hearts to a foster child with the intention of giving him a forever home.

“It was a God thing. He was meant for us,” said Neis, remembering how two-year-old Daniel came into their life in 2010. “So many things had to fall into line because the [Salt River Pima] tribe was not allowing adoptions at that time.”

The baby boy, surrendered by his Native American mother at birth, lived in two different foster homes before joining the Neises.

“The foster parents before us wanted him out,” said the administrative assistant at Nolan Catholic High School where Daniel is a sophomore. “There were eight other kids in their house. He was sensitive to what was going on around him and reacted with tantrums.”

Neis and her husband provided Daniel with the nurturing, peaceful environment he needed.

“When he came to us the simple change of not being with so many children made a difference,” she recalled. “To see where Daniel is at this point in his life is amazing. Every day I’m blessed because he is a good student, smart, and kind to others.”

Before his adoption was finalized in 2010, Neis gave birth to a daughter, Penelope, now a seventh grader at Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine. When questions understandably arise about Daniel’s birth mother, his parents respond by telling their son, “She couldn’t take care of you

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A Petition to St. Joseph

AN ADOPTION PRAYER

You took Mary and Jesus into your home. You followed the precepts of the Law, presented Jesus in the Temple, taught Him skills at the plane and lathe, and daily you shared traditions which were built on the covenants He came to fulfill. Hear the prayers of the siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and entire families of children who have been adopted. May they be a source of loving welcome and a fount of faith. Through Christ our Lord, Amen. St. Joseph, descendant of David, pray for us.



NTC Illustration/Maria Diaz



Daniel Neis is a member of the Nolan marching band.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 47

and we're just so thankful she had you."

The Neises' adoption journey proves sometimes God has a plan for your life you can't imagine.

"Daniel is ours. Being adopted is something we don't even think about," his mom gushed. "We just got him a little different way."

GIVING HOPE

Not everyone has the moxie to welcome a sibling group from the foster system into their home. But a confident Augustina Madu-Odidika had the role model of an unselfish caregiver to follow.

"My inspiration is always my mother," said the St. Bartholomew parishioner who watched the matriarch cook and care for village women and everyone else

◀ Daniel Neis, a Nolan sophomore who plays in the marching band, is shown with his adoptive family: dad, Noah; sister, Penelope; and mom, Catherine. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

in Biafra, Africa. “She did so much with so little. I have much more living in the U.S., so I thought, ‘Why can’t I raise more children?’”

Madu-Odidika and her husband, Paschal, already had two biological offspring when they decided to expand their family and contacted Catholic Charities in Dallas to begin the adoption process. A series of interviews, classes, and home visits followed.

“They started showing us children available for adoption in their system and it opened my eyes to the fact that so many have serious problems that need to be handled in a family situation and not by transferring them from one place to another,” she pointed out.

Interested at first in a single child, the former teacher and school administrator began reviewing the profiles of sibling groups Catholic Charities did not want to separate. A trio of two boys and a girl — ages 6, 5, and 4 — caught her attention.

“They were surrendered to CPS because of abuse and neglect,” said Madu-Odidika, who was overjoyed when the final adoption papers were signed in 2012. “I knew it would be a lot of work because of the psychological issues children come with.”

To say life got busy is an understatement. In addition to an increase in household expenses and a larger grocery bill, the children’s soccer and school schedules kept the mom of five on her feet from morning until night. She also spent considerable time teaching the new family members personal hygiene habits, table manners, and prayers. Now teenagers, both boys are altar servers and her daughter sings in the church choir.

No child is perfect and there were challenges over the years, but Madu-Odidika is confident lives were changed.

“They would not have the goals they have now if they were left in the [foster] environment,” she said.

Raised with love and encouragement, her children have a positive outlook and know there are things they can achieve in life.

“The biggest thing I have given them is hope,” Madu-Odidika said. “With prayer, hard work, and a little psychology, anyone can help a child.” 🌟

Adoption Trends

IN THE U.S. AND AMONG CATHOLIC CHARITIES

135,000

That’s how many children are adopted in the United States every year. There are about 1.5 million adopted children in America.

25

One out of every 25 families has an adopted child. And roughly 6 in 10 Americans have had personal experience with adoption.

2,465

In 2019, there were this many adoptions across 32 Catholic Charities agencies in the U.S. Of these, 2,204 were foster care adoptions and 157 were infant adoptions.

59

Nearly 59 percent of adopted children in the U.S. are from the foster system. In fact, national and Catholic Charities’ adoption trends from 2016-2019 reflect a long-term decline in infant and international adoptions. Foster care continues to be the most common method of adoption in the U.S. and among Catholic Charities agencies.

Information from Adoption Network (2020) and Catholic Charities USA (2020).



STANDING TALL

Jim Goldsworthy’s faith-forward leadership in Gainesville makes a positive impact for parish, school, and community

By Susan Moses

By any measure, Jim Goldsworthy is a very successful businessman, but the most important things he’s done have nothing to do with making a buck. In fact, one of his enduring legacies may have cost him.

First, the business. After working as a State

Farm Insurance agent in Tulsa and Dallas, he and his wife, Jennifer, moved to Gainesville in 1992 where he opened an agency, which has grown to 15 employees. He proudly notes the agency is ranked fourth best out of approximately 20,000 State Farm agencies in the U.S., and he gives credit to his terrific team.

Now for more important matters — faith, community, and family.

◀ Jim Goldsworthy in Leonard Park, where a monument to unity and patriotism stands on the site previously occupied by a Confederate statue. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Goldsworthy, who attended Catholic schools growing up in Oklahoma City, joined St. Mary Parish in Gainesville when he arrived in Cooke County. Shortly thereafter, the pastor noted his height and asked him to coach the basketball team at St. Mary Catholic School for a year. He continued for 25 years, long after his four sons had graduated from the school.

He has a long record of service on the parish's finance council and pastoral board too. Father John Pacheco, pastor of St. Mary, called Goldsworthy a "very effective leader" in the parish and community, stating his business knowledge is a "helpful voice in my ear" when making practical decisions about parish operations or finances.

Goldsworthy, whose father is a deacon in Oklahoma City, explained his motivation to give generously of his time and resources to St. Mary Parish and its school. He said, "The parish is your second family. That really is true. You want to see your parish succeed. That motivates me to be involved and stay involved."

Goldsworthy helped organize a cohort of parishioners to purchase and remove old, dilapidated homes around the parish and school, creating a buffer of land.

Van Knight, a St. Mary parishioner and friend of Goldsworthy, shared firsthand knowledge that the group has purchased 20 to 25 properties to date. "It's a lot to mow. I help mow it, so I know," he laughed.

