

NEWSMAGAZINE North Texas Catholic

Bringing the Good News to the Diocese of Fort Worth Vol. 32 No. 2 March / April 2016

Diocese's parishes and Catholic Charities welcome the stranger



Read about our diocese's broad-ranging efforts to help immigrants and refugees.

(NTC Photo / Susan Moses)

P. 10-13

Español

P. 42-45

Masood Hajizada reads in English to his two school-age sons every day for 30 minutes. He and his family resettled in Fort Worth with the assistance of Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) late last year.

In This Issue...

5 OFFICIAL ASSIGNMENTS

We say "Thank you" to departing priests for their service and announce new assignments for two of our permanent deacons.



4 POPE FRANCIS VENERATES OLG

From Tuxtla Gutierrez in the south, to Ciudad Juarez in the north, Pope Francis brought his honest, enthusiastic presence to the people of Mexico, venerating the original image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, perhaps changing how the world sees her patronage of all peoples.

7 MARRIAGE REQUIREMENTS AND MARRIAGE TEACHINGS

The requirements for entering into a marriage in our diocese and the Church's teachings on marriage are detailed.



9 BISHOP LOPES ORDAINED, APPOINTED ORDINARY

When Bishop-elect Steven Lopes was ordained a bishop and made the ordinary of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, it marked a new high point for the integration of former Anglicans into the Catholic Church.

14 CLOSING OF YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

Ursuline Sister Bridget Haase and Indianapolis Archbishop Joseph Tobin joined Bishop Michael Olson in bringing Christ-centered wisdom and great respect to the religious of our diocese as we honored them one last time in closing the observation of the Year of Consecrated Life.



16 TCU'S NEWMAN CENTER OFFERS CATHOLIC STUDENTS A HOME

Catholic students and alumni from Texas Christian University and friends of the TCU Catholic Community gathered to celebrate Bishop Olson's blessing of their new Newman Center on Berry Street in Southwest Fort Worth on Jan. 20.

30 PENELOPE POLKA MASS HELPS KEEP TRADITIONS ALIVE

In January Father Michael Holmberg celebrated a traditional Polka Mass with music provided by the Jodie Mikula Orchestra at Penelope's Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Parish.



25 MSGR. PUBLIUS XUEREB LOVES BRINGING BEAUTY INTO CHURCH

Msgr. Publius loves being a parish priest, and he loves bringing bright artistic creations into the church he pastors, Holy Redeemer Church in Aledo. To read a more detailed account of his life, go to northtexascatholic.org

Front cover: Masood Hajizada reads in English to his two school-age sons every day for 30 minutes. He and his family resettled in Fort Worth with the assistance of Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) late last year. See stories on services offered to immigrants and refugees in our parishes and by Catholic Charities on pages 10-13 and in Spanish on pages 42-45.



28 CHUCK PELLETIER REMEMBERED AS PATRIARCH, LOVER OF GOD AND CHILDREN, BORN AND UNBORN

Thousands of children and many now adults owe their very existence to the loving pro-life ministry of Chuck Pelletier. His life was too short, but his legacy will be timeless, extending across generations.

North Texas Catholic



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Year of Mercy challenges us to offer God's mercy

With the Jubilee Year of Mercy shaping our experience of Lent and Easter, we see the events of the Incarnation differently. We're offered a lens that helps us see God's gift of his Son in a new light. And we see Jesus' embrace of his earthly life and the acceptance of his crucifixion differently too.

In the Father's gift of his Son and the Son's gift of his persecution, suffering, and death on the cross, we see the ultimate acts of mercy.

How much more of a sense of our own obligation to offer mercy to others can we experience?

In this issue, we hear Pope Francis's call to us to hear the cries of the poor in Mexico and in our own country.

In particular, he challenges our acceptance of the plight of refugees in both countries, our inaction.

They call the train that so many economic refugees ride up from Central America "The Beast." And the beast has devoured many who have been swept from the rooftops of its cars to their deaths.

My wife carries a photo in her smart phone showing crowds of primarily young men riding atop the train. It is frightening, to say the least.

And some of the students she teaches English as a Second Language to on the East Side of Fort Worth at Poly High School have made the trek up through Mexico in this fashion.

But her ESL classes include refugees from around the world. She teaches kids from the Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Burma, and Nepal — among others.

She and her friend of 40-plus years, Mrs. Mathes, have the kids write autobiographies each spring. They tell their life stories, sharing them in little books on a day late in the year when other students and people from the community come to read them, honoring the students as authors.

Their stories reveal tales of family loyalty and love. But they also reveal great traumas many have experienced: watching their homes and belongings burn, making outrageously dangerous journeys to safety, watching family members be killed.

For them, their journeys here represent a form of the Passion; the nurturing they receive as Americans in formation, a kind of resurrection.

Jeff Hensley

'No more death, no more exploit

Pope Francis says at U.S.-Mexi

By David Agren
Catholic News Service

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico — Speaking from the symbolic platform of the U.S.-Mexico border, Pope Francis pleaded for the plight of immigrants while warning those refusing to offer safe shelter and passage that their actions and inhospitable attitudes were bringing about dishonor and self-destruction as their hearts hardened and they “lost their sensitivity to pain.”

Recalling the story of Jonah and his instructions from God to save the sinful city of Ninevah by telling the residents that “injustice has infected their way of seeing the world,” Pope Francis’ homily called for compassion, change, and conversion on migration issues.

He alluded to Mexico and the United States as Ninevah, the city he said was showing symptoms of “self-destruction as a result of oppression, dishonor, violence, and injustice.” He also said mercy was a way to win over opponents.

He also preached urgency.

“We cannot deny the humanitarian crisis which in recent years has meant the migration of thousands of people, whether by train or highway or on foot, crossing hundreds of kilometers through mountains, deserts, and inhospitable areas,” Pope Francis said Feb. 17 to hundreds of thousands of people from both sides of the border.

“The human tragedy that is forced migration is a global phenomenon today. This crisis, which can be measured in numbers and statistics, we want to measure instead with names, stories, and families.”

The Mass capped a six-day trip to Mexico in which Pope Francis traveled to the northern and southern borders and denounced the indignities of discrimination, corruption, and violence. During the trip he also asked oft-oppressed indigenous peoples for their forgiveness and chastised the privileged political and business classes — saying their exclusionary actions were creating “fertile ground” for



Pope Francis prays at a cross on the border with El Paso before celebrating Mass at the fairgrounds in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, Feb. 17. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

children to fall into organized crime and drug cartels.

The Mass was celebrated as a binational event with thousands watching across the Rio Grande in El Paso and in a college football stadium. Pope Francis saluted the crowds watching at the Sun Bowl stadium and Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso for providing technological connections that allowed them to “pray, sing, and celebrate together” and “make us feel like a single family and the same Christian community.”

The pope focused on migration, along with the dangers migrants encounter en route to their destinations and the difficulties of surviving on the margins of society without protections.

Migration has marked Mexico for generations, though the number of Mexicans leaving the country is now surpassed by those returning — involuntarily or otherwise — as poor job prospects, an increasingly fortified border, and anti-immigration initiatives prompt most to stay put.

Ironically, Mexico has assumed an unlikely role over the past several years: enforcer, as it detains and deports record numbers of

Central Americans trying to transit the country — while many more of those migrants are preyed upon by criminals and corrupt public officials and suffer crimes such as kidnap, robbery, and rape. The Mexican crackdown came after thousands of Central American children streamed through Mexico in 2014, seeking to escape forced enlistment in gangs and hoping to reunite with parents living in the shadows of American society, working minimum-wage jobs to support children left with relatives they hadn’t seen in years.

“Each step, a journey laden with grave injustices. ... They are brothers and sisters of those excluded as a result of poverty and violence, drug trafficking, and criminal organizations,” Pope Francis said, while lauding the priests, religious, and lay Catholics who accompany and protect migrants as they move through Mexico — acts of compassion not always popular with the authorities.

“They are on the front lines, often risking their own lives,” he said. “By their very lives they are prophets of mercy. They are the beating heart and accompanying feet of the Church that opens its arms and sustains.”

“They are brothers and sisters of those ex-



Coitation' Mexico border

The Pope in Mexico

Photos and articles about all of the pope's appearances during his visit to Mexico Feb. 12-17 are available on the NTC website:

northtexascatholic.org/national-news



Pope Francis wears a sombrero during his arrival to Mexico City Feb. 12. (CNS photo/Gustavo Camacho, Presidency of Mexico via Reuters)



Pope Francis greets a disabled boy and his father during the pope's arrival in Mexico City Feb. 12. (CNS photo/Gustavo Camacho, Presidency of Mexico via EPA)

cluded as a result of poverty and violence, drug trafficking and criminal organizations,” Pope Francis said. “Injustice is radicalized in the young. They are ‘cannon fodder,’ persecuted

and threatened when they try to flee the spiral of violence and hell of drugs. Then there are the women unjustly robbed of their lives.”

Pope Francis ended his homily by returning to the example of Jonah and his call for conversion in Ninevah. He called “mercy, which always rejects wickedness,” a way to win over opponents, saying it “always appeals to the latent and numbed goodness in every person,” and urged people to follow Jonah’s example.

“Just as in Jonah’s time, so too today may we commit ourselves to conversion,” Pope Francis said. “May we commit ourselves to conversion. May we be signs lighting the way and announcing salvation.”

The pope’s visit was promoted by civic officials as a rebirth for Ciudad Juarez, though priests say the city still suffers vices such as exclusion and violence — in lower numbers than before — and jobs with low salaries and long hours in the booming factory for export economy, all of which strain family life.



POPE FRANCIS WAS ASKED WHAT HE WAS PRAYING FOR DURING THE 20 MINUTES HE SAT BEFORE THE IMAGE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE IN MEXICO CITY.

He said he prayed for so many things that Mary, “poor thing,” probably had a headache when he was done. He said he prayed for forgiveness, for the growth of the Church, for the Mexican people, for priests, nuns, bishops. “I asked for a lot.”

But he would not say more or give more details. “The things a child tells his mother are kind of secret,” he explained.

Excerpted from Cindy Wooden's Vatican Letter. Cindy Wooden is Catholic News Service's Rome Bureau Chief.



CLERGY ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

by Most Rev. Michael F. Olson, STD, MA



PASTORS

Rev. Isaac Orozco, Pastor of Holy Angels Parish in Clifton and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Morgan, will be on sabbatical effective Feb. 8, 2016.

DEPARTURES

Rev. Julio Rivero, TOR, recently assigned to St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth, has been recalled by his

Religious Order community, effective Jan. 5, 2016

Rev. John Karanja, SAC, Parochial Administrator of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, has been recalled by his Religious Order community in Africa, effective Dec. 22, 2015.

Rev. Richard Johnston, SCJ, retired and residing in the Diocese of Fort Worth,

has moved out of the diocese, effective Feb. 3, 2016.

Rev. Glen Mullan, a Priest of the Diocese of Corpus Christi, has left ministry at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, effective Feb. 9, 2016, with our sincere gratitude for his service to the Diocese of Fort Worth.

DEACONS

Dcn. Art Casias, is appointed

to Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton, from Holy Family of Nazareth Parish in Vernon, St. Joseph Parish in Crowell, and St. Mary Parish in Quanah, effective Jan. 15, 2016.

Deacon Edward Ferguson, new to the Diocese of Fort Worth is appointed to St. Rita Parish in Ranger, effective Feb. 1, 2016.

Thousands witness to life at North Texas March for Life Jan. 16 in Dallas

DIOCESAN, LOCAL & STATE NEWSBRIEFS

St. John the Apostle School to celebrate 50th anniversary with Golden Gala April 30



Photo by Ben Torres / NTC

Mariana Schroeder, of Fort Worth, with her daughter Mariana, speaks outside of the Earle Cabell Federal Building during the North Texas March for Life and Rally. Schroeder is the new Youth and Young Adult Assistant for the Hispanic Pastoral Ministry of the Catholic Pro-Life Committee of North Texas.

by Juan Guajardo
Associate Editor

DALLAS — Despite blustery winds and occasional rain, more than 2,000 people gathered outside a familiar downtown Dallas landmark Jan. 16 to remember the millions of unborn children lost to abortion, and to commemorate the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion.

The Earle Cabell Federal Courthouse, the site where *Roe v. Wade* was first heard, was again the backdrop for the North Texas March for Life and Rally. That case eventually made its way up to the Supreme Court, where the justices voted 7-2 to legalize abortion nationwide in 1973. The annual march and rally, which is now in its 43rd year, is the largest event held in memory of *Roe v. Wade* in Texas, according to the Catholic Pro-Life Committee of Dallas.

The day began with prayer at local abortion facilities, continued with a Procession of Roses representing the millions of children who were aborted over the years since the decision, and segued into a memorial Mass at the Kay Bailey Hutchison

Convention Center.

Afterward, pro-lifers of various Christian denominations and ages marched through the streets of downtown Dallas to the courthouse for the rally. Speakers included Dallas Bishop Kevin Farrell, Mariana Schroeder of the Catholic Pro-Life Committee of North Texas, prominent evangelical pastor and leader Dr. Tony Evans of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, and Jewels Green, a former abortion worker turned human rights advocate.

Frances Di Jeh, a member of the University Catholic Community at the University of Texas at Arlington, said it was her third time to attend the march and rally.

“I went to the march because I wanted to join in witnessing for the culture of life, namely to protect the lives of unborn children,” Di Jeh told the *NTC*. “As part of the Year of Mercy, this is also a spiritual work of mercy directed towards praying for an end to abortion.

“Aside from the prayer part, it’s important to me because it lets me see that there are so many more pro-life people out there and most are young people. It gives hope.”

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS — St. John the Apostle Catholic School is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a Golden Gala on April 30 at 6 p.m. in the Grand Hall at NRH Centre, 6000 Hawk Avenue in North Richland Hills.

The gala, themed 50 Years in the Light of Christ, will feature silent and live auctions, a buffet dinner, and plenty of opportunities to socialize.

Principal Amy Felton said all parents and friends of the school are invited to come and enjoy the evening event. Alumni and retired teachers are also invited to come and share their memories, and hear about the success the school has had in the last 50 years.

St. John the Apostle School was founded in 1965 when parishioners committed to building a day school for the children of their growing church community. Using two army surplus buildings purchased for \$3,000, volunteers renovated the buildings into classrooms. In 1966, a separate permanent building was finished in time for the fall semester.

Fifty years later, school leaders are celebrating an exemplary accreditation review that was earned in the fall of 2015, and a school campus that has grown to include the Monsignor



Photo courtesy Amy Felton

This 1971 photo shows students at St. John the Apostle School.

Charles B. King Library and Pam Ratliff Media Center, new classrooms for kindergarten, first-, and second-graders, a science lab, Mary’s Prayer Garden, and several outside learning areas for all students.

“We invite you to come visit the school and attend our Golden Gala. See how we have grown and become a part of our next 50 years,” Felton said.

Tickets for the Golden Gala can be purchased by emailing auction@stjs.org or contacting Amy Felton at afelton@stjs.org or 817-284-2228.

Alumni who plan on attending the event should email sjsalumni@stjs.org. More information can be found on the alumni Facebook page: 50th Anniversary St. John the Apostle Catholic School, or on www.stjs.org.

RACHEL'S CORNER

Women in crisis pregnancy are told that abortion will solve their problem. Unfortunately, abortion creates much larger problems of its own, that can plague a woman for many years.

Are you suffering after abortion? Call Rachel Ministries and let them help you.

Rachel Ministries
817-923-4757
Next Retreat April 29

Diocese reinstates *Nihil Obstat* for marriage

COUPLES WHO BEGIN MARRIAGE PREPARATION STARTING THIS YEAR WILL HAVE THE TRIBUNAL VERIFY THEIR DOCUMENTATION.

The Tribunal confirms that all the steps required by the Catholic Church for a valid marriage to be contracted have been met by both the bride and groom.

Very Rev. Anh Tran, JCL, judicial vicar of the Tribunal, reviews the documentation, ensuring that the requirements have been met. Then, Fr. Tran grants the decree of *Nihil Obstat* and sends it to the parish. *Nihil Obstat* is Latin for “nothing hinders.”

“The Church and state give the priest or deacon the power to function as a minister of matrimony in conjunction with his ordination, and he cannot act outside of that faculty,” explained Fr. Tran. “In the first years of the diocese, Bishop Cassata required the *Nihil Obstat*. We have brought back this measure to make certain the deacon or priest is following all the steps required by Church and civil law for a valid marriage.”

At least one month prior to the wedding, the parish priest or deacon submits the completed documentation, including:

- Prenuptial Questionnaire
- Baptismal or Profession of Faith Records
- Witness Affidavit of Freedom to Marry
- Petition for Dispensation or Permission, if applicable
- Proof that marriage preparation has been completed
- Copy of Marriage License
- Letter of Good Standing for any priests not of the Fort Worth or Dallas Dioceses

- If either party has been previously married, Decree of Declaration of Invalidity and/or Decree of Lack of Canonical Form are also required.