Another St. Mary parishioner and friend, Ken Keeler, observed, "No matter what the church or school has asked, he's done it. He's served on every council and advisory committee; he's donated generously. If there's a need to do something, Jim is the guy who [does] it. He's a leader."

COMMUNITY CHAMPION

As a businessman, Goldsworthy served on community boards and volunteered some of his time and talents to the city of Gainesville. Believing he could have a positive impact on the city of nearly 18,000,

Goldsworthy ran for city council, ultimately serving 16 years — including as mayor from 2011 to 2021.

Ask Tommy Moore, who served with Goldsworthy on the city council and succeeded him as mayor, what Goldsworthy accomplished for the city, and he reveals a long list in a short minute.

Goldsworthy hired a city manager, and Gainesville "went from borrowing money to make payroll each week, to now we have 180 days of capital. He led all that," Moore said.

Moore also explained Goldsworthy created a public/private partnership to remove almost 700 abandoned properties in Gainesville; attracted new businesses to the city; and spearheaded the construction of a large playground in Leonard Park and a new facility for the Boys & Girls Club of Cooke County.

Moore said, "When Jim came in 1992, he fully invested himself in his new community."

REPRESENTING ALL OF US

In 2020, Goldsworthy faced a defining moment in his mayorship as he navigated the city through the removal of a Confederate monument in Leonard Park with a focus on truth, civil dialogue, and community healing.

In May and June, demonstrations across the country sparked by the death of George Floyd put a spotlight on Civil War statues.

Keeler, a Gainesville City Council member since 2011, remembered that Goldsworthy expressed, "We should have done something a long time ago. It's time to correct an injustice." And he took it upon himself to do that."

In researching the history of the monument, the mayor learned the statue was erected in 1908 at the height of the Jim Crow era in the formerly "whites only" section of Leonard Park. The statue of the armed soldier raised a defiant fist toward the "black" section, and the base celebrated Confederate soldiers as "our heroes."

Knowing the statue wasn't representative of the city, Goldsworthy "held public meetings, he answered questions. He did everything possible to defuse the situation," according to Keeler.

Then, people from outside the city descended on Gainesville to protest.

Keeler said people wanting to keep the statue came with "military-style weapons" from neighboring Montague County, and protestors from Denton demanded the monument's removal.

"It was very intense for several weeks," Keeler recalled, saying that as many as 90 law enforcement and highway patrol officers kept the peace.

Fr. Pacheco said, "Honestly, this community had to handle the problem, not other people. Jim was able to guide the community through this and come out on top. I have to give it to him — he was very brave," adding that he said many prayers for Goldsworthy.

Keeler said, "Things got pretty bad, and there was a lot of negative publicity. Some people wanted to remove him from office, and he lost some customers over this. Jim never blinked an eye. He said, 'No, we are doing the right thing.'"

The city council voted unanimously to remove the statue and donate it to a museum, then Goldsworthy raised money and made plans for an alternate statue to represent Gainesville, a Medal of Honor host city named "the most patriotic town in America" in 2012.

The new monument is dedicated to unity and patriotism. It features five arms of varying hues lifting a star, atop a base with quotes from Helen Keller, Martin Luther King Jr., and several Medal of Honor recipients.

Goldsworthy completed his tenure as mayor, but he continues to serve his parish and community for a simple reason: God has blessed him, and he wants to help others.

He said, "This isn't a practice run. You only get one shot at life. It really motivates me to help folks to see what's possible." 🇺🇸



The call of Simon the fisherman

There is an old saying from mid-19th-century England: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

The call of Simon the fisherman from Saint Luke’s Gospel (*Luke 5:1-11*) reminds me of my own calling to the priesthood. When Christ asked Simon Peter to go out to deep waters and lower his nets for a catch, picture his reaction and that of his companions. They are tired from the late-night fishing and probably frustrated because they were not able to catch any fish. However, obeying the Master’s instruction, they went out to the deep water and caught an abundance of fish — to the point of almost sinking both boats.

Simon Peter’s reaction to this miracle of Jesus was to admit that he was a sinful man and not worthy to be part of Jesus’ company. He said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”

The Lord’s response to Simon Peter was, “Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching men,” and Simon Peter “left everything and followed Him.”

Many of us may have been asked at

one time to consider the priesthood or even religious life as a brother or sister and may have thought to ourselves: Am I worthy? Am I holy enough?

I remember the days leading up to my ordination, the thoughts of doubt, of my worthiness — will I be a good enough priest? These all crossed my mind during my prayers.

A wise priest gave me advice that calmed my nerves. He said, “God has called you to this ministry and that is enough to make you worthy.” Remember, Jesus called a sinner to be the rock for His Church.

We can only respond to that calling from Jesus by answering “yes, Lord,” or “no, Lord.” Many will choose the latter, because a “yes” response to that call may mean that your dreams or profession has to be put aside. But have you considered what God had planned for you? All you need to do is pray for what God wants for you! The God who calls us is also the God who created us, and I am sure, beyond all doubt, He knows what He wants for you.

Simon Peter the fisherman became the rock on which Jesus entrusted His Church. During Simon’s encounter with the Lord

that evening on the boat, he believed that he was unworthy to be in Jesus’ company, but Simon listened to the Lord’s instructions to follow Him and became the leader Jesus knew he was capable of being.

Going back to the old saying “Give a man a fish,” Jesus entrusted the job of the salvation of souls to fishermen, to sinners — to human beings. He transformed the Apostles to be leaders of the Church. The catch is abundant, but the fishermen are few.

My advice for someone who is discerning a call is first to pray about it; second to see your parish priest or religious sister to help guide you through the doubts and concerns. Third, sign up for a vocation event like a Come and See weekend or a St. Andrew Breakfast.

God will always provide for us in abundance if we trust in Him by responding to His call. Teach a man to fish, you will feed him for a lifetime. May we have more fishermen for the salvation of souls. ✚



Fr. Nghia Nguyen

Father Nghia Nguyen serves as the pastor of St. George Parish in Fort Worth and as Vocations Liaison with the Vocations Office.

What is the Roman Missal?



Fr. Thu Nguyen

Dear *NTC* readers, taking into consideration Pope Francis' June 29 apostolic letter *Desiderio desideravi* ("On the Liturgical Formation of the People of God"), we introduce a new column that draws well-deserved attention and consideration to the liturgy of the Church. By better understanding the how and why of the liturgy, we hope to make it a "place of encounter with Christ," as the Holy Father puts it. Our guide along this journey is Father Thu Nguyen, diocesan director of Liturgy and Worship for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

To kick off this series, we begin with a fundamental question: What is the Roman Missal and what role does it play in the Mass?

WHAT IS THE ROMAN MISSAL?

FATHER THU: This is a 2,000-year-old collection of how to celebrate Mass from the early days of the Apostles. In 2010, it was revised into a third edition. Prior to that, it had been 500 years since its last revision.

The Roman Missal was compiled by early Christians putting together everything [they learned] from the Apostles. It was passed down by the Fathers of the Church and included writings about how to celebrate Mass, which Jesus started with the Last Supper. He doesn't write out a script. When He left and ascended to heaven, the disciples celebrated by memory — memory forms the base of the structure back then.

St. Justin Martyr is the first one who recorded a kind of structure of Mass because he was talking about Baptism for catechumens and how they enter the Mass. He wrote about how after the Baptism, the newly baptized disciples gathered with the elders and other Catholic Christians. They would gather at the table and bring in the gifts of bread and wine. An elder would say a prayer (that's what the Eucharistic Prayer is nowadays). Then they would break bread and pronounce the Word that Jesus instills in us at the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper.

So, the Missal began very fragmented. The *Didache* also contains elements of the Apostles' teaching that are found in the Eucharistic Prayer.

Back then (before 600 A.D.) the Church was very fragmented. They had a little book (the Sacramentary) for the priest when they traveled to celebrate Mass, which included prayers and the form of the Mass.

Long story short, the Roman Missal has been compiled over many years.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

FATHER THU: The Roman Missal consists of structure of the Mass, prayers that the priests say, and even songs already written for a certain part of the Mass, like the entrance antiphon. The Mass is right here in the [Missal].

You have rubrics also — rubrics are in red text and tell you what to do as the

celebrant. For example, at the Prayer of Consecration, the rubric tells the priest what to do with his posture. Every gesture is told to you.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal explains and guides us, including the faithful, on how to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist. This includes all general postures, manners, parts requiring responses, and everything to celebrate the Eucharist fruitfully.

Furthermore, I will tell you something important that we priests have to respect about the Roman Missal. Paragraph 24 reminds the priest that "he is the servant of the sacred liturgy and that he, himself, is not permitted on his own initiative to add, to remove, or to change anything in the celebration of the Mass."

The pope says in *Desiderio desideravi*, "Let us be clear here. Every aspect of the celebration must be carefully tended to (space, time, gesture, words, object, vestment, song, music). Every rubric must be observed. Such attention would be enough to prevent robbing from the assembly what is owed to it, namely, the Paschal Mystery celebrated according to the ritual that the Church sets down." 🇺🇸

Father Thu Nguyen serves as pastor at St. Paul the Apostle Church in Fort Worth and Director of Liturgy and Worship.





A Family of Faith

Although George Augustine and his future wife, Rani, were strangers as they grew up in the state of Kerala, India, they shared the ultimate thing in common: faith in Jesus Christ and membership in the Church He established.

They recall their parents and grandparents living a deep faith and devoted prayer life. Now grandparents themselves, they pray for the health and protection of their children and grandchildren, and that the family's subsequent generations will cling to the faith that Saint Thomas the Apostle brought to Kerala in the first century, according to tradition.

Pope Francis, in his exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*On Love in the Family*), acknowledges the role of parents and grandparents in being the first, and primary, teachers of their children. He writes, "The family is the first school of human values, where we learn the wise use of freedom. Certain inclinations develop in childhood and

become so deeply rooted that they remain throughout life..." (*Amoris Laetitia*, 274)

George and Rani Augustine are examples of living a faith deeply rooted by parents and grandparents, and then intentionally passing those values to following generations.

BLESSED BEGINNING:

"We have been so lucky to be part of the Catholic faith," said George, "because the fundamental truth, humanity itself, is based upon the redemption — Jesus' suffering, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. We have been blessed to be aware of His light."

EARLY LESSONS:

George recalls his grandfather would get on his knees at 5 p.m. each day to pray. "No one could talk. That lasted for about two, two-and-a-half hours. Very strict." George admitted the silence annoyed him

as a youth, but he learned prayer "is meaningful. It is with a purpose."

MOTHER MARY:

George and Rani both say their mothers were devoted to the Holy Rosary, "praying it day and night" for their children and grandchildren. "I could feel it," said George. "We were protected in every aspect."

MARRIAGE MAKER:

According to the tradition in Kerala, their families arranged an introduction after ensuring that each was a strong Catholic. This year, they celebrated 34 years of marriage and have three sons and two grandchildren.

EVENING EXERCISE:

The couple maintains a habit of evening prayer from their childhoods until today, even when their three sons were toddlers.

◀ George and Kochuthresia "Rani" Augustine stand between their son Alvin George and his wife, Ann-Christy John, who holds baby Luke. (NTC/Ben Torres)

The routine, which lasts 35-45 minutes, begins by praying the Angelus and Rosary. Next, they pray for departed souls and recite a Litany of the Saints. After a Bible reading and discussion, they sing a hymn to Mother Mary.

MASS MOVEMENT:

The couple attends daily Mass about two times each week at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Flower Mound. Sunday Mass, "a must," is usually celebrated at St. Alphonsa Catholic Church in Coppell according to the Syro-Malabar rite they grew up with in India.

WELL CULTURED:

The couple has lived in India, New York, and Texas, and when their sons were young, they sent them to live with their grandparents to ensure that they would understand both cultures.

"The Church is one of the major meeting points for everyone, to share ideas and make a community," said George.

PASS IT ON:

When living in Rockland County, New York, George helped the priest begin a religious education program at a new parish. He has also served as director of religious education at St. Alphonsa Parish.

His oldest son Alvin teaches high school religious education at the parish.

GLOBAL MATCH:

Alvin attended World Youth

Day in Poland in 2016 and befriended Ann-Christy John, a young woman from England who was discerning a religious vocation.

Some time later, when Ann-Christy discerned that God was calling her to married life, Alvin expressed his interest in deepening their relationship.

The couple has been married three years and has a baby, Luke.

FAITH AT WORK:

Rani worked in health care, and she said her faith helped her "work sincerely," as expressed in *Colossians 3:23*: "Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others."

George, an insurance agent, helps individuals plan for the future, whether it's retirement or when "something goes wrong." He views his profession as "an essential part of my vocation. God protects everyone, but you should also have your own plan. His plan is going to take place, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't have any plans."