Marriage preparation requirements

According to Chris Vaughan, director of Marriage and Family Life for the diocese, a couple wanting to marry should begin by contacting their parish at least nine to 12 months before their intended wedding date. In an initial interview, the priest, deacon, or another person appointed by the pastor, explains the marriage preparation process, determines if the couple is free to marry (according to Church law and civil law), and identifies any special needs.

Marriage is viewed as a lifelong vocation by the Church. To prepare the bride and groom for their vocation, the diocese requires theological formation and life skills preparation before a wedding occurs.

The diocese uses the Pre-Cana course for theological formation so that the bride and groom understand Catholic teaching on marriage. The classes, held at several locations in the diocese, cover topics including marriage as a sacrament and biblical and Church foundations for Holy Matrimony.

Life skills are addressed in the Fully Engaged program, in which the couple each takes a premarital inventory that assesses attitudes on topics such as finances, intimacy, communication, parenting, and division of labor. After the inventory is scored, a sponsor couple meets with the engaged couple for about four sessions to lead discussions about areas of agreement

and disagreement.

For couples of childbearing age, the diocese also requires natural family planning instruction offered in a classroom setting or online.

Individual parishes may also recommend additional marriage preparation.

Catholic teachings on marriage

The Church teaches that marriage is more than simply a social and legal institution; it is a response from two people to a call from God. Marriage preparation is a process to discern the call and to discover the resources to transform an initial attraction into a lifelong commitment.

Jesus, St. Paul, the Second Vatican Council, and St. Pope

John Paul II are only a few of the sources of wisdom on the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Thousands of pages have been written on the topic, but three of the most important principles of Church teaching are that marriage is sacred in the plan of God; that it is permanent, faithful, and fruitful; and that it is a living symbol of God’s love for his people.

In the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, God brings to the spouses the divine grace needed to live a life of holiness and service within the couple’s own relationship, their family, and their community. In daily acts of kindness, service, mutual love and forgiveness, married couples are called to imitate, albeit imperfectly, the unconditional love which Christ offers to all of us.

Silver & Golden Anniversary Mass

On SUNDAY, MARCH 6TH, 2016 at 2:00 P.M. the Office of Marriage and Family Life will host the SILVER AND GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY MASS CELEBRATION for all couples who are celebrating their 25th and 50th wedding anniversary. Also, all couples who have been married longer than 50 years are welcome.

The celebration will take place at St. Patrick Cathedral, 1206 Throckmorton St. Fort Worth. Bishop Michael F. Olson will preside at this special Mass which will include an opportunity for you to renew your marriage vows and receive an anniversary blessing. A light reception with cake and punch will follow immediately afterward in the parish’s Family Life Center.

PLEASE RSVP BY MARCH 1 TO IRMA JIMENEZ AT JIMENEZ@
FWDIOC.ORG OR CALL (817) 945-9354

Be ‘stewards of the gift of life,’ Bishop Olson says at annual Respect Life Mass

by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen
Correspondent

AFTER THREE BOYS, MARY AND PETER MACDONALD WANTED A GIRL. WHEN THE BABY ARRIVED, THEY NAMED HER HOPE.

That’s the sentiment they used to explain why they brought the toddler to the annual Respect Life Mass celebrated Jan. 28 at St. Patrick Cathedral.

“We’re hoping her generation grows up respecting life,” said Mary MacDonald, who has two special needs youngsters. “Abortion is murder, and the people working to end it need prayer. We come to the Mass every year because that’s what it’s all about — prayer.”

More than 300 pro-life workers, supporters, and families — like the MacDonalds — attended the liturgy held annually to commemorate the Jan. 22, 1973 Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion.

During the Mass — celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson, St. Patrick Rector Monsignor Joseph Pemberton, and other diocesan priests — volunteers carried 57 red votive candles, representing the 57 million unborn babies lost to abortion in the U.S. since 1973, up to the altar where they lined a five-tier platform. In front of the display, Rachel Ministries Coordinator Betsy Kopor placed the Book of Innocents.

“It contains all the names of children lost to abortion whose parents attended a Rachel Ministries retreat,” she explained, referring to the faith-based abortion recovery program offered by the diocese.

“They name their babies during a memorial service. It’s very meaningful and brings a lot of closure.”

Macaria Gonzalez, who facilitates the Rachel Ministries retreat for Spanish speakers, encourages attendance at the Respect Life Mass for women who are post-abortion.

“At this Mass, we honor our children who have died in this holocaust,” she observed.

The Rachel Ministries retreat, scheduled several times a year, provides emotional and spiritual healing.

“It’s a release of pain for us,” Gonzalez continued. “We find happiness in knowing God is with our children.”

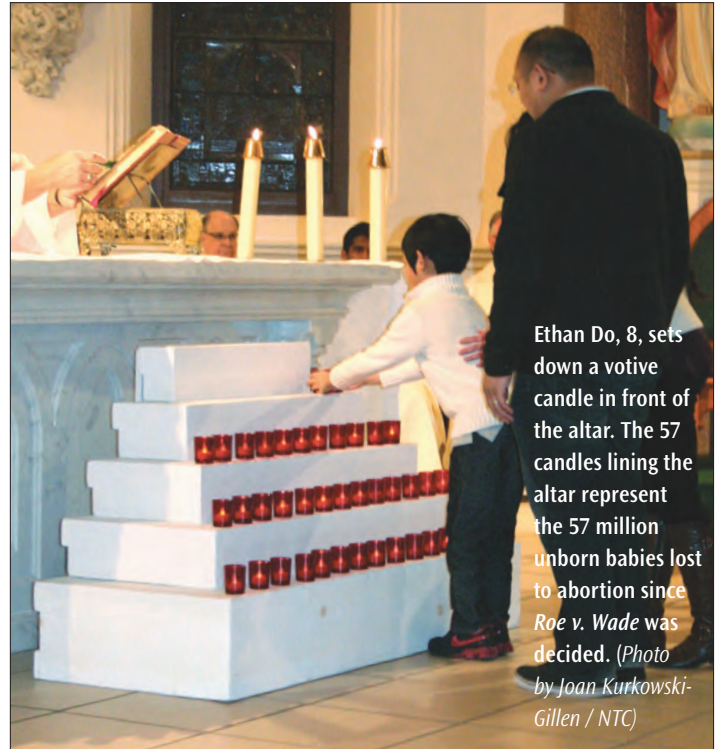
Bishop Olson said the Respect Life Mass not only celebrates the gift of life, but is also an opportunity to pray for those affected by sins against life — especially abortion. He told the congregation we live in a society and culture that wants to take the truth and make it an abstract idea or concept by changing the point at which life begins.

Bishop Olson said we know when life begins. It is “a starting point that we know by faith and reason that human beings exist and human beings have life.” And, he said we know “that life is a good thing transmitted in love and in relationship.”

Made in the image and likeness of God, people enjoy a unique and dignified status in creation.

“But we’re also meant to flourish as participants in creation and be stewards of the gift of life — human life that is divine through baptism and human through the gift of nature and understanding,” the bishop added.

Human beings have free will, but choice requires commitment to faith and authentic reasoning. It’s not simply about rights or creating an individually-defined world, re-



Ethan Do, 8, sets down a votive candle in front of the altar. The 57 candles lining the altar represent the 57 million unborn babies lost to abortion since *Roe v. Wade* was decided. (Photo by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen / NTC)

gardless of the responsibilities people should feel toward one another.

“When we begin with the premise that I’m only an individual, and the world is for my making and fashioned in my image, we end up forming a culture that chooses to resolve its problems by killing people,” the bishop emphasized.

Difficult questions about faith are basic, the bishop assured the gathering.

“The Lord loves us and created us in his love and fashioned us in his image,” he said in closing. “He shared with us the responsibility to love our neighbor as ourselves and be inconvenienced for the sake of those who are the most vulnerable and the most in need.”

This year’s Respect Life Mass included a special collection for the Mother and Unborn Baby Care Center of Fort Worth.

“The collection is in memory and in honor of Captain Charles Pelletier who was, absolutely, one of the finest warriors for life I have ever met,” said Michael Demma, diocesan director of the Respect Life Office, who presented the basket of donations.

Pelletier, who founded the center in 1984, passed away Jan. 14.

To remember the souls lost to abortion, 9-year-old Cad Swan carried a candle up to the altar along with his mother, Melissa.

Abortion is a difficult concept for a fourth grader to comprehend, admitted the expectant mom. The St. Andrew School student wondered why someone would choose to end a baby’s life instead of giving it up for adoption.

“I hope that’s the way this next generation grows up thinking,” Melissa Swan said. “We can always hope for an end to abortion.”

Bishop Lopes ordained first bishop of Ordinariate

Historic moment unites former Anglicans even more firmly to Church

By John Henry
Correspondent

ENVOYS OF THE HOLY SEE ALONG WITH DOZENS OF AMERICAN ROMAN CATHOLIC PRELATES GATHERED FEB. 2 WITH THE FAITHFUL AT THE CO-CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART IN HOUSTON for the history-making Mass of Ordination and Installation of Bishop Steven J. Lopes, the first bishop of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter.

Bishop Lopes assumed his new charge declaring the motto "*Magna Opera Domini* – Great are the works of the Lord."

Appointed by Pope Francis in November, Bishop Lopes took the reins from Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson, who announced his retirement last year.

"We thank God for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and his Spirit-prompted vision of unity and faith in a diversity of expression which informs the apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*," Bishop Lopes said.

"We thank God for our Holy Father Pope Francis for putting his vision into concrete expression."

Among bishops on hand to commemorate the event was Bishop Michael Olson of the Diocese of Fort Worth and Bishop Kevin Vann, bishop of the Orange Diocese in California and former bishop of Fort Worth. Bishop Vann has been Ecclesiastical Delegate for the Pastoral Provision, since 2011.

Bishop Lopes, 40, who was ordained a priest by Cardinal William Levada of San Francisco in 2001, assumed his new duties after serving as an official of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith since 2005.

Lopes, who holds licentiate and doctoral degrees in sacred theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, was named a monsignor in 2010.

Cardinal Gerhard Müller, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington, D.C., were co-consecrators.

Cardinal Levada delivered the homily. "Today is Candlemas day, the feast of the presentation of the Lord," he said. "Today, is the blessed day when Jesus was presented in the temple by Mary and Joseph. Outwardly He was fulfilling the law, but in reality He was coming to meet his believing people. Among the believing people



Bishop Steven J. Lopes receives applause from Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington, left center, and others as he holds his crosier seated in the *cathedra*, or bishop's chair, during his Feb. 2 episcopal ordination Mass at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Galveston-Houston.

Bishop Lopes is the first bishop of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, which serves former Anglicans living in full communion with the Catholic Church. (CNS photo/Tom McCarthy Jr.)

He met in the Jerusalem temple, the names of Simeon and Anna have sounded down the ages. But the liturgy is not simply about a past event.

"On Candlemas Day in this year of grace 2016, Jesus has come again to meet his believing people in word and sacrament...."

Bishop Lopes' appointment marked the continuation and a fuller maturity of Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 *Anglicanorum coetibus*, the apostolic constitution that created a pathway for Anglican parishes to join the Catholic Church through ordinariates, akin to dioceses.

Pope Francis' directive to appoint Lopes, stated a news release at the time, "affirms and amplifies Pope Benedict's vision for Christian unity, in which diverse expressions of one faith are joined together in the Church.

"By naming Bishop-elect Lopes, the pope has

confirmed that the Ordinariate is a permanent, enduring part of the Catholic Church, like any other diocese ..."

Benedict's action expanded John Paul II's 1980 Pastoral Provision, which provided the framework for Episcopal priests to become Catholic.

Churches in the Ordinariate are fully Roman Catholic, yet they were allowed to keep some of the Anglican liturgical traditions.

Any Catholic may attend Ordinariate liturgies and functions, just as members of the Ordinariate can attend liturgies and functions at any traditional Catholic parish.

The Chair of St. Peter, based in Houston's Our Lady of Walsingham Church, is one of three Ordinariates worldwide. The Chair of St. Peter's jurisdiction is the United States and Canada. According to data provided by officials, the Ordinariate includes 62 priests and more than 20,000 faithful in 43 parishes, including St. Timothy of Fort Worth; St. John Vianney in Cleburne; and St. Mary the Virgin in Arlington.

Bishop Lopes shared his inspiration for the maxim *Magna Opera Domini*, recalling a retreat of Ordinariate priests and seminarians in Florida.

Many there shared their stories of journey to Catholic reunification and their search for the truth in sacred Scripture, along the way sacrificing and confronting suffering. At that moment it was clear, Lopes said, that this was the work of the Lord, "and great are the works of the Lord."

Msgr. Steenson was not eligible to be a bishop in name because he was married. Only a bishop, of course, could offer the connectivity to the apostles, something Steenson recognized.

At the time of Lopes' appointment in November, Steenson said: "I welcome this news with all my heart, for the Ordinariate has now progressed to the point where a bishop is much needed for our life and mission. A bishop will help to give the Ordinariate the stability and permanence necessary to fulfill its mission to be a work of Catholic unity."

The new bishop closed his remarks with a message from Pope Francis, whom Lopes met with after his appointment. "*Avanti!*" Lopes recalled the Holy Father saying in Italian. "Go forward! There is our mandate. Go forward and preach the Gospel. Show the world that the Christian disciple is indeed joyful and that the communion of the church is worth committing our lives to."



*“I was... a stranger and you
welcomed me...”*

PARISHES THROUGHOUT THE DIOCESE HELP IMMIGRANT FAMILIES SEEKING A NEW START

by **Joan Kurkowski-Gillen**
Correspondent

AFTER ARRIVING IN THE U.S., IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES OFTEN STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE. ELIZABETH CHANOINE HEARS THEIR HEART-WRENCHING STORIES.

One undocumented woman, living alone with her children, spoke little English and couldn't find work.

“She began making loaves of bread to sell on the street corner,” remembers the director of Christian Connection at St. Michael Church. “We could see how code enforcement people would jump on that and so would the police.”

Helping at risk families and individuals avoid troublesome situations and improve their station in life is the focus of Christian Connection. Launched in the 1990s as Resources for Recovery, the social outreach ministry helps needy families with rent, utilities, prescriptions, and miscellaneous expenses. Twenty-five percent of the clients at Christian Connection are considered immigrants — people in the U.S. less than five years who are not citizens.

“A lot of times, people don't help immigrants because they don't know what to do,” Chanoine points out. “At Christian Connection, we have very specific strategies.”

“Loving your neighbor as yourself is not extra credit. It's part of who you are as a faithful Catholic person.”

— Paul Cmkovich

Funded by St. Michael parishioners, 12 volunteers use a case management approach to find long-term solutions for senior citizens, single moms, ex-offenders, the unemployed, and often partner with Catholic Charities of Fort Worth.

“Everything is customized,” says Chanoine who sees both African and Central American immigrants apply for aid. “We don't want immigrants to go from being in poverty in Mexico to being impoverished here.”

Toward that goal, ministry workers discuss how to access community services, encourage attending English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and persuade vulnerable immigrants to apply for a “green card” which allows them to work legally. If someone doesn't understand immigration paperwork, “we'll find someone who can help them,” she continues.

Christian Connection works with several attorneys who advise clients on legal issues pro bono. To counter the high rate of domestic

violence against immigrant women, case managers explain how to use America's legal system to escape an abusive situation.

“The philosophy of Christian Connection is to build community with the people we serve,” says Chanoine. “Showing them how to be productive, successful, and happy is what community is all about. It's about the dignity of the human person, the dignity of work, and solidarity with the poor.”

PROVIDING THE NECESSITIES

Some new arrivals in the U.S., ineligible for the federal food stamp program because of immigration status, visit the food pantry at St. John the Apostle Church where dried beans, crackers, cereal, and canned vegetables from parishioners stock the shelves. Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Colleyville provides food twice a month and local grocery stores contribute deli meat, fresh salad, and vegetables.

“We're trying to offer more balanced, nutritious foods,” ex-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



In this 2015 photo, a Syrian refugee girl is seen at a camp in Germany as she and her family await their immigration documentation. (Photo by Jazzmany / shutterstock.com)

Looking at the Works of Mercy

EDITOR'S NOTE: Throughout the Extraordinary Year of Mercy the *NTC* will highlight some of the incredible deeds of mercy happening right here, in our diocese and parishes. Look for more special features on spiritual and corporal works of mercy in upcoming issues.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES FORT WORTH WORKS TO INTEGRATE REFUGEES, HELP THEM ACHIEVE SELF-SUFFICIENCY

by Susan Moses
Correspondent

WHILE LIVING IN KABUL, AFGHANISTAN MASOOD HAJIZADA WOULD CALL HIS WIFE, MALALAY, AS MANY AS 10 TIMES ON HIS WAY HOME FROM WORK EACH DAY.

Every explosion, every gunshot he heard, he had to make sure that she and their three sons were alright.

Hajizada provided translation services for the U.S. Army beginning in 2002. In 2009 he applied to come to the U.S. through the special immigrant visa program for military translators. But after years of hearing nothing, he gave up hope.

Early last year, Hajizada's documentation arrived. He and his family left their homeland, their extended family, his business, their home, and possessions to resettle in Fort Worth with

the assistance of Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW).