ACTIONS SPEAK:

When it comes to raising children, George and Rani insisted, "It's not what you say that matters; it's what you do."

TROUBLED TIMES:

When faced with difficult situations, the couple prays and keeps focused on God. George explained, "You pass through. Every time we face something, our faith becomes stronger and stronger." 🇺🇸

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A los 91 años, el diácono "Tacho" Pérez inspira a la parroquia de Wichita Falls con su dedicación a Dios y a los demás

Por Susan Moses

“**N**o tienes hambre”. Esto parece ser un comentario extraño al comenzar una conversación mientras almuerzas.

En el 1980 Juan Porras era joven y bastante nuevo en su trabajo en Lone Star Gas Company en Wichita Falls. Anastasio “Tacho” Pérez era un trabajador bien establecido en la empresa de servicios públicos, ya que llevaba dos décadas en su trabajo.

Cuando continuaron su conversación, Porras se dio cuenta pronto de que Pérez no estaba hablando meramente de su apetito. Pérez le compartió su propia observación: Porras no mostraba ningún deseo de avanzar en la empresa y sólo cumplía con los requisitos mínimos de su trabajo.

“Me animó a tener aspiraciones, a mejorar cada día”, dijo Porras, quien dijo que esa conversación a la hora del almuerzo inició una amistad de 40 años. “Él me enseñó que todo lo bueno viene a través del trabajo”.

A medida que crecía su amistad, Pérez invitó a Porras a ir a la iglesia con él. Pérez lo animó también a convertirse en monaguillo, lo que Porras hace todavía hoy.

“Lo respeto como un mentor, como maestro. Me ayudó a regresar a la Iglesia”, dijo el feligrés de Nuestra Señora

de Guadalupe.

Porras está en un camino diferente al que tenía cuando era joven, “gracias a Dios y a través de él”, dijo agradecido.

CONSEJOS VIVOS

Pérez ha vivido según su propio consejo.

No sólo ascendió de excavador de zanjas a soldador calificado durante su carrera de 41 años con Lone Star Gas. Tacho creció además en su fe y eventualmente se convirtió en diácono, lo que fue una tarea abrumadora para un padre trabajador de seis hijos que no asistió a la escuela secundaria.

Pérez abandonó la escuela después del sexto grado y trabajó en diferentes restaurantes, y hasta vendió periódicos para ayudar a ganar dinero para mantener a su familia y su madre enferma. Más tarde se inscribió en un programa de educación continua de Midwestern State University en Wichita Falls y obtuvo el G.E.D.

Él y su esposa, Rosa, se casaron y asistían a la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Pérez nutrió su fe con los sacramentos, los retiros y las clases de ministerio laico. Estuvo en el primer grupo de Ministros Extraordinarios de la Sagrada Comunión, que fueron capacitados e instalados por la Iglesia en el 1975.

Cuando tenía casi 50 años aceptó una invitación para ingresar al programa de formación diaconal.

El trabajo académico del programa le resultó muy abrumador a Pérez. Nos comparte, “Luché con eso. Yo no estaba demasiado educado. Le dije a mi esposa después de los primeros seis meses de haberlo comenzado, “Creo que lo voy a abandonar. No creo que pueda lograrlo”.

“Sin embargo, mi esposa me dijo: ‘Tengo fe en que lo lograrás. Te ayudaré. No te preocupes por eso’. Ella siempre me ayudó. Ella iba conmigo a las clases. De esa manera, lo logramos”, añadió.

Con su determinación y arduo trabajo, el apoyo de su esposa y la gracia de Dios, Pérez fue ordenado diácono en el 1995 y lo asignaron a servir en su propia parroquia.

SIGUE SIRVIENDO

Convertirse en diácono fue un trabajo duro, pero ser diácono es pura alegría, según el Diácono Pérez.

En enero celebrará su cumpleaños 92 y todavía sigue sirviendo, lo que lo convierte en el diácono activo de mayor edad de la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

El Diácono Pérez es un pilar esencial en la vida de su parroquia. Sirve en las Misas dominicales, oficia funerales y vigilias del rosario, visita a los enfermos, brinda asesoramiento y preparación para



Anastasio "Tacho" Pérez en Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en Wichita Falls. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

el matrimonio, instruye a los candidatos de RICA y lleva la Comunión a los fieles que no pueden salir de sus casas.

Durante el período inicial de la pandemia de coronavirus, la parroquia limitó su servicio de diaconado para reducir su posible exposición al virus. Las restricciones frustraron al Diácono Pérez, aunque entendió que dichas medidas tenían el fin de protegerlo.

Sirve actualmente en la Misa dominical, oficia en los entierros y vigilias, visita a los enfermos y asiste a un grupo espiritual para personas mayores entre semana, tras haber pasado el rol de liderazgo a otro miembro del grupo.

"Cuando me llaman estoy siempre listo para ir a servir. Lo que el sacerdote quiera que yo haga, lo haré", dijo.

El diácono habla inglés y español con fluidez, y le gusta predicar cuando el párroco se lo permite.

Elearza Olguín, que sirve como acólito en la parroquia, se maravilla de

que el Diácono Pérez predica sin usar apuntes, lo hace sólo de memoria. "Tiene mucha fe y siempre enseña el amor de Dios", dijo Olguín.

"Donde realmente brilla es en los entierros y velorios", señala Olguín.

"Cuando alguien ha perdido un pariente, un hijo, una esposa o un esposo, el Diácono Pérez tiene siempre las palabras adecuadas para consolarlos. Sienten su amor, que viene del amor del Señor", dijo.

El Diácono Pérez no tiene planes de retirarse, pues según él, "todavía estoy bastante saludable. Puedo ver bien. Camino bien. Lo disfruto muchísimo. El diácono es realmente un servidor, así que eso es lo que estoy haciendo".

"Dios todavía tiene un propósito para él", dijo su hija Christine Pérez, quien vive con su padre y es la que maneja y lo lleva en su carro la mayor parte del tiempo.

El Diácono Brad Samuelson, que

sirvió con el Diácono Pérez en Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe después de su ordenación en el 2020, lo llama "El Chico".

"El Diácono Tacho es el todo para todos y conoce a todo el mundo. Si no te has sentido conmovido por él todavía, significa que acabas de llegar a la parroquia", dijo el Diácono Samuelson, que ahora sirve en la Parroquia de Santa Rita de Fort Worth. "Es un verdadero siervo y un evangelista natural".

Samuelson agregó que el Diácono Pérez le enseñó la importancia de estar presente. "Su presencia brinda consuelo a la gente", explicó. "A la gente le encanta verlo en el altar y proclamar el Evangelio".

Un diácono dice las palabras de despedida y envió al final de la Misa, tales como: "Pueden ir en paz para glorificar al Señor con sus vidas".

"Ciertamente, el Diácono Pérez lo ha hecho", concluyó diciendo el Diácono Samuelson. ✨



¿Hito? ¡Qué Hito!

Monseñor Juan Rivero, párroco jubilado y administrador diocesano, reflexiona sobre sus 50 años como sacerdote

Por Susan Moses

Monseñor Juan Rivero se acerca a una ocasión muy significativa en su vida. Sin embargo, afirma que no está pensando aún en la celebración del 50^{mo} aniversario de su ordenación sacerdotal.

El prelado señaló que es posible que su familia venga a celebrar con él, pero tal vez la celebración se posponga un mes o más.

Su sacerdocio es lo más importante

para él, pero no las festividades. Monseñor Rivero fue ordenado el 24 de diciembre del 1972. Comentó que ésta es una “fecha incómoda” para reunirse, pues las familias tienen sus planes y el clero está ocupado con las celebraciones de las Misas de Vigilia de Navidad.

Monseñor Rivero ingresó a los Legionarios de Cristo en el 1963 en México, su país natal. Sus estudios de seminario lo llevaron a Irlanda por dos años, donde adquirió más dominio del inglés. Estuvo además en España e Italia. Fue ordenado al sacerdocio en el 1972 en

la Pontificia Universidad Gregoriana de Roma.

Después de servir un tiempo como sacerdote en México y Miami, Monseñor Rivero se enteró de la gran necesidad de sacerdotes bilingües en la Diócesis de Fort Worth y le envió una carta al Obispo Joseph Delaney, en la que le dejaba saber su interés de servir en la Diócesis. Llegó a Fort Worth en el 1982 y fue incardinado como sacerdote diocesano de la Diócesis de Fort Worth en el 1985.

Durante los 40 años que lleva sirviendo en la Diócesis, Monseñor

Rivero ha estado en ocho parroquias y ha ocupado varios puestos administrativos, incluso el de Vicario del Clero y Vicario General. Fue también el primer Director del Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis.

El ex párroco, que ya está jubilado, dijo que se apegó mucho a las comunidades donde sirvió y aún extraña a los feligreses de las parroquias. “Es difícil decir adiós. Es un placer estar cerca de ellos”, señaló con nostalgia.

La celebración de los sacramentos y la vida parroquial han sido los aspectos más destacados de su sacerdocio. “Es un placer acompañar la gente en los éxitos, fracasos y desafíos de sus vidas”, añadió.

Monseñor Rivero continúa celebrando Misa en las parroquias cuando un sacerdote no está disponible. Recibe numerosas solicitudes para casar o bautizar a la segunda o tercera generación de los fieles de las parroquias en donde sirviera anteriormente.

CÁLIDA BIENVENIDA

En las parroquias donde sirvió, entre ellas, la Inmaculada Concepción de Denton y los Holy Angels de Clifton, Monseñor Rivero se esforzó siempre por conocer a los feligreses, especialmente en las parroquias más grandes. El sacerdote acostumbraba prepararse temprano para la Misa y entonces saludar a los feligreses en los bancos antes de la Misa para que estuvieran relajados y se sintieran bienvenidos a la celebración Eucarística.

“La gente odia a los sacerdotes gruñones”, dijo, y agregó que tanto en sus homilías como en el confesionario, “les da la bienvenida a los feligreses, no importa quienes sean” y trata de reflejar que “Dios no juzga. Este Dios gozoso no es un Dios gruñón”.

Su asignación más larga, que duró desde el año 2,000 hasta su jubilación en el 2015, fue sirviendo de párroco en la Parroquia de St. Frances Cabrini de Granbury y la Parroquia de Santa Rosa de Lima de Glen Rose. Monseñor Rivero se desempeñó también como Vicario

del Clero, Decano del Decanato del Sur y Administrador Parroquial de Holy Angels y Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Morgan.

Comentó que manejó bien sus variadas responsabilidades porque “siempre encontró personas realmente buenas, dispuestas a ayudar” en cada parroquia y apostolado de la Diócesis, donde sirvió. “No me gusta micro-administrar; me gusta delegar. Es muy importante tratar de incluir a la gente tanto como puedas para hacerles sentir que son parte de la comunidad”, dijo.

AL SERVICIO DE LA DIÓCESIS

Monseñor Rivero aportó a sentar las bases de importantes ministerios que hoy día aún prosperan en la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

El Obispo Delaney le pidió el mismo año que llegó a Fort Worth que dirigiera el Movimiento de Cursillos, que se estableció en la Diócesis, pero que se reunía en Dallas. El Obispo había comprado una antigua iglesia bautista en el norte de Fort Worth, que Monseñor Rivero ayudó a renovar para convertirla en el Centro de Cursillos (actualmente, el Centro de Formación Diocesano).

Monseñor Rivero solía organizar programas 48 fines de semana al año en el Centro de Cursillos durante sus años de apogeo. Se ofrecían retiros, en inglés y español, para los jóvenes, los adultos y las familias. Él recuerda: “Pese a que uno se sentía molido los lunes, valió siempre la pena”.

Alrededor del mismo tiempo, se le pidió que creara la Oficina del Ministerio Hispano.

Monseñor Rivero señaló que la “Oficina del Ministerio Hispano” no tenía en realidad una oficina como tal. En cambio, operaba desde “dondequiera que estuvieras”. Monseñor no quiso tomarse el crédito por establecer el ministerio, pues enfatizó que encontró “personas de tremenda fe” en grupos establecidos dentro de las parroquias, y que él

simplemente los coordinó. “No fui yo, sino que el ministerio ya existía entre los feligreses”, dijo.

Monseñor Rivero ha notado que escucha a más gente hablar español hoy día mientras realiza sus actividades diarias en la región e indicó que la necesidad del ministerio hispano es aún más importante en estos momentos.

El Papa Benedicto XVI le confirió el 27 de marzo del 2012 el título eclesiástico de honor de “Monseñor, Capellán de Su Santidad” a Monseñor Rivero, a petición del entonces Obispo Kevin Vann.

El Obispo Vann elogió al sacerdote por su gran dedicación, por ayudar al Obispo a desarrollar un programa espiritual para los sacerdotes y por dirigir el Movimiento de Cursillos y el Ministerio Hispano.

El sacerdote jubilado objetó que el honor reflejara algún logro especial. “Sigo siendo simplemente un sacerdote”, dijo, y apuntó que el título demostraba la “naturaleza generosa y agradecida” del Obispo Vann.