Of the world's 15 million refugees, about 70,000 arrive in the United States yearly, and CCFW annually helps approximately 600 refugees make a new home in the area.

Catholic Charities has 10 programs with a primary focus on refugee resettlement to equip the refugees with the resources and knowledge they need to thrive in the United States.

Before the refugee even arrives, CCFW begins their services, finding appropriate housing and stocking it with furniture, clothing, linens, and food. Staff, and a translator, if needed, meet the refugees at the airport. Sometimes they arrive with only a plastic bag containing their immigration documentation. Taken to their new home, they find a warm, culturally-appropriate meal is waiting for them.

Quickly, the refugees are immersed in the

transition to their new lives. English classes. Employment preparation. School enrollment for children. Cultural adjustment classes. Medical care and immunizations. Even instruction on the public transportation system.

"Our goal is that the refugees become self-sufficient and integrated into the culture as quickly as possible," said Mike Auman, CCFW's director of programs for Refugee Services.

By all measures, they are succeeding. In 2015, 92 percent of their refugee clients were employed and paying their bills by the four-month mark and 96 percent hit that target by six months.

Hajizada, who arrived on July 22, found a job at the Amazon Warehouse near Alliance Airport and was paying his bills by November. With a four-day workweek at Amazon, he

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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plains Colleen Cargile, the director of social ministry at St. John.

In addition to the 100 families who depend on food assistance each week, the parish has a financial assistance program and “baby world” with nursery items and clothing for newborns through grade school youngsters. Last year, 520 undocumented families — about 14 percent of the total client load — received food from the St. John’s pantry.

“Most of the refugees we work with are asylees (people seeking or granted political asylum). They’ve been in the country for awhile, have used up immediate help resources, and are now looking for long-term options,” Cargile says.

To make ends meet, many immigrants and refugees sell bread, tamales, and fruit to their apartment complex neighbors. Cleaning homes is another way to earn much-needed cash.

“It’s about keeping families intact,” Cargile says, pointing out that many undocumented workers have children who are citizens. “And we have an obligation to care for people in our community.”

To promote a better understanding of immigrants, St. John the Apostle will host an April 2 program (see www.northtexascatholic.org for event coverage) to address the challenges new residents face when they arrive in the U.S. During the workshop, the church’s pastor, Father Hoa Nguyen, will share his experiences as a former refugee from Vietnam.

IN THE SHOES OF THE REFUGEE

Catholic Charities of Fort Worth offers a refugee simulation program to help Catholic school students understand the plight of people fleeing persecution, war, or poverty in their home countries.

“We try and give them a sense of this major transition in someone’s life,” says Paul Cmkovich, Catholic Charities director of par-



St. Joseph eighth-graders Grace Wagner, Jaya McCarty, Harley DeLoera, Phillip Gumo, and Jacqueleen Lopez assemble furniture to be used by refugees, during their 2015 Faith Extension Day. (Photo by Donna Ryckaert / NTC)

ish relations.

Eighth graders learn why people are forced to leave their homelands and the difficulties experienced when they try to enroll in school or find employment. Later in the day, students are debriefed on how they felt about what they witnessed in the simulation.

The field trip to Catholic Charities usually inspires a student-led donation drive for items specific to the refugee population.

“The whole aim of social teaching formation is to seed the fires of charity in the hearts of the faithful and form individuals in the faith so they understand what the Greatest Commandment means,” Cmkovich asserts. “Loving your neighbor as yourself is not extra credit. It’s part of who you are as a faithful Catholic person.”

After attending the refugee simulation program in 2015, eighth-graders at St. Joseph School in Arlington approached their “faith extension” project with new purpose. The students, who have since graduated, assembled furniture at the Hope Center for refugee families being resettled by Catholic Charities.

“I think the program opened their eyes to what it’s like to be alone in the world or in a refugee camp,”

says eighth-grade teacher Judy Gavin. “It made them more caring toward others and strangers because they realized you never know what someone has been through.”

TEACHING ENGLISH AT ST. JUDE

The free ESL program at St. Jude Church in Mansfield caters its curriculum to the needs of the immigrants and refugees enrolled, according to director Julie Cosby. Started in 2008 by Sister Rita Claire Davis, SSMN, and Sister Cecile Faget, SSMN, as a parish initiative, the ESL classes currently serve 213 students from a variety of backgrounds. The majority speak Vietnamese or Spanish. A grant from Fort Worth ISD adult education funds in-house instruction and distance learning.

“Our students are able to get better jobs or go on to college,” says Cosby, who joined the program as a teacher five years ago. “Many of them were professionals in their own countries. Their credentials are good but their English wasn’t.”

Other ESL participants are barely literate in their native language.

“And that’s our challenge,” the director adds.

St. Jude Parish provides the

classrooms, a computer lab, and volunteers from the church community. Father George Foley, St. Jude’s pastor, keeps the students motivated. Having received U.S. citizenship just a few years ago, the South Africa native can relate to their efforts.

“He talks to the groups and offers encouragement,” Cosby said.

HELPING FAMILIES INTEGRATE

And, the Capuchin Franciscan Fathers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish reach out to the immigrant population in the nearby area by providing space for citizenship classes. The 10-week session is offered twice a year at the north Fort Worth church and prepares people for the U.S. citizenship test and interview.

In 2007, Holy Family parishioners helped a refugee family from Burundi resettle in North Texas. It was an experience Deacon Mike Mocek never forgot.

“We stayed with them about a year and helped purchase necessities for their apartment,” he says. “A number of people worked with them in various ways. They had their ups and downs, but made progress.”

Today, Holy Family’s Just-Faith group visits residents of a West Fort Worth apartment complex with a large population of immigrants. They offer fellowship and sponsored National Night Out activities at the site last fall.

Why is it important to make connections with immigrants, the poor, and other neglected members of society?

“Because that’s what we’re called to do,” the deacon answers. “Our baptism calls us to reach out to the poor and immigrants.”

Many times we don’t realize the struggles of human beings who have fled horrendous circumstances in their homeland.

“They need to be welcomed and embraced,” he said. “They deserve our help.”

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

has started to search for a part-time job for the other three days.

“I can pay for everything we need, but I would like a little extra. I’ve got the mind and strength to work, and I want to save the government benefits for others who need it,” he said.

According to Auman, work restores dignity to the refugee. Hajizada agrees, “My advice to other refugees is to stand on your own feet. It’s good for you, and it’s good for your future. Nothing is free so don’t expect it.”

Alice Kigera, senior program manager for the refugee matching grant program, said, “Among the many misconceptions about refugees is that they come here with little education and remain at the lower socioeconomic level. But each refugee has a unique story. Some have lived years in refugee camps and are un-schooled or underschooled. Others are doctors, lawyers, professors, or engineers.”

Kigera continued, “Most are eager to maximize their economic opportunities. We know of 70 families that within [their first] couple of years [in the U.S.] have worked and saved enough to buy a home, or they have opened a store or other small business.”

When Basil Mahmood, a civil engineer from Iraq, arrived in 2010, he took the U.S. certification exam for civil engineering but did not pass, so he set his sights on earning a commercial driver’s license (CDL). He split the \$3,000 cost of CDL training with Catholic Charities. After earning his CDL, he has worked his way up from being an airport employee to driving a leased rig to owning his own truck and general freight company.

His wife, who was also a civil engineer in Iraq, is currently enrolled in college and will graduate with a civil engineering degree in 2017. They hope to start a construction business.

Becoming proficient in English is another priority for refugees. Catholic Charities offers English as a Second Language classes for up to five years after resettlement. Last year, volunteers provided 1,900 hours of language assistance. Most refugees begin with six to nine hours of English instruction each week, and 94 percent make notable progress after 40 hours. The objective is for the refugees to quickly become proficient enough in English to get a job.

After one year in the U.S., refugees are required to apply for their green card, which

Masood Hajizada walked away from his business in Afghanistan to ensure a safer future for his sons. (Photo by Susan Moses / NTC)



allows them to be permanent residents. After five years, refugees are eligible and encouraged to apply for U.S. citizenship.

Mahmood and his wife and two daughters became citizens last year.

“This is my home now. I see my kids playing, and they are doing great, and what more do you want for your life than that,” he explained.

BUT THERE ARE CHALLENGES

But Catholic Charities does encounter barriers along the path to helping refugees gain self-sufficiency. Employers who have partnered with CCFW appreciate the work ethic and reliability of the refugees. But, often the refugees are not considered for promotion when the opportunity arises. Simply finding affordable housing located near public transportation routes and employers poses another complication. And, social service agencies are sometimes unaware of their obligation to serve refugees and how to best do so. Catholic Charities has held training sessions at local social service agencies to educate the employees about refugee eligibility and translation services.

Placing refugee youth in an appropriate grade level can pose a special challenge if they have limited schooling or are not certain of their age.

Hajizada’s oldest son, Mosawir, enrolled in second grade last August, having attended two years of school in Afghanistan. He knew his numbers, but the language and even the alphabet were foreign to him. However, with an eagerness to learn and a father who reads to him 30 minutes each night in English, Mo-

sawir is quickly mastering reading and writing in English.

REFUGEE ASSISTANCE TODAY

Today, about 33 percent of the refugees arriving in Tarrant County come from Burma, with Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Congo rounding out the top five.

To serve these refugees, CCFW employs 29 individuals who work primarily in the agency’s refugee programs, along with a large network of volunteers who pitch in by tutoring students and teaching English as a Second Language, among other tasks. Other volunteers assist by donating household items or money.

“We depend on community support to welcome the refugees, to be their advocates, and to offer them jobs,” Kigera said. “The political climate swings back and forth, sometimes sympathetic to refugees, sometimes not. But the Catholic community has been consistently supportive. Their hearts go out to the refugees and they do more for them.”

Auman added, “Catholic social teaching includes a preferential option for the poor and solidarity with our neighbor. Who is our brother and sister? It’s not race, it’s not geography — we all are brothers and sisters. And the poor? These are people who come here with nothing. We can reach out and work with them right here.”

After six months in Fort Worth, Hajizada is grateful for the help from CCFW and the opportunity to build a new life. “I have less stress, less depression. It makes me happy that my kids are safe now. We can live peacefully.”

At closing of Year of Consecrated Life, religious reminded to ‘keep looking’ for God’s presence in others

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen
Photos by Donna Ryckaert

WHEN BRIDGET HAASE WAS A 9-YEAR-OLD GROWING UP IN LOUISIANA, SHE CROSSED PATHS WITH A DOUBLE AMPUTEE WHO USED A BOARD WITH WHEELS TO NAVIGATE THE SIDEWALKS.

He was dirty, unkempt, and she remembers remarking to her mother, “I bet that man stinks!”

Recognizing a teaching moment, the wise elder leaned over and gently pointed out, “Sugar, God is in that man.” Observing the man inch along the street, Bridget replied matter-of-factly, “I don’t see God.” The next words the youngster heard changed the way she viewed the world forever.

“Keep looking,” her mother encouraged.

An Ursuline for more than 50 years, Sister Bridget has spent a lifetime looking for God in people everywhere — the faces of the poor in the Appalachians, the starving in Sudan, depressed waitresses, and airport bathroom cleaners. Using her gifts as a storyteller, the missionary told a Feb. 5 gathering of priests and other religious at Grapevine’s St. Francis of Assisi Church how finding “the sacred moments” in everyday life can ease the grind of daily ministry.

“Whether we take vows or not, when we look for these moments, we awaken the world to hope,” said Sr. Bridget, who recounted her experiences in the book, *Doors to the Sacred*. “God comes in surprises and disguises. When we open ourselves to God’s presence, we avoid a preconceived notion of the face of God in our everyday lives.”

The speaker’s two-part presentation was one of the events planned by the Diocese of Fort Worth to mark the conclusion of the Year of Consecrated Life. Other Feb. 5 activities at the Grapevine parish included a micro-retreat for young adults, a keynote address by Indianapolis Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, and an evening Mass concelebrated by Bishop Michael Olson and Archbishop Tobin.

The Year of Consecrated Life commenced on the first Sunday of Advent in 2014 and ended Feb. 2, 2016 — designated as World Day of Consecrated Life. During the special observance, the pope asked religious men and women to look at their past with gratitude, to live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope.

Offering advice on how to accomplish those directives, Sr. Bridget shared with her audience a story about

Blessed Mother Teresa. An interviewer asked the soon-to-be canonized founder of the Missionaries of Charity whether she knew the Gospel. Without flinching, the diminutive nun admitted, “Yes. I have the Gospel on my fingertips.”

Impressed the busy nun had the time to memorize Scripture, the reporter looked up as Mother Teresa counted out on each finger, “You did it to me.”

“We have to be the answer to people’s prayer for hope, help, support, and encouragement. We have to offer each person we meet the sweetness of being noticed,” Sr. Bridget affirmed. “May we always live with the Gospel on our fingertips.”

As a family therapist for Cook Children’s Medical Center, Sister Janette Hernandez, MCDP, identified with the speaker’s plea to “seek God everywhere.”

“I love that she called God a God of interruptions,” Sr. Janette explained. “When He interrupts our life, what’s important is being present in that interruption and accepting what He’s asking of us in that moment.”

Her profession is known for its high burn-out rate, and the stories of depression and anxiety she hears can be overwhelming.

“You pray for the families and hope the best for them,” Sr. Janette adds. “Sometimes you just have to put it in God’s hands. But, like Sr. Bridget said, at that given moment I’m doing the best I can.”

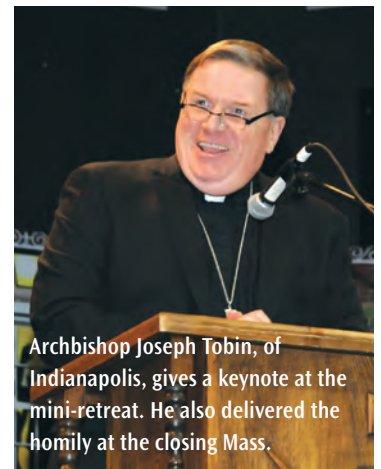
Father Alexander Ambrose, HGN, said the afternoon addresses provided spiritual enrichment.

“It’s energizing. In sad moments, messages like this give us life,” explained the parochial vicar at St. Patrick Cathedral. “We can go out into the world strong, happy, and remembering that we are working for the Lord.”

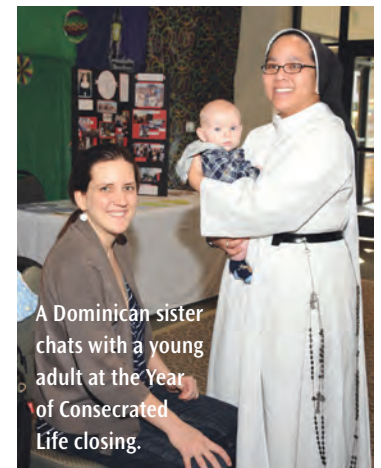
In his keynote address before clergy, religious women, and Catholic young adults, Archbishop Tobin said the Year of Consecrated Life provided an opportunity to reflect on what is expected of consecrated life and what the future holds for people who profess religious vows.

“What is the greatest contribution religious make to the Church? In Pope Benedict’s words it’s their witness to love,” said the archbishop who is a member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (the Redemptorists). “Since love is the highest of charismatic gifts, it is its essential witness that is needed across the world.”

The bishop, who spent many years as a parish priest and later as superior general for the Redemptorists, told his listeners that going forward, consecrated people will exhibit — in one way or another — three characteristics: testimony of the primacy of God, testimony of a community marked by sisterly or brotherly love, and a mission that is on the margins of the Church and society. Consecrated persons are not visible in the Church



Archbishop Joseph Tobin, of Indianapolis, gives a keynote at the mini-retreat. He also delivered the homily at the closing Mass.



A Dominican sister chats with a young adult at the Year of Consecrated Life closing.



Sister Bridget Haase, OSU, gives a talk to religious about seeking God in the faces of others.

by the clothing they wear, he insisted, but by the values they hold.

“Before anything else, consecrated people in the Church should be specialists in faith,” Archbishop Tobin asserted, “while at the same time, going out wisely to accompany believers who are looking for a more demanding way to live their own faith.”

Mass honors Dr. King's legacy, bolsters justice and equality

By Susan Moses
Correspondent

THE WORDS, ACTIONS, AND IDEALS OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. WERE REMEMBERED BY HUNDREDS OF CATHOLICS OF ALL RACES AT THE ANNUAL DIOCESAN MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL MASS, CELEBRATED AT ST. BARTHOLOMEW CHURCH JAN. 8.

Among the many quotes attributed to the slain civil rights leader is "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Bishop Michael Olson reinforced that idea in his homily, saying that racism is a "sneakier sin, a sin of omission. People of faith and religion sin when they overlook, gloss over, or are unconcerned" about prejudice, injustice, and inequality.

After hearing the Gospel reading from Luke, in which Jesus cured a man of leprosy, the bishop compared leprosy to racism. Both appear to be concerned with the skin but go much deeper. They both result in the sin of exclusion, the sin of marginalization, and the sin of isolation. Only Christ can heal the disease, sin, and division caused by both leprosy and racism.

The leper in Luke's Gospel pleads with Jesus, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." The bishop noted that this was a "sincere prayer of conversion, a sincere cry out for liberation, a sincere prayer for healing. And the Lord answered with a resounding 'Yes, I do will it.'"

Today, according to the bishop, we also need to cry out to Jesus as the leper did with a humble and sincere prayer asking for healing. "Christ offers real conversion and transformation to liberate us from what enslaves us



Bishop Michael Olson delivers the homily at the annual diocesan Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Mass at St. Bartholomew Church Jan. 8. (Donna Ryckaert / NTC)

in fear and sin. He can transform our hearts to be more like his own, so we can freely love our neighbor as ourselves."

His homily also touched on the responsibility of the Church.

"The Church is not a thermometer of popular opinion and the status quo," Bishop Olson said. "The Church is a thermostat to transform the mores and customs of society."

Prayers throughout the Mass emphasize that God formed us as one people, made in his image and likeness. Our baptism unites us into one Church, where Christ is Lord and reigns over brothers and sisters who are united in our diversity and redeemed as God's children in Jesus Christ.

Other highlights from the Memorial Mass included a presentation of the flag by the color guard from Our Mother of Mercy School; buoyant singing led by the Our Mother of Mercy Church Choir; a sustained, heartfelt sign of peace followed by the song, "Let There Be Peace on Earth;" and the presentation of awards to winners of the MLK essay contest.

Tonja Jefferson, a member of

St. Matthew Church in Arlington, said, "Dr. King is a man to celebrate for every faith. We need more unity, more coming together. And I appreciated how the bishop used the familiar leprosy story to show we need to go beyond the outside to see what is inside."

The annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Mass dates back to 1986 when Father Carmen Mele, OP, who at the time served as the director of the peace and justice ministry, wanted to honor the civil rights leader and reach out to African-American Catholics. Since then, a committee has organized the annual Mass which rotates among churches in the diocese.

"This continues because it's important to remind people in this day and age of the struggle and work of Dr. King," said Deacon Don Warner, Director of Liturgy and Worship for the diocese. "The work is not finished. Our problems are somewhat different now, but inequality and racial and economic injustice exist. It is still relevant today,"

The light and love of Jesus,

Bishop Olson concluded, is the cure for the disease of racism, injustice, and inequality. Just as Jesus touched the leper and healed him, Jesus can transform our hearts,

Award-winning essays

More than 80 students from the diocese entered the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. essay contest, based on the topic "What Can I Do?" drawn from Dr. King's Poor People's Campaign. Awards were given after Communion to the top three students in each division.

Grades 4 – 5

- 1st – Ikeem Bolds, Our Mother of Mercy School
- 2nd – Michael Castro, Our Lady of Victory School
- 3rd – Bishop Williams, Our Mother of Mercy School

Grades 6 – 8

- 1st – Nanaaba Aghakuofie, Our Mother of Mercy School
- 2nd – Zayn Willars, Our Mother of Mercy School
- 3rd – Jaida Bookman-Davis, Our Mother of Mercy School

Grades 9 – 12

- 1st – Ian Kintz, Sacred Heart School
- 2nd – Carmen Villa, Sacred Heart School
- 3rd – Virginia Mar, Sacred Heart School

Overall Winner

- Nanaaba Aghakuofie, Our Mother of Mercy School

At the reception following Mass, seventh-grader Nanaaba Aghakuofie read her grand-prize winning essay. She emphasized that poverty is not an issue to solve but an opportunity to serve, and requested that her audience ask the Lord what they can do. As for Aghakuofie, she plans to volunteer monthly in a soup kitchen and homeless shelter.

With dedication of Newman Center, TCU Catholics receive place to call their own

by John Henry
Correspondent

THE TCU CATHOLIC CAMPUS MINISTRY OPENED THE DOORS OF ITS NEW NEWMAN CENTER, A PLACE, BISHOP MICHAEL OLSON DECLARED, WHERE “FAITH AND REASON MEET” AND STUDENTS AND VISITORS MAY LIVE THE TRUE GIFT OF CHRIST’S FRIENDSHIP.

Bishop Olson presided over a formal dedication and blessing of the site on Jan. 20 with Texas Christian University chaplain Father James Wilcox, other diocesan clergy, and seminarians, students, and faculty also in attendance.

The diocese is leasing the site in the 2700 block of West Berry from the Kubes family, a Catholic family long active in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

“We ask for a blessing on this place and even more so on all of us and all who come here,” Bishop Olson said. “That those who come do not leave as strangers.

“The good news is we are strangers no more.”

Newman Centers are Catholic ministry centers at non-Catholic universities throughout the world. Inspired by the writings of Cardinal John Henry Newman, the centers provide pastoral services and ministries to their Catholic communities, in particular to the Roman Catholic student population.

The opening of TCU’s center ends decades of the campus ministry’s life as vagabonds.

For generations, those in the Catholic community on campus floated from place to place, meeting wherever an open spot was available.

“This is a monumental day for us as a community,” said Brad Horn,

a senior religion major and apologetics chair of the TCU Catholic Campus Ministry. “We wanted a space to call our own, a place to be grounded physically and spiritually, and now we have that.”

The search for a permanent location began soon after Bishop Olson’s ordination two years ago, said Horn, recalling a conversation with the bishop in which he asked what the ministry needed most.

The space at the Kubes building, part of which houses Kubes Jewelers, came open, and the family invited the diocese and campus ministry to come and look at it.

“They [the Kubes family] weren’t really sure if it would accommodate” the mission, said Fr. Wilcox. “The rest of us came out and looked and visualized some things and thought ... this will work.”

Newman Centers provide a place for students to fellowship, study, and worship — Mass is scheduled three times a week, on Sundays at the Robert Carr Chapel and Wednesdays and Fridays now at the Newman Center.

A small chapel walled off in the existing space offers a place for confession and Adoration.

Much of the furniture, including a wooden altar and a beautiful rendition of Michaelangelo’s Pieta, were in storage at the grounds of Nolan Catholic High School.

That the space was needed is underscored by the fact that Catholics for more than 25 years have represented the university’s largest faith community among its students, said Kathryn Cavins-Tull, vice chancellor for student affairs.

“TCU has always been committed to the development of the



Bishop Michael Olson blesses the new TCU Newman Center on Jan. 20. (Photo by Juan Guajardo / NTC)

whole person — spiritually, emotionally, socially, intellectually, and even vocational development happens in centers like this,” said Cavins-Tull, who added that she was a product of a Newman Center as a college student.

Newman Centers, Cavins-Tull said, facilitate Catholic students to take ownership of their faith.

“When we bring people together

MORE PHOTOS ONLINE! Visit northtexascatholic.org and click on the 'Photo Gallery' tab

who share the same values, and challenge each other in their growth and development, very powerful things happen.”

Saint Luke Productions Presents

Therese

The Story of a Soul

Tuesday, March 8 - 7pm
Wichita Falls, TX

Thursday, March 10 - 7pm
Grapevine, TX

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CATHOLIC CHARITIES

SOS team offers help to homeless



Photo supplied by Catholic Charities Fort Worth

Fernando Peralta (center) chosen as top case manager by the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition for 2015, poses with other CCFW SOS Team members at a January luncheon. (Photo courtesy of CCFW)

They sleep under bridges, in isolated areas of brushy undergrowth, and in deserted doorways. Standing patiently in line, waiting for a simple meal, they endure brutally extreme temperatures. For the approximately 2,000 individuals who are homeless in Tarrant County for a wide variety of heartbreaking reasons, each day is an endurance test.

In the midst of such suffering, agencies like Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) work to offer experiences of God’s healing presence and nonjudgmental care. CCFW, a member of the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition, offers comprehensive outreach to the homeless through their Street Outreach Services (SOS) Team.

The team, comprised of three full-time and three part-time outreach workers, as well as numerous volunteers, interns, and community partners, had personal contact with 708 homeless individuals in Tarrant County in 2015. Offering water, food, hygiene kits, and blankets. The workers were also able to help approximately half of those individuals into permanent or temporary housing and to obtain benefits such as veteran’s assistance and access to medical care.

With the goal of recognizing the efforts of CCFW and

several other area agencies on behalf of the community’s most vulnerable citizens, the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition honored outstanding case managers at a luncheon Jan. 19 in Fort Worth. SOS Team members Candice Barton and Fernando Peralta were among the honorees. To his fellow team members’ delight, Peralta was selected as the Coalition’s top case manager in 2015.

Peralta was “so very honored” by the recognition, he says. “And yet, it’s truly our team, our shared goal as we work together to reach out to our brothers and sisters on the streets, that gives me so much joy,” he explains. “We all consider this a ministry. It’s an opportunity that we cherish.”

Building relationships of trust is key, notes Peralta. “When I’m spending time with our clients, just being with them at night under a bridge or in the woods, I’m bringing the love of God to them, and that’s when things can start to change,” he says.

“I see Catholic Charities as an agency that goes where others don’t go. We push forward in an innovative way, trying to eradicate poverty and relieve suffering. With all of the programs that we offer, we find a way to help our clients to move forward, out of homelessness.”

LIGHTER & BRIGHTER



Norbertine Father Michael Weber traces a cross with ashes on the forehead of 6-week-old Every Braden, daughter of Erica Braden, during Ash Wednesday Mass Feb. 10 at Holy Cross Church in Bay Settlement, Wis. (CNS photo/Sam Lucero, *The Compass*)



A young man smiles during a Feb. 7 training session of the Orchestra of Ghetto Classics in the Korogocho slum of Nairobi, Kenya. In a partnership with the Art of Music Foundation and St. John's Catholic Church, the orchestra was started to teach music to the youths and provide them with income opportunities. (CNS photo/Dai Kurokawa, EPA)



Juan Esteban Ruiz, 6, left, and Christian Cosme, 8, sing during a Jan. 30 general chorus and orchestra rehearsal in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Several hundred children from different parishes and a government youth orchestra program performed at the welcome ceremony for Pope Francis during his Feb. 17 visit to Ciudad Juarez. (CNS photo/David Maung)



Pope Francis attends a conference at the Vatican Feb. 3, during which Scholas Occurrente announced a second benefit soccer match for peace to be played May 29 in Rome's Olympic Stadium. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



Diana Vega Flores, 18, sings during a Jan. 30 youth ministry program at Corpus Christi parish in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. (CNS photo/David Maung)



Ron Rider dances during a Mardi Gras party Feb. 9 at Prince of Peace Catholic Church in Sun City West, Ariz. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)

Comic Retreat By: Brian Montfort

WELL GOD, THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO A BIBLE, HOWEVER IT APPEARS THAT THEY JUST ARE NOT READING IT.

GOD'S PUBLICIST

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Umbert the Unborn by Gary Cangemi

IF GOD MADE EVERYBODY EQUAL, WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE SO WICKED?

FREE WILL, UMBERT. THE CHOICE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL IS EACH PERSON'S TO MAKE.

SO GOD IS TESTING US? THAT'S ONE WAY OF PUTTING IT.

WHAT'RE YA DOIN'? IT THERE'S GONNA BE A TEST, I NEED TO STUDY.

The FLOCK

I'VE BECOME TOO ATTACHED TO GRASS— I'M GIVING IT UP FOR LENT.

YOU SURE THAT'S A GOOD IDEA?

YES, IF I STAY AWAY FROM GRASS, I'LL BE ABLE TO GET CLOSER TO GOD.

'RIGHT, LORD?

What?

GROWING AS A CHRISTIAN

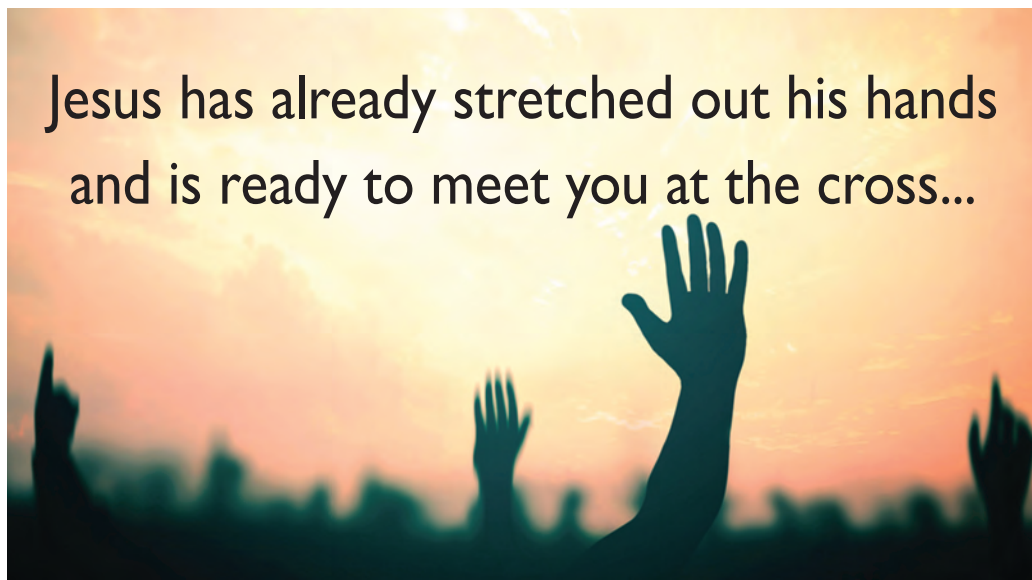
Is being Catholic at the heart of our true identity?

By JEFF HEDGLEN



Jeff Hedglen is director of Young Adult Ministry and Campus Ministry for the diocese. He is also the founder and primary convener of Camp Fort Worth's many editions. His column received second place honors for best spiritual life columns by Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada in 2014.

Jesus has already stretched out his hands and is ready to meet you at the cross...



WE ARE OFTEN ASKED TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES. TYPICALLY WHEN THIS HAPPENS WE GIVE OUR NAME AND WHERE WE WORK OR GO TO SCHOOL. SOMETIMES WE GIVE OUR FAMILY INFO, AND OTHER TIMES WE SHARE A HOBBY OR SOME OTHER RANDOM FACT ABOUT OUR LIFE. BUT WHEN WE ARE ASKED TO DESCRIBE OURSELVES, DO WE EVER SHARE THAT WE ARE CATHOLIC?

How much a part of your identity is the fact that you are Catholic or Christian or a believer in Jesus? I recently heard something that really got me thinking. Many times we live the faith like we are wearing a costume; like we are a kid in our favorite pajamas. It is almost like we are pretending. We put on the costume when we go to Mass or some other church function, but when we are with our friends or at work or in the car

or out shopping or at home, we are back to our “real self.”

When I reflected on this I started to dwell on the question: What is my true self? At my core who am I? My faith tells me that before I was anything I was the beloved of God. When those two cells met inside my mother, I became someone loved by God and that has never stopped being true.

The way I live my day-to-day life and maybe more importantly, inside my head, I am often something other than this most fundamental truth. Many of these identities are actually very good things to be: son, brother, husband, friend, employee, parishioner, and citizen. Others are things I am not proud of. I can be selfish, angry, and I tend to procrastinate. I do not do as much as I would like to serve the poor and the community. I do not

study the faith as much as I would like, and I certainly do not pray as much as I should.

To be sure these things are true, but they are not who I am at my core. We can all easily forget who we truly are: beloved of God. I think this is one of the chief aims of the season of Lent. If we take this season seriously, we can set aside all of the other characteristics of who we are and focus on the manifestation of the Father's love for us made visible by the passion, death, and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ.

The point of fasting from food and the other items that we give up and the spiritual practices we add in our Lenten journey is to take the focus off of ourselves and turn our eyes upon Jesus.

Even though Lent has already started, it is not too late to make

this the best Lent of your life. Start today by giving up something you will really miss and add a spiritual practice that will really stretch you. Whenever you miss what you gave up, think of the sacrifice God has made for you. God gave his Son and Jesus gave his life.

Try to have your spiritual practice be something that helps you focus on Jesus. Maybe go to Adoration or visit the tabernacle at your parish. Meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary — don't just fly through the prayers; daily read part of one of the Gospels; or attend the Stations of the Cross at a local parish.

Remember that you do not have to be perfect in your Lenten promises; you just have to strive for holiness. All you have to do is reach out beyond your comfort zone. Jesus has already stretched out his hands and is ready to meet you at the cross, where all our effort is joined with his and made holy.

Do not make sin your heritage

BY MARLON DE LA TORRE

IF SOMEONE WERE TO ASK YOU; "HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED WHEN YOU PASS ON" IT'S PROBABLY NOT THAT, "HE REALLY KNEW HOW TO SIN!" The irony in this is that sin was introduced as part of our heritage from the actions of our first parents which also opened our inclination to continue this practice and offense against God (concupiscence). Even though at first this may sound dreary, God's infinite love and mercy opened the opportunity to forgo sin and not make it our lasting heritage if we so choose.

St. John Marie Vianney once said: "those who say: 'I have committed too many sins, the Good Lord cannot forgive me' is a gross blasphemy. It is the same as putting a limit on God's mercy, which has none; it is infinite." The Cure of Ars reminds us that God's mercy has no limitations regardless of our human condition. Even when we try to limit our opportunity to receive mercy He easily supercedes the best of our human intentions whether positive or negative. St. Vianney eschews the human tendency of losing hope thus settling for a heritage of sin instead of a heritage of grace and mercy.