HOGAR FELIZ

Cuando no está sirviendo como sacerdote suplente, Monseñor Rivero goza de la tranquilidad de una “vida pacífica” en su casa cerca de Cleburne, rodeado de caballos y llamas. Disfruta de la compañía de sus dos perros labradoodles y cultiva cebollas, tomates, hierbas y pepinos, frutos que se come, a menos que “los grillos se los coman primero”.

A medida que envejece, ha reducido sus grandes aventuras de acampada, pero de vez en cuando se va a acampar a un lago cerca de su casa.

Al reflexionar sobre su pasado y su vocación sacerdotal, que comenzó en la Ciudad de México y que eventualmente lo trajo a Fort Worth, afirmó: “Nunca sabes a dónde te llevará el Señor, dónde te guiará o las diferentes circunstancias que enfrentarás en tu ministerio. Se dan cosas tan diversas”.

“Dios es bueno. El hecho de que yo esté aquí hoy es la prueba”. 🍀

Una celebración

MIRE MÁS
FOTOS



Mire las demás fotos de las celebraciones escaneando el código QR arriba.



Feligréses por toda la diócesis honran a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe con misa, procesiones y bailes

Feligréses de todas edades y parroquias celebraron la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en gran manera este mes.

El 11 de diciembre, cientos de feligréses en Fort Worth se juntaron en la Parroquia de All Saints para una procesión desde esa iglesia hasta la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en Blue Mound Road — una distancia de más de tres millas. La procesion concluyo con Misa.

En la Parroquia de St. Francis Xavier en Eastland, se llevo a cabo una Novena de la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe que concluyó diciembre 12 con una procesión, Rosario, Misa, y comida y social.

El mismo día en Nolan Catholic High School, el grupo de ballet folklorico hizo un baile especial para honrar a la Patrona de Las Americas. Despues, los estudiantes disfrutaron de pan dulce. 🇺🇸

sagrada



El grupo Danza Guadalupeños abre el camino al ritmo de los tambores de Omar Alonso durante una procesión desde la Iglesia de Todos los Santos a la Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe a través del norte de Fort Worth. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Paola López fue la parte de la Virgen María durante una procesión en honor a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe el domingo 11 de diciembre de 2022. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



El Ballet Folklórico "La Vikina" de Nolan Catholic High School honro la Virgen con un baile especial el 12 de diciembre en la preparatoria. Aquí, Anayansi Camargo baila con Alex Aleman. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



Una niña se viste como la Virgen María, en la Parroquia de St. Francis Xavier en Eastland durante una Misa el 12 de diciembre. (NTC/Carolina Boelter)

Hasta la próxima vez

El Padre Balaji Boyalla, SAC, irá a India para dirigir la Región Gloria Dei como Rector Regional

Por Susan Moses



El Padre Balaji Boyalla da la comunión durante la Misa del 10 de diciembre en la Parroquia de St. Michael. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

El Padre Balaji Boyalla, SAC, necesitará unas maletas muy grandes cuando viaje a la India para asumir el cargo de Rector Regional de la Región Gloria Dei de la Sociedad del Apostolado Católico, a quienes se les conoce también como los Sacerdotes Palotinos.

El párroco de St. Michael en Bedford

empacará lo que él describe como una cantidad “incomprensible” de amor que recibió durante sus más de 14 años que sirvió en la Diócesis de Fort Worth, además del aliento y el apoyo de sus feligreses, sus hermanos sacerdotes y el Reverendísimo Obispo Michael Olson.

Padre Boyalla fue elegido para dirigir la Región Gloria Dei, con sede en el

estado de Andhra Pradesh de la India. La Sociedad consta de 43 sacerdotes que sirven en 11 parroquias diferentes, tres escuelas y tres orfanatos en la India, así como de los sacerdotes que sirven en las diócesis de Fort Worth y Detroit. Incluye también sacerdotes que actualmente sirven en Canadá, Italia, Alemania y Sudáfrica.

El Padre Boyalla no solicitó para el término de los tres años que requiere el cargo; no obstante, después de la elección respondió decididamente: “Ellos confían en mí, así que yo confío en Dios, y Dios me guiará tal y como lo ha planeado.

“Creo firmemente que estas cosas no sucederían, a menos que haya sido por la mano de Dios. Por eso no puedo decir que no; sino que lo tomo como mi gran responsabilidad hacia mis sacerdotes”, explicó.

La Región Gloria Dei se creó en el 2020 cuando la Provincia de la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen María se dividió debido al crecimiento del número de los Sacerdotes Palotinos en la India. Padre Boyalla será su segundo Rector Regional y comenzará su mandato el 6 de enero.

SU TIEMPO DE SERVICIO EN TEXAS

El Padre Boyalla recuerda claramente el día que llegó a la Diócesis de Fort Worth, el 22 de agosto del 2008. Fue asignado originalmente a la Parroquia de la Sagrada Familia de Fort Worth. El sacerdote estaba preocupado de que su baja estatura y su acento pudieran marcarlo como una persona ajena.

Sus dos años en dicha parroquia “me levantaron el ánimo y me animaron”, exclamó y señaló que los feligreses se reían de sus chistes, incluso cuando el sacerdote sospechaba que no lo habían entendido.

Monseñor Joseph Pemberton, que era el párroco en ese momento, le inculcó una práctica que se ha convertido en una prioridad perdurable para el Padre Boyalla: visitar a los enfermos y las personas que no pueden salir de sus casas.

Padre Boyalla explicó que “Estos feligreses han dado su dinero; han dado su talento; han lavado la ropa del sacerdote; y han limpiado las rectorías... y hecho tantas otras cosas. Cuando no consiguen que nadie los vea, se sienten muy solos... El regalo más grande que le puedes dar a la gente es visitar a los enfermos, darles la Comunión y

brindarles los sacramentos”.

Cuando comenzó en el 2010 una asignación de ocho años en la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Lourdes de Mineral Wells y la Parroquia de San Francisco de Asís de Graford, “Simplemente me acogieron muy cálidamente. Fue una experiencia muy maravillosa”.

El Padre Boyalla se sintió un poco atemorizado en el 2018 al ser nombrado párroco de la Parroquia de St. Michael de Bedford. Se preguntaba, “¿Cómo voy a manejar una parroquia tan grande?” Sin embargo, experimentó una vez más una “efusión de amor” en su ministerio sacerdotal y le da crédito y se lo agradece a su excelente personal por la gran dedicación al dirigir las actividades diarias de la vibrante parroquia.