Understanding our human heritage

An interesting characteristic of our human condition is the tendency to seek mercy but yet ignore the opportunity for conversion and renunciation of sin (See: *Deuteronomy 28:15-46; 18:9-22; Exodus 16:1-21; 32: 1-14*). The protoevangelium in Genesis 3:15 sets the stage where God expounds on his infinite mercy to Adam and Eve but yet reminds them of the work they will need to perform both spiritually and corporally. It is his

loving reminder of the need to prepare for the one who is to come in order to release the bondages of this first sin. This "New Adam" will perfect the human condition in a way that would open the door for all of God's children to repent, seek forgiveness, and in turn be in full communion with Him. St. Paul echoes this point quite well, reminding us that "as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (*Romans 5:12*).

He strengthens this point in Romans 7 where he reveals to us his own struggle in doing the very things he should not do but does them anyway. What he's trying to tell us is not to settle on a legacy of sin but instead center one's actions on Christ Himself. The book of Wisdom expands this point even further; "For God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it" (*Wisdom 2:23-24*).

Keep in mind that the devil himself wants a legacy of sin established in every single one of us. His demonic desire is a direct assault on the Incarnation because the devil does not want us to be partakers of the Divine nature, know God's love, or be reconciled by Him (*CCC 456-460*). In order not to succumb to a legacy of sin we must be open and honest about our fallibility and place our trust in Christ (*Colossians 3:1-3*). Blaise Pascal once wrote; "Being unable to cure death, wretchedness, and ignorance, men have decided, in order to be happy, not to think such things" (*Pensees, 133*).

Establishing a heritage of grace in the family

As a father of four children the last thing I want is to leave a lasting legacy of sin for my children to follow and emulate. I'm called to be cognizant of my actions both verbal and physical because as I just stated, the last thing I want is an imitation of my sinful behavior to fall upon them. But yet when I'm caught disciplining my children, it is because of an act they've imitated from me. In many ways it ends up being an examination of conscience for me as a parent.

Man is called to perform good acts (*CCC 1749*). This means as children of God created in his image and likeness, we are naturally inclined to perform corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Our Christocentric heritage also calls us to obey and be attentive to the voice calling us to do what is good and avoid evil (*CCC 1776*). We hopefully understand that sin is a rejection of God's love and looking at this a bit further is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods (*CCC 1849*). Our Christian responsibility is to center our very being to Christ which leads to an active renunciation of sin. How can we strengthen our Heritage of Grace within our families while at the same time weaken the heritage of sin? Here are several suggestions to consider:

- Establish a central time to pray every evening as a family i.e. Family Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Liturgy of the Hours, general intercessory prayers, reading from Scripture.
- Pray over your children every



Marlon De La Torre is the director of Catechesis for the Diocese of Fort Worth, and author of *SCREWTAPE TEACHES THE FAITH: A GUIDE FOR CATECHISTS*.

night before going to bed by making the sign of the Cross on their foreheads, calling upon their guardian angels to be with them.

- Establish a sacred space within your home consisting of a Bible, crucifix, and the colors of the liturgical season to serve as a focal point of prayer and to bring an awareness of Christ and the liturgical season.
 - Make a daily examination of conscience and go to confession as a family.
 - Faithfully attend Mass on Sunday.
 - Perform spiritual and corporal works of mercy as a family toward one another.
 - Cultivate and practice the virtue of charity (*1 Peter 4:8, CCC 2517-2519*).
 - Consecrate your home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
 - Remove any distractions that contradict Christ e.g. inappropriate music, clothing, movies etc.
 - Pray for prudence and wisdom in your daily tasks.
 - Call upon the intercession of the saints at all times and especially during times of struggle.
- O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your word... give me wisdom that sits by your throne... for even if one is perfect among the sons of men, yet without the wisdom that comes from you he will be regarded as nothing.*

St. Maria Goretti

inspires us to cultivate a merciful heart

By Anamaria Scaperlanda Biddick



Relics of St. Maria Goretti at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston. (CNS photo/Gregory L. Tracy)

THE RELICS OF ST. MARIA GORETTI WERE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF MY HOUSE DURING THEIR U.S. TOUR. WITHOUT THINKING MUCH ABOUT HER, HER LIFE, OR HER DEATH, I WENT TO VENERATE THEM.

As I walked into the church, her story turned over in my mind: When she was 11 years old, Maria was attacked and stabbed multiple times by her neighbor's son after a failed attempt to rape her. She fought her attacker as well as she could. While she was dying of the wounds he caused her, she forgave her attacker.

She forgave her attacker, murderer, would-be rapist.

This realization struck me, I who am so capable — and, often, all too willing — to hold on to petty grievances. How often do I hold on to my anger and my idea of justice over a small slight? How often am I too prideful to forgive, clinging to my hurt, even at times when the offense was unintentional? Yet this 11-year-old girl was able to forgive someone whose offense was intentional —

and brutal.

Maria Goretti's example inspires me to cultivate a merciful heart and extend mercy to those around me — particularly appropriate during this Year of Mercy. An article by Father Carlos Martins, C.C., on the website for the relics tour emphasizes the centrality of forgiveness to Christianity. He writes, "As Maria understood so well, forgiveness is something *quintessentially Christian*. Indeed, it was to share with us the Father's forgiveness that Christ became incarnate and underwent his torture and death."

In other words, the more I am able to forgive others, the more I share Christ's love with them and understand God's love for me — but how? I have often wanted to forgive those who have caused me pain, only to bubble in anger at the thought of the offense.

Fr. Martins says that forgiveness is a choice, an act of the will, that can begin regardless of our emotions. Rather than being an absence of anger or hurt, as I have often thought, forgiveness means asking Jesus to

enter into the situation and bless the offender. When our negative feelings reappear, as they will if it is a major offense, our prayer can arise out of these feelings.

This process of forgiveness can only be done after we acknowledge the violation, writes Fr. Martins, rather than minimizing the transgression by pretending it's "okay." Many offenses, such as the death of a child or injury to oneself, can never be "okay" or repaired, but forgiveness is still possible in these situations, as Maria Goretti, in her meekness, shows us.

In the process of forgiving, Fr. Martins proposes that the victim pray this prayer aloud, "Jesus, I release [offender's name] from his debt to me and I give that debt to you. In place of that debt I ask You to give [offender's name] a blessing instead." Like all prayer, it must be prayed with humility: We must acknowledge our own sinfulness and our inadequacy in forgiving the offender. After this prayer, Fr. Martins recommends communicating forgiveness to the offender, if it is possible and will not subject the victim to more abuse.

This process of forgiveness may, at times, leave us feeling "at peace" about the situation, while other times sadness, anger, and hurt will still be present. True forgiveness leaves us free from these emotions by turning them into a prayer.

Anamaria Scaperlanda Biddick, a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, is a freelance writer based out of Oklahoma City, where she lives with her husband and two daughters.

Navigating our lives

with the Almighty navigator

By Kathy Hamer

MY APOLOGIES TO THE LATE DR. THEODOR SEUSS GEISEL, 1904-1991, WHO TITLED HIS LAST BOOK — PUBLISHED IN 1990 — *OH THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!* THAT BOOK BECAME A GREAT GRADUATION GIFT BECAUSE IT SPOTLIGHTED THE ESSENCE OF AN EXCITING FUTURE.

By 1990, the year of that last Dr. Seuss book, I'd already BEEN to those PLACES; in fact my kids were on their way, too: As Dr. Seuss said, they had "BRAINS in their heads, they had FEET in their shoes."

All my children's school experiences ended more or less successfully. Some of the kids were serious about education; some were more creative and fun-minded. The same had been true of my own undergrad experiences. My sister Georgene was serious. I was not.

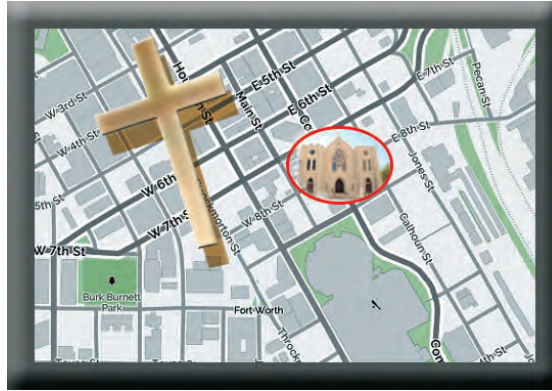
Specifically I remember the "science project fiasco," when I created the same project as my sister, in exactly the same school year. I was in fifth grade. She was in ninth. Fortunately we were in different schools.

My sister's project, "recessive pedigrees," illustrated the percentages of blue-eyed and brown-eyed children that occur in the general population, based on the color of their parents' eyes. I decided to follow my sister's lead and studied the same thing.

Our presentation boards were similar (identical), and creative. (My sister's was creative. Mine was creatively copied from hers.) My sister and I cut 30 holes in our respective cardboard displays and filled the holes with big baby doll eyes. No bodies or heads. Just eyes. And they blinked.

It was truly creepy.

We frequented every junk store in Southern Colorado, searching for the correct numbers of brown, blue, and hazel doll eyes; that was not easy. Late 1950's doll-biology ignored dominant and recessive genes, so it appeared dolls came only from blue-eyed parents. After long searches, we finally painted some of those baby-blue eyes brown,



to illustrate recessive pedigrees.

Navigating our lives is trickier than completing a school project; but both experiences are to be cherished. Looking back — through blue or brown eyes — it is startling to realize how much we learned; how much our schools formed us.

Catholic Schools Week is a whirligig of action, particularly for families with multiple children and grandchildren. This year, Larry and I separated for Grandparents Day. He attended St. Andrew's fourth and seventh grades with Emma and Natalie, and I went to St. John the Apostle pre-school, and met up with Charlie.

Both schools earned rave reviews from my family, SAS because of grandparent/child interviews, and St. John's because of the huge liturgy for children, grandparents, and grandfriends.

Amy Felton, St. John's principal, said, "We have Mass every Wednesday and every first Friday. We say the Rosary daily in our classrooms, and we have adoration on Thursdays. Since adding more Catholic Identity, the school has become calmer and more of a family.

"The reason we are here," Felton said, "is to make sure we prepare their minds for a lifetime and their souls for eternal life."

Last month I was called to traffic court, for an auto accident that occurred five-years ago! I had forgotten it, but after the sum-

mons, I became anxious about the impending date. My husband Larry drove us downtown, and my nervousness mounted, until he asked, "Where do you turn to get to the municipal courthouse?"

"I don't remember the street name," I answered. "But I usually just drive toward the cathedral."

"Ding! Ding!! Ding!! Ding!!!" Imaginary bells jingled in my head like a backyard full of wind chimes. I smiled. Of course! "I just drive toward the cathedral."

Suddenly I was feeling relaxed about the car accident I had forgotten about. It had been five-plus years since the accident. Since then I had married, and enjoyed the births of my six youngest grandchildren.

Somehow I had pushed the accident away, and given it to God, who watched over me during the intervening years, and allowed me to enjoy just the good things.

Larry and I arrived at the courtroom and sat for two hours, as dozens of people were called to the front or to the back. I wondered when my turn would be and whether it would involve a fine or a stint in the "big house".

While we sat, I ran through my experiences in that downtown neighborhood, near the cathedral where I had covered many NTC stories: ordinations, Chrism Masses, Guadalupe feast day celebrations. They were wonderful events that had filled my life, and I had forgotten anything bad.

"We all have BEEN a lot of PLACES!" I thought. "But, no matter how old we are, OH the PLACES we still will GO!"

"I wonder, God, how will we get there?"

"We'll drive toward church, Kathy."



Kathy Cribari Hamer's column has been recognized repeatedly by the Catholic Press Association.

For information about her book,

ME AND THE CHICKENS, go to

somethingelseagain.com.

They wanted more Bible

they said

By David Mills

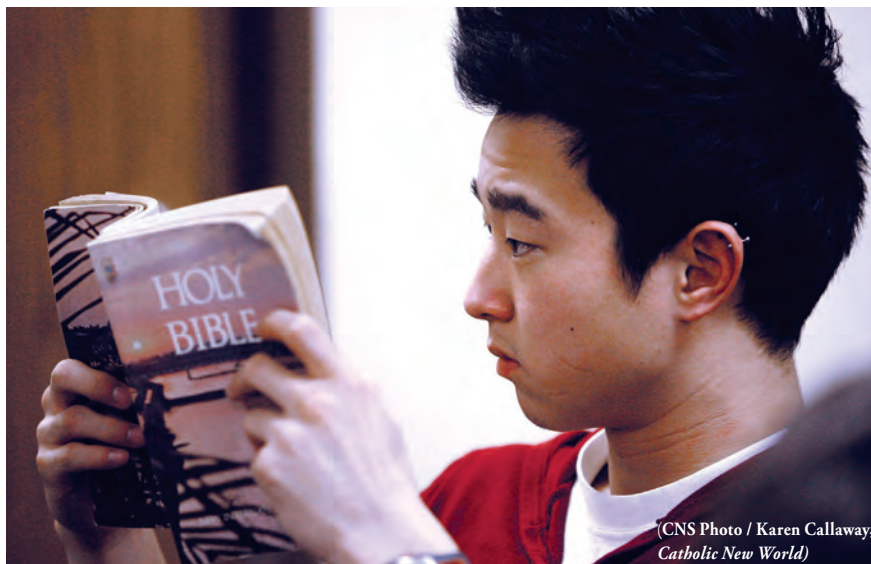
“WHEN THEY BECAME PROTESTANTS, THEY WERE ENCOURAGED TO READ THEIR BIBLES, AND STUDY THEIR BIBLES, AND BE TAUGHT FROM THEIR BIBLES, IN WAYS THAT HAD SELDOM HAPPENED WHEN THEY WERE CATHOLICS.” SO MY FRIEND BOB HARTMAN DESCRIBES WHAT HE’S HEARD FROM EX-CATHOLICS HE KNOWS.

Bob grew up in Pittsburgh and has been a Protestant pastor here for decades. He’s written a lot of books of children’s Bible stories, though weirdly enough most of them are only published in England, where he served as a pastor for several years. He’s also written other children’s books, like one of my family’s favorites, *The Wolf Who Cried Boy*. His latest is *The Big Pig Stampede*, a clever telling of Jesus’ story through a teenage boy and his friends.

He knows a lot of ex-Catholics. He had a lot of them in his church on the North Side. He made this comment in his contribution to a series on the website *Ethika Politica* called “What I want from Catholics.” (Full disclosure: I’m the editorial director.) He’s a Catholic-friendly Protestant and offered his observations in good faith. I don’t agree with everything he says, of course, but it’s helpful to hear from such people how they see us.

His Catholic friends told him that years ago Catholics were almost afraid to study their Bibles. Nowadays, they tell him, their parishes offer Bible studies but don’t push them. He also mentions the short homilies and the fact that the priest doesn’t always preach on the Scriptures. This is, he says, “the exact opposite of what you would find in your typical Protestant (and most certainly Evangelical) church, where knowing one’s Bible and how to study it is seen as absolutely crucial to the development of one’s faith and discipleship.”

He thinks Catholics don’t get nearly enough of the Scriptures and that some go to Protestant churches to get it. It’s a story I’ve heard before. There’s obviously some



(CNS Photo / Karen Callaway, Catholic New World)

truth to it. There’s a gap between what the Catholic Church says about her Scriptures and what many Catholics do with those Scriptures. The Bible is the written form of our family story, and we could do a lot more to understand it. Fair enough.

But (let me say this carefully): People are complicated and we don’t understand ourselves very well. When someone says “I left the Church because the Church didn’t give me the Bible,” he may be telling the truth as far as he knows it, but he may not. And even if he is, he may be wrong.

Ex-Catholics told me these stories when I was a Protestant, thinking I wanted to hear them. I didn’t, as it happened, but I learned something.

Sometimes I would notice that the speaker’s leaving the Catholic Church seemed well-coordinated with his doing something the Catholic Church didn’t approve of. Sometimes he would say that he wanted more Scripture, but what really got him excited was talking about his other reasons, like the fact that Protestantism didn’t make him go to church every Sunday, and no one expected him to go to confession. The Bible is a good stick these people could use to beat the Church with.

People are complicated, and who knows exactly why someone decided to leave the Church. I have strong doubts that the reason my good friend gave in his article is the real reason except perhaps in a small minority of cases. We can be politely and silently skeptical. We don’t need to accept their criticism of the Church either. We can take it as a reason to try to do better but not as a reason to condemn the Church or try to make her more like the Protestants.

But we could do better with the Bible, because it’s not just a book of stories and rules and some poetry, and some hard to follow theology. “In Sacred Scripture,” the *Catechism* explains, “the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, ‘but as what it really is, the word of God.’ In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.” We can always listen better, since we’re listening to our Father.

David Mills is editorial director of ETHIKA POLITIKA (www.ethikapolitica.org). Pastor Hartmann’s article can be found at tinyurl.com/HartmannBible.

SEEKING GOD'S PATH VOCATIONS

God's Mercy and the Culture of Vocations

BY FATHER JAMES WILCOX



Father James Wilcox was ordained to the priesthood in 2013 and serves as the Vocations Director for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

MY DAD IS A GOLFER. WHEN MY BROTHER AND I WERE YOUNG, MY DAD ENJOYED TAKING US TO THE COURSE AND TEACHING US TO PLAY. FIRST TO THE DRIVING RANGE, THEN A LITTLE TIME TO PRACTICE PUTTING, AND, EVENTUALLY, NINE HOLES OF GOLF. While I enjoy golf (even in the midst of playing so poorly), as young kids, we were extremely fascinated with the golf cart. In one of these outings on the ninth hole, my brother and I were moving the golf cart. Upon leaving the cart, we forgot to lock the brake, and the cart rolled slowly down into a ditch. With Dad's help, we tried to pull it out of the ditch but to no avail. It was stuck.

We gathered our clubs and made the somber walk to the clubhouse. Without naming my brother and me as culprits, Dad explained simply that the cart was stuck in a ditch. The clubhouse manager was understanding — perhaps we were not the first to fall victim to the elusive ditch or to forget the brake. Even upon our return to the car and the drive home, Dad did not scold us for the error. We knew we had made an error, and we learned our lesson. In his way, he demonstrated mercy.

Often we learn about God the Father from our own earthly father. Of course, we can attribute falsely the poor or painful actions from an earthly father to God the Father. However, once we are able to recognize that a good earthly father follows the example of God the Father (and not vice versa), we also see the attributes that are required for a good

spiritual father in the priest.

This Jubilee Year of Mercy offers priests, seminarians, and those in discernment a focused look into the essential attribute of mercy for the people of God. First and foremost is recognizing that mercy is the work of God, and we priests are his instruments to bring forward reconciliation for people. We are able to seek examples of God's mercy in Scripture, especially in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and his Gospel message.

In praying the Liturgy of the Hours, priests, religious, seminarians, and lay faithful throughout the world pray Psalm 25, calling out for God's mercy. "Remember your compassion and your mercy, O LORD, for they are ages old. Remember no more the sins of my youth; remember me according to your mercy, because of your goodness, LORD" (*Psalm 25:6-7*). The image of God remembering us in light of his mercy is a beautiful meditation, especially for those who are seeking to serve our brothers and sisters in priesthood and religious life.

The discernment to priesthood is a discernment of the call of Jesus Christ, the manifestation and incarnation of the mercy of God in our lives. To truly live out the *alter Christus*, the priest is called to be an open vessel of mercy first. In response to God's immense love, the priest lives out this mercy through a life dedicated to pursuit of holiness, salvation of souls, and proclamation of the Gospel. Pope Francis offers a beautiful image for the priest

— the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

Vocations to the priesthood are vocations to be men of mercy. We are called to serve the Lord as these bridges of hope for his people. Hearing the call of Jesus Christ is hearing the call to being a man of mercy: a man who sees as God sees; who views others with a merciful heart; who can look into the loving heart of the other and desire to move that heart into a deeper relationship with God.

Being a man of mercy does not have to be a difficult task. However, it must be an intentional one. The priest must recognize his role as *alter Christus* and put the love of Christ into action in the lives of people. The men who seek to serve the Lord as priests must be, above all, living signs of the Father's readiness to welcome those in search of his pardon.

On that golf course many years ago, my brother and I felt horrible that we had caused a huge problem with the golf cart. My dad readily helped us know what it means to be a man of mercy. Dad made certain that we understood our mistake, while simultaneously demonstrating the love of a Father.

As a diocese, we can continue our efforts to build a Culture of Vocations by seeking men of mercy to consider life as a priest. Pray for mercy. Pray for vocations. St. John Vianney, patron of priests, pray for us.

Msgr. Publius has never lost sight of the beauty surrounding Christ's Church

By Jerry Circelli
Correspondent

MONSIGNOR PUBLIUS XUEREB, PASTOR OF HOLY REDEEMER CHURCH IN ALEDO, IS A MAN IN CLOSE COMMUNION WITH CHRIST AND A LITANY OF SAINTS.

That spiritual relationship has grown strong over the years not only through prayer, but with the skillful hands of a craftsman passionate about repairing statues of holy figures.

"I talk to the statues when I work on them," Msgr. Publius said, his serious countenance quickly transforming into a wide smile.

"I ask them, 'What happened here?' because maybe they have a broken hand or foot, or a chipped finger. I tell them not to worry, I can help. I can do miracles with plaster of Paris."

From 100-year-old crucifixes to statues of Mary and other saints, Msgr. Publius has worked his miracles for more than three decades.

For the past few years, however, Msgr. Publius has had little time for his hobby, focusing instead on overseeing the design, creation, and installation of two life-size statues of the Holy Family on either side of the altar at Holy Redeemer. The wooden statues, carved in Italy, were consecrated late last year by Bishop Michael F. Olson during a dedication Mass at the parish.

One statue depicts Mary and her son as a toddler. Mary is seated, and the child Jesus' arms are outstretched toward us.

"The gentle mother is giving us her son, Jesus," Msgr. Publius explained. "And Jesus is ready to begin walking toward us with his arms open, waiting for us to accept Him."

On the other side of the altar



Msgr. Publius Xuereb poses with Bishop Michael F. Olson late last year on the occasion of a special consecration of sculpted wooden statues of the Holy Family the Holy Redeemer pastor commissioned in Italy. (NTC / Jerry Circelli)

is the statue of Joseph and the child Jesus. Joseph is laboring on a woodworking project, but his attention is focused on young Jesus.

We see that Jesus is imitating his father, as the child is holding a nail over two pieces of wood. Foreshadowing is evident, with the nail and the pieces of wood reminding us of the cross.

The new statues complement other beautiful artwork at Holy Redeemer, including large stained-glass windows in the church's Eucharistic chapel that depict the seven sacraments.

"I love art," Msgr. Publius said. "And I love being a parish priest. I love it all."

Born in 1943, Msgr. Publius Xuereb grew up on the rural island of Gozo, a part of the Maltese archipelago, off the coast of Italy in the Mediterranean.

One of 11 children growing up in a family with no electricity or running water, Msgr. Publius

learned at a young age the importance of family, community, and faith.

"It was the best time of my life," Msgr. Publius said, explaining that most people on the island grew close to one another and worked together to raise their families, educate their children, and serve God.

"We were one big family," the monsignor said, describing the effects of World War II on his home. "The war may take away your house, but it gives you a family."

"And the Church was the center," the priest stressed.

At that house of God, St. Joseph Church on the island of Gozo, Msgr. Publius has some of his earliest memories. They include sitting at his mother's side and listening to her pray at daily Mass. "To this day, I am still saying the same prayers," said the monsignor.

At a young age, the priest said

he heard God's call and followed the path to priesthood at a local seminary.

In 1968, Msgr. Publius was ordained and took his first job running an orphanage on his home island of Gozo in Malta.

In 1969, the priest traveled to visit his brother who had moved to the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He was introduced to Bishop John J. Cassata, the first bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth. Born in Galveston to Sicilian parents, Bishop Cassata felt a cultural connection with the young priest and asked him to consider serving in the newly created Diocese of Fort Worth. Publius Xuereb accepted the bishop's invitation.

During the next 47 years, Msgr. Publius would go on to serve at 10 parishes in the diocese under four bishops.

Msgr. Publius has served as associate pastor at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth, Our Lady Queen of Peace in Wichita Falls, and St. George, St. Rita, and Holy Family parishes in Fort Worth.

He has also served as pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Abbott and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Penelope, St. Peter's in Fort Worth, St. Thomas in Pilot Point, and Holy Cross in The Colony, before becoming pastor of Holy Redeemer in Aledo — where he's ministered since 2009.

In 2012, the priest received the papal honor of monsignor. At the time, he said he owed the honor to every parish family and church where he has served.

"I have loved every parish where I have been," said Msgr. Publius, who was actually in retirement before being asked to serve as pastor at Holy Redeemer.

"I really enjoy it here and will stay as long as my health is good and the bishop wants me to."

PRAYER AND WITNESS.
Thanks to Laux's efforts and Youth for Life, teens have learned the value of praying outside local abortion clinics (BELOW) and participating in pro-life marches (FAR RIGHT).



Starting *young*

How do you create a culture of life? Well, according to Sue Laux, it starts with youth: giving them the facts, teaching them the importance of chastity, and reinforcing the sanctity and dignity of the human person

by Mary Lou Seewoester / Correspondent

THE HISTORY OF YOUTH FOR LIFE IN THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH BEGINS WITH THE STORY OF HOW ONE WOMAN DISCOVERED HER PASSION FOR SHARING THE MESSAGE OF LIFE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.

Sue Laux, who resigned in December as Youth for Life coordinator, said her pro-life journey “was definitely guided by the Holy Spirit.”

“Until 2003, I hadn’t thought much about pro-life,” she said. “Then I started helping with my daughter’s ninth grade (religious education) class” at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, where “pro-life issues were a very big part of the program.”

Next, she joined the March for Life Pilgrimage to Washington D.C. as a chaperone, and eventually ended up “praying on the sidewalk” in front of a local abortion facility.

“While praying on that sidewalk I thought: ‘I don’t want to wait until the end. We want to stop these girls from ever getting to this point.’ So I wanted to educate the girls and guys in junior high and high school to know the facts. And I wanted to get the message out to the youth in person.”

That seed of an idea and her passion for a proactive approach to the sanctity of life grew into 12 years of learning, leading, and evangelizing with Youth for Life in the diocese.

“At that time pro-life and chastity weren’t always included in youth ministry, so I started to cover that aspect” with Youth for Life events,



Laux explained.

The areas of catechesis previously handled by Youth for Life are currently in transition from Laux and the Respect Life Office to Jason Spoolstra, diocesan Youth Ministry Coordinator.

“We’re trying to make sure that there is no separation between Youth for Life things and Youth Ministry things. It’s really one thing,” Spoolstra said. “Youth Ministry should encompass everything, including Youth for Life programs.”

Laux agreed. “Youth for Life can now be under Youth Ministry like it should be. So now, pro-life and chastity will be included in everything that Youth Ministry does,” she said.

Laux also said “it’s time for new blood to take it to the next level, and this is such a good opportunity with Jason’s expertise. I’ve known him for 15 years and watched him ‘grow up’ in the pro-life movement.”

Youth for Life began in 2004 as part of

Catholics Respect Life, a non-profit 501c3 organization that was separate from the diocese until 2009 when Bishop Kevin Vann created a diocesan Respect Life Office.

Angela Walters was director of Catholics Respect Life when Laux became its first Youth for Life coordinator. “It was all strictly volunteer,” Walters said. “And she also raised funds all these years to cover the costs of all of the [Youth for Life] programs.”

Lock-In for Life was one of the first programs that Laux facilitated. She continued what Matt Gill, then youth minister at St. Elizabeth’s, had organized as a parish event. It grew to include more parishes and eventually became a diocesan event.

Laux also worked with the Dallas Diocese’s Youth for Life coordinator to bring Pro-Life Boot Camp to the Fort

Worth Diocese. In 2005, Pro-Life Boot Camp drew about 30 high school students, but in the last few years more than 100 students, including junior high students, have participated.

Other Youth for Life programs that Laux facilitated include the annual March for Life

Pilgrimage, Pure by Choice, and Spiritual Adoption.

“Sue will be sorely missed for the amount of work she did behind the scenes,” Spoolstra remarked. “She has a servant heart and never ever looks for the limelight. She saw herself as a facilitator. She was really good at it and worked tirelessly at that.”

He explained that some Youth for Life programs that began at the parish level became diocesan events due to Laux’s hard work.

“For example, if Sue hadn’t kept it going, we wouldn’t have had the Lock-In for Life 16 years in a row. That’s in large part due to Sue finding ways to make it better each year,” Spoolstra added.

Michael Demma, Respect Life director for the diocese, commented that the impact of Youth for Life can’t be measured in the numbers of individual babies saved, but with Sue, “she has impacted thousands of young people and many of those young people continue to be dedicated to life because of her efforts.”

Laux said though she’s looking forward to more time with her family and her job as a Keller-Williams real estate agent, she’ll miss most the relationships with young people she has met through Youth for Life.

“One of the most fulfilling things is to go to weddings of these great kids who are Catholic and have good relationships and are getting a wonderful start. They’re our hope for the future,” she said.



Sue Laux

Defending the great value of **LIFE**

Chuck Pelletier, a long-time
advocate for the unborn — and
their mothers — dies at 72

by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen
Correspondent

THE CRIES OF A RESTLESS INFANT AREN'T USUALLY WELCOMED AT A SOMBER, SOLEMN FUNERAL SERVICE.

But the sound of newborns emanating from the back of St. Patrick Cathedral seemed entirely appropriate — even providential — as friends and family gathered Jan. 22 to say goodbye to a man who saved the lives of countless babies during his lifetime.

Retired U.S. Army Capt. Charles J. (Chuck) Pelletier II, a dedicated pro-life advocate and founder/director of the Mother and Unborn Baby Care Center in Fort Worth, died Jan. 14 at the age of 72. During a funeral Mass, concelebrated by Bishop Michael F. Olson and diocesan priests, he was remembered as a devoted husband, father, and godparent to innumerable children he met through his ministry at the crisis pregnancy center.

Pelletier took the role of godfather seriously, Bishop Olson told the congregation during his homily. He happily took on the responsibility of introducing children to the life of Christ and many times was instrumental in bringing the parents back to the faith.

“Godparents make real the truth that this child is now named, and not a possession of the parents but belongs to God,” the bishop explained.

Being a godparent is a vocation of service to help the child attain the ultimate destination of life with God, their maker, in heaven.



Chuck Pelletier smiles after receiving the Service to Life Award last November at the annual Catholics Respect Life Banquet. Pelletier and his wife, Pat, were honored for their more than 30 years of helping women in crisis pregnancies. (Photo by Donna Ryckaert / NTC)

“Chuck throughout his life, did that in the most fundamental way by reminding each of us — especially mothers and fathers — that their children did not have ‘labels’ but names, and were not possessions,” he pointed out. “In those names and identities is the presence of Christ.”

Pelletier, who spent four decades of his life working and praying to end abortion, was laid to rest on the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Jan. 22, 1973 landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing the practice in the United States. Traditionally, the date is observed with a major pro-life march in the nation’s capital.

The devoted sidewalk counselor, who stood outside abortion centers year-round hoping to save a life, never attended the annual Washington D.C. protest.

“He never wanted to close the center and risk that some mother might choose death, sin, and selfishness out of fear,” the bishop said. “He was sensitive and aware of that responsibility.”

Suzette Chaires helped produce a video for the Mother and Unborn Baby Care Center started by Pelletier, his wife, Pat, and other volunteers in 1984. On several occasions, the former youth minister at St. John the Apostle brought young, pregnant women considering abortion to the center for guidance.

“Their babies would live and not be killed,” Chaires said, recalling Pelletier’s gentle, fatherly demeanor. “I can actually picture him looking so tenderly at these young women who were troubled and wanted an abortion. His prayerfulness, gentleness, and the information he shared with them was so pastoral.”

The whole experience was life giving because many babies were saved, she continued, adding, “I don’t know if there is anyone who can fill his shoes. He touched so many people — not just women dealing with a crisis pregnancy. He helped people understand the gift of life.”

Born in Highland Park, Michigan and raised in a devout Catholic family, Pelletier’s belief in the sanctity of life was strengthened by his wartime experiences. After graduating from Notre Dame University in 1965 and pursuing a master’s degree at Eastern Michigan University, he joined the U.S. Army and served two tours of duty during the height of the Vietnam War. On Nov. 1, 1970, the Cobra helicopter he piloted was shot down over a rice paddy during a rescue mission. Married 18 months earlier, his wife, Pat, was just days away from delivering the couple’s first child.

Circling the smoking wreckage, another helicopter crew noticed Pelletier hacking away at the chopper’s canopy and was able to retrieve him and his co-pilot. A severe spinal cord injury, sustained in the crash, forced the army veteran to use a wheelchair for the rest of his life. For his bravery, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Combat Infantry Badge, and Bronze Star for valor along with other honors.

Lisa Irlbeck, who was born four days after the crash, said her father lived in constant pain, but his injuries didn’t deter his willingness to serve the innocent and oppressed.

“He continued to drag his broken, pained body out and about daily for the sake of others, most notably, but not exclusively, for babies threatened by abortion and the souls of their mothers,” she said. “He lived a sacramental life that fed and flowed into his work and garnered

“I don't know if there is anyone who can fill his shoes... He helped people understand the gift of life”

— Suzette Chaires



Chuck Pelletier (right) at one of the many Good Friday Rosary Vigils outside Planned Parenthood that he attended. (Photo by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen / NTC)

for him the graces needed to be the face and flesh of Christ to others.”

The eldest of the couple’s five children, Irlbeck said her father lived by the Jesuit motto: All for the Greater Glory of God.

“And he expected us to live it, too,” she said. “Our gifts, talents, and energies are ours to use for the glory of God in the gift of self to others. That self-donation is the reason for my father’s holy death and the reason so many lives were personally and profoundly changed by an encounter with him.”