La prioridad del Padre Boyalla en cada lugar donde estuvo asignado fue siempre la construcción de una comunidad espiritualmente fuerte. Ha sido también muy significativo la visita a los enfermos y el fomento de las vocaciones religiosas.

EL SIGUIENTE CAPÍTULO

Sus años en el norte de Texas ayudaron a preparar al Padre Boyalla para su nuevo cargo, señaló el sacerdote. Se ha “convertido en un sacerdote maduro” y ha aprendido cualidades de liderazgo del Obispo Kevin Vann, del Obispo Michael Olson y sus mentores sacerdotes.

Aprecia especialmente la confianza que el Obispo Olson depositó en él al nombrarlo Decano de las 11 parroquias del Decanato del Suroeste y al nombrarlo párroco de St. Michael.

“Su confianza me hizo más responsable”, explicó el Padre Boyalla, que fue ordenado al sacerdocio en el 1999.

Cuando el Padre Boyalla asuma el rol de liderazgo como el Rector Regional de la Región Gloria Dei de la Sociedad del Apostolado Católico, su prioridad será lograr que “todos los sacerdotes sean felices en su vocación y ministerio”.

La mayoría de los sacerdotes de la Región Gloria Dei son jóvenes y él quiere guiarlos para que “se conviertan en buenos líderes, sobretodo, buenos líderes espirituales. Desea ayudarles a encontrar la verdadera satisfacción en su vocación y ministerio sacerdotal”.

Quiere escucharlos, comprenderlos y guiarlos “con un corazón compasivo y bondadoso”. Añadió que al hacer esto aprenderá también de ellos.

El Padre Vijaya Mareedu, SAC, párroco de la Parroquia de San Juan de Strawn, la Parroquia de San Francisco Xavier de Eastland, la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora del Santo Rosario de Cisco y la Parroquia de Santa Rita de Ranger conoce personalmente el liderazgo del Padre Boyalla.

Cuando el Padre Mareedu, que pertenece también a la Región Gloria Dei, llegó a la Diócesis de Fort Worth en el 2018 fue el Padre Boyalla quien le sirvió como guía para navegar el choque cultural al que se enfrentó en este país, que queda a unas 9,000 millas de su país natal.

La “pequeña dinamita”, como le llama afectuosamente el Padre Mareedu, fue un modelo a seguir al construir una verdadera comunidad, además de ser un amigo cariñoso.

“Él sabe llegar a cada persona, comprende a cada individuo y le da tiempo a los demás. Él ve lo bueno que hay en cada persona y saca a relucir sus talentos”.

HASTA LA PRÓXIMA

Los feligreses de St. Michael tuvieron la oportunidad el fin de semana del 10 y 11 de diciembre de compartir sus buenos deseos con el Padre Boyalla.

Padre Boyalla se convirtió en ciudadano de los Estados Unidos en el 2019 y espera regresar a la Diócesis de Fort Worth cuando finalice su mandato (que podría extenderse otros tres años). “Ojalá, si es la voluntad de Dios, pueda volver a este país después de terminar mi mandato como Rector Regional”, expresó. 🇺🇸

NAVIDAD AÚN NO HA
TERMINADO



NTC/Maria Diaz

Las celebraciones navideñas continúan, incluso después de Navidad, con Solemnidades y Fiestas litúrgicas

Los platos de la cena navideña están apilados en el fregadero; el papel de regalo tirado en una esquina todo arrugado como si fuera una ameiba; algunos están jugando con sus nuevos regalos, otros se prueban su ropa nueva o están durmiendo la siesta. Supongo que esto significa que la Navidad ya se terminó, ¡a tan sólo las 3 p.m. del día de Navidad!

Tal vez, ésta sea la forma en que se celebra esta fiesta en el mundo secular, pero en la Iglesia Católica la celebración apenas comienza ese día. De hecho, contando el día de Navidad y los siguientes 17 días, se celebrarán un total de siete Solemnidades y Fiestas litúrgicas. Durante este tiempo se celebra la mayor concentración de días especiales en el calendario litúrgico de la Iglesia.

Antes de continuar, quisiera explicar ciertos términos. Hasta hace poco ignoraba mayormente la diferencia entre Solemnidad, Fiesta y Memoria. Sabía que eran días especiales, pero no tenía una idea clara de qué los diferenciaba entre sí.

La Solemnidad es la celebración de mayor rango entre las celebraciones de la Iglesia Católica. Hay 24 solemnidades que se celebran durante el Año Litúrgico. Una Solemnidad es un día en que se conmemora y glorifica un acontecimiento importante de la vida de Jesús y los misterios más significativos de la fe católica, tales

como la Natividad de Nuestro Señor, la Epifanía, Pascua de Resurrección, Pentecostés y la Santísima Trinidad. Tenemos varias solemnidades que honran a la Santísima Madre: el día de Santa María, Madre de

Dios, la Anunciación del Señor, la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen María y la Inmaculada Concepción. Algunos santos son reconocidos con una Solemnidad; entre ellos, San José, el Nacimiento de San Juan Bautista, los Santos Pedro y Pablo, Apóstoles, y Todos los Santos.

Las celebraciones que se identifican en el calendario litúrgico de la Iglesia como Fiesta son de menor rango que las solemnidades y suelen honrar a un santo especial o uno de los apóstoles, así como otros acontecimientos importantes de la historia del cristianismo como el Bautismo del Señor, la Conversión de San Pablo y la Transfiguración. La mayoría de las Fiestas son fechas fijas en el calendario litúrgico.

Una Memoria es una celebración de menor rango de un santo o acontecimiento de la vida de Jesucristo o de la Virgen María. Sin embargo, todos los sacerdotes deben recordar el santo que se conmemora en la Misa diaria y en la Liturgia de las Horas.

Algunas de las Memorias son opcionales, ya que no son tan importantes. Se deja a discreción del



Jeff Hedglen

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 66

AMBIENTE SEGURO

Para Reportar Mala Conducta Sexual:

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

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

Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha de Abuso:

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

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

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



DE LA PÁGINA 65

sacerdote celebrarlas o no. Los santos o acontecimientos celebrados en estos días festivos se consideran de menor importancia universal para la Iglesia.