Although Pelletier’s presence is missed, work at the Mother and Unborn Baby Care Center will continue, vowed Laura Herrera, the ministry’s assistant director. Her mother, Suzanne Baumhardt, was one of the center’s founding organizers.

“He was influential in my mother’s life and my life spiritually. He brought me back to the Catholic Church and fullness of faith,” Herrera said. “The center is not closing. Chuck trained people so it would continue to function without him.”

Donations to assist the center can be made

in Pelletier’s memory to Mother and Unborn Baby Care, 3704 Myrtle Springs Road, Fort Worth, Texas 76116.

Joe Stroto became familiar with Chuck Pelletier after taking his two youngest children to the Good Friday Rosary Vigil organized every year by Mother and Unborn Baby Care and Catholics United for Life. When a bout with thyroid cancer prevented him from working, the FedEx pilot joined the local pro-life ministry as a sidewalk counselor.

“He was a great mentor to me,” said Stroto, noting both men shared a love for aviation. “Chuck was a walking catechism and he certainly lived it. He put all of himself into his faith.”

Although his friend lived a holy life, he continues to pray for him.

“At a wake Chuck went to, the priest said the person who passed away was so good, he was sure the person was in heaven,” Stroto said, recalling the anecdote.

Pelletier felt those words robbed the deceased of needed prayer.

“So I’m remembering to pray for Chuck every day,” Stroto added. “As good as he was, I know he would love to have our prayers, and I think he’s up there praying for us.”

Pelletier’s survivors include his wife of 46 years, Pat; daughters, Lisa Irlbeck and husband, Randy; Jennifer Pelletier; sons, Charles Pelletier III, James Pelletier and wife, Stacie; John Pelletier and wife, Kathleen; 14 grandchildren and thousands of babies who are alive through his efforts.

Penelope Polka Mass, one way Catholics there

Keep Traditions Alive

In this recent photo, taken during a Polka Mass Fr. Michael Holmberg presides, while a polka band (**upper right**) provides the music for the liturgy.

NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY CHURCH IN PENELOPE HAS SERVED CATHOLICS IN THE FARMING REGION ON THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF HILL COUNTY FOR 117 YEARS.

The parish was formed by Czechs, both immigrants to the U.S. and their descendants.

On a January Sunday, the parish hosted its traditional “Polka Mass” with the Jodie Mikula Orchestra of Ennis, a Czech polka and waltz band. In July, another polka Mass will feature the band Czech and Then Some, also of Ennis.

In the Czech tradition of maintaining community, a polka Mass is not just a Mass with music. It also brings together family and friends for a traditional Czech lunch and dancing.

“We love to sing polka Masses and even one of our friends from our sister parish in Abbott, Mrs. Willie Mae Polansky, comes to help us,” explains Karen (Fabian) Osborne, a descendant of a longtime Czech family. “Sometimes at these Masses, we sing some of the old Czech songs taught to us by a former pastor, Father Bohumil Hruby, who passed away in 1977. Father Hruby was a first generation immigrant of Czechoslovakia.”

While polka and waltz music followed the Czechs as they immigrated into Texas and has been part of the Texas Czech culture throughout, the polka Mass is a locally cherished tradition of singing familiar polka melodies, with spiritual lyrics. Today they are most often sung as English versions introduced 40 years ago. Father George Balasko, a Cleveland priest who also

was a polka musician, created the first polka Mass in 1972 following Vatican II which permitted liturgical music in the vernacular, or the language of the people. The Mass was spread by Minnesota priest Father Frank Perkovich, also a polka musician, in the '70s and '80s. The Penelope polka Mass participants still sing some of Fr. Balasko's songs.

For the January polka Mass, the Mikula band provided the music as Father Michael Holmberg celebrated Mass. Faithful from throughout North and Central Texas come to the celebration.

“Joe and I love the polka Mass,” says Paula Anderle of Waxahachie. “We have a genealogical connection to the Penelope and West area because my husband Joe's parents were from here.

“Things like the polka Mass bring everybody together,” Anderle explained. “But, it is not just the polka Mass, it is also the community and its connection to the Czech culture.”

After Mass, the congregation files into the parish hall for lunch, through an entrance that features early black and white photos of the old wooden church and all of its parishioners. Lunch includes traditional *buchta*, kolaches, and strudel, homemade by parishioner Marcella Sinkule and sausage made locally in the Tours community by Benny Nors. And of course, there is sauerkraut at every meal.

Nearby parishes including St. Martin's in Tours, St. Mary's in West, and Immaculate Heart of Mary in Abbott also have Czech roots and keep traditions alive. When fall

arrives, so does picnic time. These “picnics” or “bazaars” have been the local Czech tradition since the Czech Catholics arrived. Each parish has its own delicious specialty meal. Some feature kid's games, bingo, a raffle, meal, and an auction, which many times feature handmade quilts by local parishioners.

For these smaller parishes, these events, whether it is the polka Mass or the church picnic, are opportunities for Czechs and their friends to visit and connect, while fondly remembering the Czech heritage in Texas, Mrs. Osborne observed.

Mrs. Osborne explains that her mother, Mary Ann (Firasek) Fabian, now 85, was a little girl with long, curly, hair in the picture hanging on the parish hall wall.

“She can still tell you who most of the hundred or so people in the photo are. And she can also tell you that when she was growing up, they had church ‘picnics’ in the little hall that was located out in the country.

“Traditions are important,” she adds. “They provide a source of identity. They help strengthen a sense of community. It is vital to keep the community alive.”

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Spirit Games return April 24; give Catholic school students opportunity to celebrate faith, friendship

by Lance Murray
Correspondent

AFTER A THREE-YEAR HIATUS, THE SPIRIT GAMES ARE BACK, OFFERING STUDENTS ATTENDING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WITHIN THE FORT WORTH DIOCESE THE CHANCE TO CELEBRATE THEIR FAITH, INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS AND HAVE A GOOD TIME PARTICIPATING IN A VARIETY OF EVENTS.

The event now is under the auspices of the Catholic Schools office, and is sponsored by the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation. It will be held on Sunday, April 24, at Nolan Catholic High School, 4501 Bridge St. in Fort Worth.

The event will begin at 11 a.m. with a Mass celebrated by Bishop

Michael Olson at the school's football stadium. Advance registration has begun at the diocese's schools, while day-of-the-event registration will begin at 10 a.m. A \$15 T-shirt will serve as all-admission to the event for students, which will include dodgeball, kickball, and other tournaments; a punt, pass, and kick competition; a variety of food; and a motivational speaker.

Jennifer Pelletier, superintendent of schools for the Fort Worth Diocese, said the games made a comeback after its founder, Jim Breen, visited her to talk about athletics.

"He came to me at the beginning of the school year and wanted to introduce himself," Pelletier said. "That organically led to this conver-

sation about the Spirit Games, and I'd never heard of it, so I jumped on it."

It was an easy decision, she said. "He was excited to bring them back, and we decided on that day to bring them back," Pelletier said.

Breen and his wife, Kathy, created the games and the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation in honor of their son, Stephen, who died on Oct. 4, 2004, at the age of 15, after battling cancer. Stephen Breen was a sophomore at Nolan Catholic High School, and he asked his parents to help two of his peer groups, Catholic school children and teenagers, and also teenagers battling cancer at Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth.

The Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation's mission is to offer financial aid to local children who "want the strength and values of a Catholic education," and to the children and their families whose lives are affected by cancer.

Breen said his son told him during his finals days: "I really appreciate the Catholic education you and Mom afforded me, and I imagine there are many people who can't afford that."

The parents have been fulfilling the son's request ever since.

"It's a labor of love, I'll tell you that," Breen said of the foundation's efforts to help Catholic youth with tuition, and those youngsters struggling to overcome cancer.

The foundation will top the \$1 million mark this year in providing tuition assistance to young people wanting a Catholic education, but might not be able to afford it. And, it has provided roughly \$100,000 to Cook Children's Medical Center.

Pelletier said the games and the foundation's efforts to provide tuition assistance to Catholic youth "enhances the sense of community of the Catholic schools."

David LaPointe, a third-year seminary student at St. Joseph Seminary College in Louisiana, said he knows the value of Catholic education and how critical the foundation's help is for many young people.

LaPointe received the foundation's assistance, and attended St. Andrew Catholic School in Fort Worth and graduated from Nolan, where he said his vocation to the priesthood was initiated.

What did he see as the main value of the games?

"It's an opportunity to come together and experience joy with one another," he said.

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Every Lent, I fast to remember

BY MARÍA RUIZ SCAPERLANDA

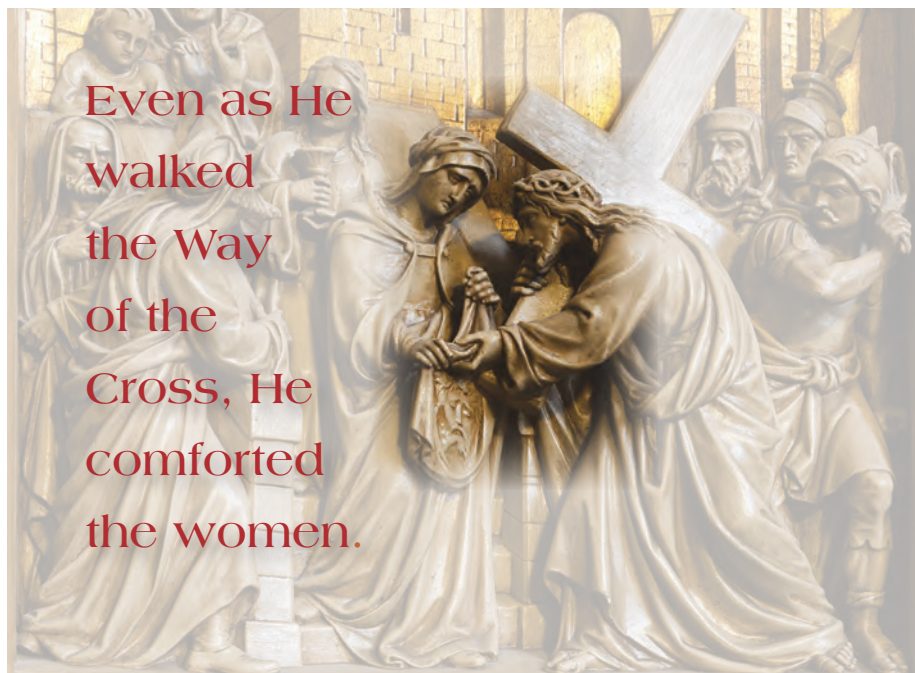
TEN YEARS AFTER MY FRIEND PAT AND I WALKED 350 MILES OF THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO PILGRIMAGE ACROSS NORTHERN SPAIN, WE SAT AT HER DINING TABLE AND LAUGHED ABOUT THE VIGOROUS WOMEN WE WERE THEN— AND HOW MUCH OUR LIVES HAD CHANGED.

Pat was battling brain cancer, and I was learning to function with a chronic autoimmune condition. Exactly one week after marking the tenth anniversary of our arrival at the holy city of Santiago de Compostela, Pat completed her earthly pilgrimage.

During that last year of her life, as I walked with Pat through her chemo, then radiation, and then finally facing her impending death, we used to talk about and ponder how the physical trials of our daily life mirrored the struggles and challenges we went through on the *Camino*.

In truth, however, it's the other way around. Our *Camino* pilgrimage was — and is — a metaphor for our lives: I can't anticipate what struggles today will bring, but anything is doable one step at a time; every uphill has a downhill; hardships become manageable with a friend; every single thing that I carry weighs me down, so I must choose wisely what is in my backpack. And accepting that there will always be hardships and trials in our daily walk is the path to, ultimately, learn to notice the unexpected blessings along the way.

In our culture, however, things like pain, suffering, worries, difficulties, grieving, are all things to conquer — and above all — to anesthetize as quickly as possible. Each of us becomes an addict looking for a quick fix. Drugs. Food. Exercise. Sex. Alcohol. Shopping. Television. Disposable relationships.



Even as He walked the Way of the Cross, He comforted the women.

Jesus meets the Veronica. Relief from Saint Antoine Church, Brussels, Belgium.

Whatever it takes in order to *not feel* bad, sad, or hurt.

Lent offers me a unique opportunity in my quest to open my heart without reservation to what God wants to give me each day. I fast to get out of my comfort zone. But mainly I fast as a continuation of my pilgrimage, out of my desire to become deliberate in my daily living.

Thus the question is ultimately not whether there's a point to giving things up during Lent, but whether I should ever *stop* fasting from all that numbs, dulls, and deadens me to life, all of life, as it is today — the good, the bad, and the ugly! But I can start during these 40 days. Fasting makes me willing.

For Christians, Good Friday stands alone in holiness and singularity. That one-day defines who and what we believe — and what makes us different. Christianity alone scandalously proposes a God who becomes human out of *love* for humanity. The scandal only deepens when this God-made-man willingly accepts suffering and death out of complete trust!

The Passion of Christ is not so much about remembering how Christ suffered, what happened to Him, or even about how dreadful we imagine it was. It's not a documentary on the History Channel.

Think about the difference.

Even as He walked the way of the cross, he comforted the women. He loved on his mother. He showed gratefulness to the kind heart who wiped his bloody face. He forgave his offenders. And he offered hope to the thief next to him as He hung dying on the cross.

No. The Passion of Christ is about Jesus' *response* to what was happening to Him.

In the midst of intense pain, in spite of undeserved persecution, torture, and profound suffering, Jesus keeps his eyes on God the Father, commending his heart, his spirit, his entire being to the One He trusted completely and without reservation.

The Master shows us the way to the Father's love.

And every Lent I fast to remember.

Lent's true goal...

BY JEFF HEDGLEN

THE USE OF ASHES AS A SYMBOL OF REPENTANCE GOES BACK TO THE OLD TESTAMENT. IT IS EVEN MENTIONED IN MATTHEW AND LUKE. We also see ashes as a sign of penance in the writings of Tertullian in the second century. Down through the ages and still today we wear ashes to show that we are mortal beings who began as dust and we shall return to dust.

Reflection on this image of returning to dust can lead us to realize that we are not our own ultimate end. Our sinfulness brings a spiritual death and a separation from God. This awakens in us a longing for reconciliation with God, and the pathway to this is repentance. Thus ashes, a symbol of our physical death become the object that marks the beginning of our Lenten journey to the cross of our salvation.

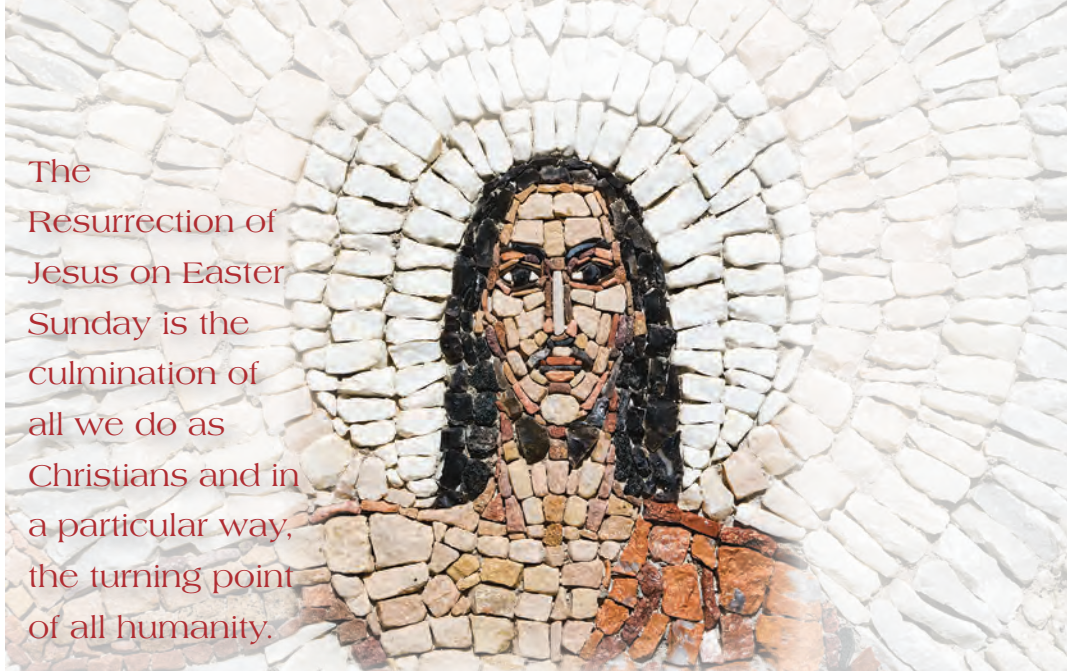
It is important to remember that an outward symbol like ashes in and of itself is not the focus of this spiritual practice. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says in Paragraph 1430:

Jesus' call to conversion and penance, like that of the prophets before him, does not aim first at outward works, "sackcloth and ashes," fasting and mortification, but at THE CONVERSION OF THE HEART, INTERIOR CONVERSION. Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures, and works of penance.

In other words the chief goal of all of our spiritual practices is deeper conversion, if this is not the aim then our practices are "sterile and false". We employ signs like ashes to express outwardly what is happening internally.