A continuación aparecen las próximas celebraciones especiales en el calendario litúrgico, las fechas en que se celebrarán y qué tipo de celebración es cada una:

25 DE DICIEMBRE: Navidad, Solemnidad

26 DE DICIEMBRE: San Esteban, primer mártir, Fiesta

27 DE DICIEMBRE: San Juan Apóstol, Fiesta

30 DE DICIEMBRE: Sagrada Familia, Fiesta

1 DE ENERO: María Madre de Dios, Solemnidad

8 DE ENERO: Epifanía, Solemnidad

9 DE ENERO: Bautismo del Señor, Fiesta

La Iglesia tiene varias categorías de días especiales, no sólo para celebrar y honrar a Nuestro Señor y María Santísima, y los acontecimientos asombrosos de la vida de la Iglesia y los santos, sino también para invitar a todos los fieles a participar de la vida de la Iglesia de una manera más profunda. Es como cuando celebramos el cumpleaños o el aniversario de las personas que amamos. Claro, podríamos simplemente enviar una tarjeta o enviar un mensaje de Facebook, pero todos sabemos que ir en persona y celebrar con esa persona es una celebración más especial y un reconocimiento más profundo.

Lo mismo sucede cuando la Iglesia se reúne para una Solemnidad, Fiesta o Memoria. No es mera casualidad que

la Iglesia se llame a menudo la Familia de Dios, porque somos una sola familia, y como familia, nos gusta reunirnos en ocasiones especiales.

Un amigo sacerdote me dijo hace unos años que en los días festivos especiales del Año Litúrgico, a menudo reúne a un par de amigos y se dirige a Dairy Queen para tomarse un 'Blizzard' y así todos celebrar juntos. Los exhorto a que en esta temporada de Navidad se reúnan con su comunidad parroquial y celebren los grandes santos y los momentos especiales que se recuerdan en esta época del año. ¡Luego, diríjense a algún lugar para disfrutar de un convite con sus amigos o familia y continuar la celebración! 🇺🇸

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LA FAMILIA ES EL CAMPO DE FORMACIÓN DEL AMOR

Algunos de ustedes me han oído hablar de mis experiencias pasadas como sacerdote especialista en ética en las que serví como consultor en el campo del cuidado de la salud. Una de mis responsabilidades era ayudar a las personas a preparar sus poderes notariales duraderos para el cuidado de la salud, especialmente en lo que respecta a la tradición católica de los medios de tratamiento médico ordinarios y extraordinarios.

Cada vez que hacía mi presentación, alguien inevitablemente diría: “Padre, simplemente no quiero pasar los años de mi vejez siendo una carga para mis hijos”. Yo les respondía siempre: “Entiendo, pero es demasiado tarde. Ya eres una carga para tus hijos y lo han sido durante toda su vida, y ellos para ustedes”.

Encontramos en el Libro de Sirácida (Eclesiástico) la siguiente cita: “Hijo mío, cuida de tu padre cuando llegue a viejo; mientras viva, no le causes tristeza. Si se debilita su espíritu, aguántalo; no lo desprecies porque tú te sientes en la plenitud de tus fuerzas. El bien que hayas hecho a tu padre no será olvidado; se te tomará en cuenta como una reparación de tus pecados; la bendición de un padre afianza la casa de sus hijos” (*Sir 3:12-14*).

Cuando se trata de nuestras responsabilidades y relaciones dentro de nuestra propia familia, con frecuencia hacemos la suposición errónea de que

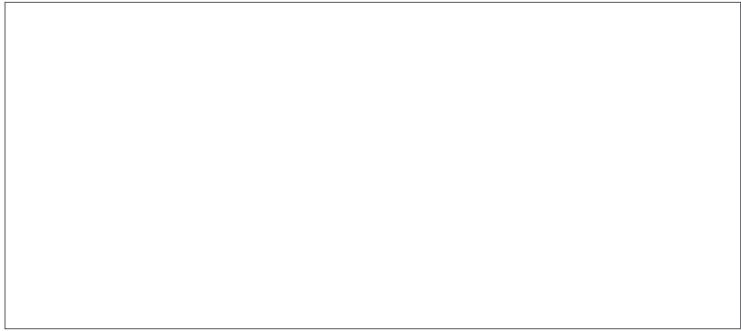
no debemos ser una carga los unos para los otros como miembros de la misma familia. La Fiesta de la Sagrada Familia que se avvicina nos afirma que la redención de la humanidad por Cristo comienza con la redención de la vida familiar a través de la aceptación de la voluntad de Dios por parte de María y José; y el amor desinteresado y agobiante que se ofrecieron el uno al otro, y a Jesús, a lo largo de sus vidas.

Escuchamos en el Evangelio de Lucas cómo José y María, observando las leyes rituales, llevaron a Jesús al Templo para presentarlo a Dios. Se encontraron en el Templo con dos ancianos, cuya gran fe les lleva a ver que el Niño Jesús es el cumplimiento de la promesa de Dios de salvar a Su pueblo.

El justo y piadoso Simeón fue dirigido por el Espíritu al Templo, donde reconoció a Jesús como la fuente de salvación para todos los pueblos. Pudo prever también la controversia que traería Jesús al mundo, y los sufrimientos que Él y los que creen en Él enfrentarían: “Mira, este niño está puesto para caída y elevación de muchos en Israel, y para ser señal de contradicción —y a ti misma una espada te atravesará el alma! — a fin de que queden al descubierto las intenciones de muchos corazones” (*Lc 2, 34-35*). Esta profecía de Simeón de que la espada traspasaría el corazón de la Santísima Virgen manifiesta que

era parte del plan de Dios que María y José compartiesen el sufrimiento de Jesús por su amor a Él y su fidelidad a Dios. Parte de ese sufrimiento incluiría el rechazo de Jesús por parte de muchos de Su propia familia extendida en su ciudad natal de Nazaret que se negaron a creer en Él. Nos muestra además que las cargas relacionadas con el matrimonio y la vida familiar no son sólo parte de la naturaleza humana, sino que son vehículos para la gracia de Dios y la redención del pecado.

Es importante que celebremos también a la Sagrada Familia en la Navidad como ejemplo e intercesora de cada una de nuestras familias, ya que aquéllos a quienes hemos sido entregados y que nos han acogido en su vida, nos aportan fuerza y gracia en nuestras vidas. No debemos tener una idea ingenua de las familias; las familias pueden ser fuente de gran alegría y felicidad, pero también pueden ser fuente de gran sufrimiento y tragedia. Los amores más profundos y las heridas más profundas se asocian a la familia. Dios nos hizo para ser parte de una comunidad, nos guste o no. No existe tal cosa como una persona completamente autónoma o que se hizo a sí misma. Somos lo que somos gracias sólo a ser parte de una familia y una comunidad. Por eso, la Iglesia enseña que es la familia, y no el individuo, la célula fundamental de la sociedad. ✝



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