Every year we begin our 40-day jour-

The Resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday is the culmination of all we do as Christians and in a particular way, the turning point of all humanity.



Fragment of a stone mosaic of Jesus Christ resurrection

ney to the celebration of the Pascal Mystery by having our foreheads marked with ashes. Of our own volition we process to the foot of the altar and receive our marching orders for Lent: "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel."

The cross of ash on our forehead is but one of two crosses that serve as ritual bookends for this season of the Church year. Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday completes the set. We are marked with the symbol of repentance and then we embrace the object that redeems us.

One without the other has less meaning. If we focus on our need to repent without embracing the cross, we are left in our sin. If we cling to the cross with no acknowledgment of our need to repent, then we come empty-handed to the mercy seat.

Yet when we reflect deeply on our sinfulness and our need for repentance and we come to the foot of the cross with a contrite heart, laying the burden of our sin at the feet of Jesus, we encounter a God who is not only rich in mercy, but is exceedingly generous in offering mercy to all who call upon Him.

The goal of all of our external Lenten practices is to interiorly prepare us to walk the way of suffering with Jesus on good Friday, uniting all our sufferings, hurts, and heartaches with his passion so they too can be redeemed

The external cross of ash points to

the actual cross of salvation, which is the doorway we must pass through to receive the power of the Resurrection. All the fasting, prayer, and almsgiving of Lent is for naught if it culminates in the Good Friday observance and stops there. As St. Paul says: "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins" (*1 Corinthians 15:17*).

As vital as our Lenten practices are along with the observances of Holy Week, the Resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday is the culmination of all we do as Christians and in a particular way, the turning point of all humanity. For as St. Paul continues: "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all" (*1 Corinthians 15:19*).

But, praise God that Good Friday is not a dead-end, but instead, a grand opening! For with his death AND resurrection Jesus opens the chains of sin that bind us all and He opens the gates to heaven for all who surrender to his grace and mercy.

So in this Jubilee Year of Mercy let us dive deep into our practices this Lent. Make a heartfelt confession, perform meaningful fasts from food and other physical things, and dive down into the mystery of the God-Man Jesus who suffers and died for you. The more profound your Lent, the more glory-filled will be your Easter celebration.

March 6, Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Cycle C Readings:

- 1) Joshua 5:9a, 10-12
Psalm 34:2-7
- 2) Corinthians 5:17-21
Gospel) Luke 15:1-3 11-32

By Jean Denton

This week's Gospel story of the prodigal son has always captivated me with its image of God the Father waiting with open arms, constantly ready to take his wayward child back into his loving embrace.

There are so many facets to this parable's message: the father's unconditional love and mercy; the prodigal recognizing his sin and the joy of reconciliation; the sibling's loyalty and how his resentment caused separation.

But who would think it has anything to do with climate change? Well, think of "squander" and



"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you." — Luke 15:21

before I thought of the prodigal son.

The document reminds us that God has generously provided for all the needs of humanity through

his gift of the natural world. Many of us, especially in the wealthiest countries, have wantonly, selfishly spent God's gift of creation with increasingly wasteful consumption and depletion of its resources.

Does the parable of the prodigal son apply here? Is it a sin when I waste water or fail to speak up when my own electricity

provider is destroying the habitat of endangered species?

Of course it is. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis quotes Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians: "For human beings ... to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth ... to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life — these are sins."

Through his emphatic reiteration of Catholic social teaching in *Laudato Si'*, our pope calls us to turn away from these sins and return to God's loving embrace where we can care for his gift of creation as he desires for the common good and generations to come.

"a life of dissipation" — or simply "prodigal," which means wastefully extravagant — as the Scripture describes the son's behavior.

Think of the father lovingly bestowing on his son all the resources he needed to maintain the good life he'd had under his care. Think of the son using up his inheritance that would have allowed him to ensure that same life for subsequent generations of his family.

When I read Pope Francis' recent encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (*On Care for Our Common Home*), I only got as far as Paragraph 2

QUESTIONS:

How have your personal lifestyle and habits contributed to damaging the earth's ecology? This Lent, what can you do to reconcile and deepen your relationship with God's creation?

March 13, Fifth Sunday of Lent.

Cycle C Readings:

- 1) Isaiah 43:16-21
Psalm: 126:1-6
- 2) Philippians 3:8-14
Gospel) John 8:1-11

By Jeff Hensley

All the Scriptures this weekend point to the future, a future filled with good things that proclaim the goodness of the Lord and his forgiveness. The Gospel tells us the story of the woman caught in adultery and Jesus' words to her, so appropriate in this Year of Mercy: "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more."

When I think of this story, I'm always reminded of a woman I encountered in the back of a church many years ago. I'd see her



"Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'" — John 8:10

to something she had done that she said she could never be forgiven for. She didn't say what it was, so I've never known, but she's remained in the back of my mind across the intervening decades.

I remember gently trying to encourage her to accept God's forgiveness and her insistence that she was beyond God's grace.

She had a glow about her, a sense of holiness that I've seen in people I consider to be very holy. As much time as she spent in prayer, she had, no doubt, become quite familiar with what it feels like to be in God's presence.

So what do we tell people, when they fail to believe God can forgive them? How do we tell them to ask, to reach out to the hand extended in blessing? I still don't know. I only know that those of us who know the depths of our own sinfulness must keep pointing the way, must keep telling those who have fallen that God Himself will help them stand again.

frequently in the darkened, empty church, kneeling in prayer, her head on her hands, a look of deep sorrow on her face.

For whatever reason, I spoke with her one day, and she alluded

QUESTIONS:

Have you experienced deep feelings of unworthiness that make you doubt God's ability to forgive you? How can you overcome these feelings to experience the unmerited favor of God which is grace?

March 20, Passion Sunday.**Cycle C Readings:**

- Procession) Luke 19:28-40
 1) Isaiah 50:4-7
 Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24
 2) Philippians 2:6-11
 Gospel) Luke 22:14-23:56

By Sharon K. Perkins

There's an acronym often used to describe Catholics who come to Mass only seldom: PACE (or sometimes CAPE) Catholics. The letters stand for "Palms-Ashes-Christmas-Easter" (or "Christmas-Ashes-Palms-Easter"), referring to the four occasions when they usually choose to attend, for whatever motive.

Since the readings for Palm Sunday are unusually lengthy and the Mass is 20-30 minutes longer than normal due to the beginning procession, I can only imagine that for many of these



"And yet behold, the hand of the one who is to betray me is with me on the table." — Luke 22:21

occasional attendees, the big draw must be the take-home of blessed palms.

Setting aside my indulgence in a bit of self-righteous sarcasm, I find that it's extremely easy to congratulate myself for not being a PACE/CAPE Catholic, just as it's quite easy to place myself outside the narrative of Christ's Passion. After all, I've heard the story many times before, I wasn't there when it happened and I'm familiar with the eventual outcome.

So I listen to the readings and reassure myself that Jesus' suffering is at an end and that I can

count myself among the religiously observant few. Unfortunately, I'm not the first to succumb to this sanctimonious way of thinking, nor will I be the last, I suspect. No sooner had Jesus instituted the sacrifice of his body and blood and predicted his betrayal than the apostles not only absolved themselves of any responsibility, but they argued among themselves about "which of them should be regarded as the greatest."

"What blind arrogance!" we say smugly, and proceed to the

Eucharistic table as if we aren't culpable of any wrongdoing ourselves.

But note whom Jesus identifies as his betrayer: the one whose hand "is with me on the table." It could have been anyone. And, if I'm truly honest, that "one" is me, especially when I compare myself favorably with others while remaining blind to my own sin. In doing this, I not only approach the Lord's table unworthily, but I desecrate it without a second thought.

Jesus knows all of this; He knows who his betrayer is, He knows that Peter will deny him three times and He knows every single instance of my own desertion. Yet He still comes to you and to me "as the one who serves."

QUESTIONS:

At what time of day are you at your best? How can you cultivate a habit of prayer so that you are in communion with God throughout the day?

March 27, The Resurrection of the Lord, The Mass of Easter Day.**Cycle C Readings:**

- 1) Acts 10:34a, 37-43
 Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
 2) Colossians 3:1-4
 Gospel) John 20:1-9

By Jeff Hedglen

The third-highest-viewed TED Talk, by Simon Sinek, is titled, "How Great Leaders Inspire Action." He gave this talk in September 2009, and it has been viewed more than 25 million times. On the surface, it is about marketing and sales as he compares successful companies, ideas, and people with others in the same field who were not as accomplished. But when viewed from another perspective, Sinek's talk reveals a truth of our faith.



The premise of his presentation is that, "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." He used this idea to frame why some organizations excel and others don't. Basically, he pointed out that when a company knows why it exists, it knows its purpose, and if it shares that purpose with the world, other like-minded people will jump on the bandwagon and buy its product.

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above." — Colossians 3:1

This TED Talk came to mind while I was reading the Scriptures for Easter Sunday. St. Paul says: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above." The connection is that we have to know our "why" if we are going to know our purpose.

The why for Christians is the Resurrection! If Jesus is not raised from the dead, then we are all fools for believing in Him. Jesus is our "why," and we need to seek the

things that lead us to this "why" and then lead others to this "why."

Another connection between Sinek's TED Talk and the Christian life can be made if we see ourselves as on the marketing team for God: He is management, we are sales, and if we do not know the "why" of the kingdom, we won't make many "sales."

People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it. When we know the "why" of the kingdom of God, we have direction for our lives. But even more so, when we share the "why" of our faith, we reveal a truth that the world does not have in its power to offer, namely, that through Jesus our sins are forgiven, and we will appear with Him in glory.

QUESTIONS:

How would you describe the "why" of Christianity? Why are you a follower of Jesus? How has the Resurrection made an impact on your life?

April 3, Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday.

Cycle C Readings:

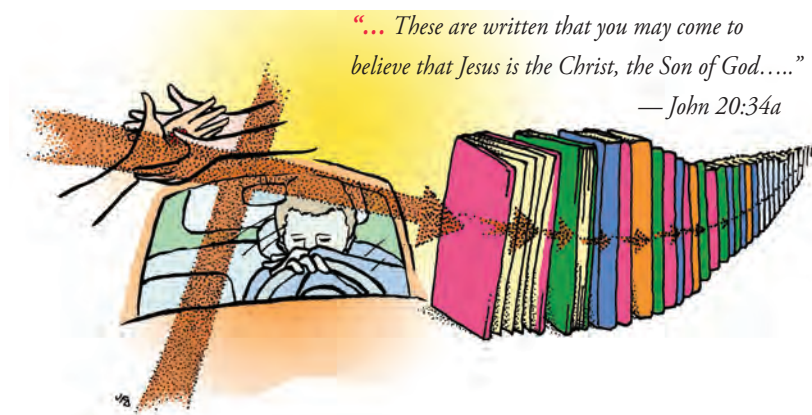
- 1) Acts 5:12-16
Psalm 118:2-4 13-15, 22-14
- 2) Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13 17-19
Gospel) John 20:19-31

By Jeff Hensley

Jesus is risen! He is risen, indeed! And that seems to be much of what today's readings reflect.

The Gospel offers us the account of Thomas coming to faith when Jesus appears before him and the other disciples. Jesus offers to Thomas the opportunity to put his finger on his hand, to put his hand into his side. But Thomas doesn't need the proof he had earlier said he required. His response to Jesus is "My Lord and my God!"

The chapter closes with the writer saying "Jesus did many



other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.”

When I came into the Church in 1974, I had already witnessed many great things Jesus had done in my life. In the intervening decades, I have seen Him

act again and again in my own life and the lives of those around me, often in amazing ways. Prayers have been answered; difficult situations that should not have worked out well did. Once on ice-coated streets, moving downhill at 20 mph, the pickup I was driving

QUESTIONS:

Have you experienced God's saving mercies in your own life and that of your family? Are those stories part of your personal or family lore?

then, went from sliding sideways on a collision course with the trunks of five substantial cars into the one open lane on the far right side of the intersection, coming smoothly to a stop, as though there were no ice on the road at all.

I believe my experiences and

those of all who read this are part and parcel of those books that the next chapter of John refers to as being more than the whole world could contain. All brought about by the obedience of the Son of God, who laid down his life to take it up again in its resurrected form, that we too might have life in his name.

April 10, Third Sunday of Easter.

Cycle C Readings:

- 1) Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41
Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13
- 2) Revelation 5:11-14
Gospel) John 21:1-19

By Sharon K. Perkins

Most moms have their favorite proverbs that, repeated often enough, become embedded wisdom in their children's brains. One of my mother's sayings was, "This too shall pass," and it still pops into my head whenever I feel stuck in a rut or am going through a tough time. It reminds me that trials are temporary and that there is always hope.

I imagine that in those days following Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, his disciples must have been grasping for some way to make sense of their situation.



Words alone, while comforting, could not suffice. Jesus' continued presence — which he had promised them at their last supper together — would be the only thing to sustain them.

At first, Jesus made Himself known by way of post-resurrection appearances, usually accompanied by a meal. Today's Gospel narrative describes one of those appearances in superb detail, noting that the disciples didn't recognize Him immediately. Once Jesus' identity became apparent, however, Peter literally jumped out of the boat

to meet Him. The ensuing meal and conversation would serve to strengthen him in the days ahead.

When Peter is later confronted by the Sanhedrin for speaking in Jesus' name, he boldly counters their accusations with the words, "We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom God

has given to those who obey Him." Therein lies the key: We are never asked to be witnesses (literally, "martyrs" in Greek) by ourselves. Even if it takes us a while to recognize it, the promised Holy Spirit has already been poured out, ensuring that Jesus is always present to us.

This same Holy Spirit gives us the hope to carry on in the midst of trial. As the psalmist writes, the weeping of nightfall will enter in — it's part of living. But just as surely as dawn follows night, rejoicing will come. Jesus' abiding presence isn't simply a platitude. It's a promise. And the sacred sustenance He provides isn't simply a meal. It's Himself.

QUESTIONS:

Is there a favorite saying or proverb that you rely on when you are in need of comfort or renewed hope? When has the presence of the Holy Spirit brought you from discouragement to joy?

April 17, Fourth Sunday of Easter.

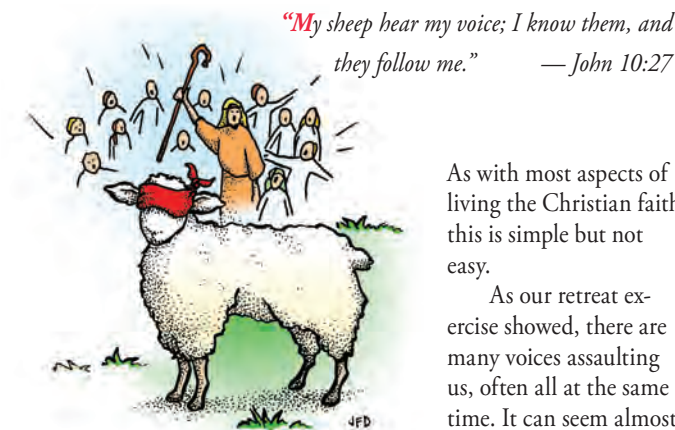
Cycle C Readings:

- 1) Acts 13:14, 43-52
Psalm) 100:1-3, 5
- 2) Revelation 7:9, 14b-17
Gospel) John 10:27-30

By Jeff Hedglen

While leading a youth ministry retreat on how to hear the voice of God, I presented an activity that involved one person being blindfolded and then challenged to navigate an obstacle course by listening to directions from others in the group. The catch was each group member played a different role.

One person was the calm assuring voice of God — giving the right directions through the course. But the other voices were: a loud voice of chaos yelling random direction, a quiet voice of deception whispering the wrong information, a voice of confusion



giving contradictory directions, a voice of flattery complimenting every move made, and a voice of disapproval criticizing every move.

The task was for the blindfolded person to listen to the cacophony and distinguish the “voice of God” in order to make it through the obstacle course.

In this week’s Gospel, Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

As with most aspects of living the Christian faith, this is simple but not easy.

As our retreat exercise showed, there are many voices assaulting us, often all at the same time. It can seem almost impossible to decipher which voice is God’s.

There are no short cuts to learning to distinguish the voice of God: It simply is all about exposure. Imagine that you are in a crowd and many people are calling your name, but one of them is

your mother. You have heard your mother call your name hundreds of times, so it will be easier to pick out her voice. In the same way, it takes time to learn the voice of God.

We can grow in our ability to recognize God’s voice by reading and meditating on the Scriptures, listening attentively to homilies, sitting in silence to hear God’s voice inside our hearts and by seeking the counsel of trusted spiritual mentors.

The more exposure we have to the truths of God, the more we will know how God would guide us, and this is the key to recognizing his voice. Just as the sheep know the voice of the shepherd, we too need to know the voice of God if we are to follow Him.

QUESTIONS:

Has there ever been a time when you clearly heard the voice of God? How do you know when you hear the voice of God? What is hardest for you about discerning God’s voice?

April 24, Fifth Sunday of Easter.

Cycle C Readings:

- 1) Acts 14:21-27
Psalm 145:8-13
- 2) Revelation 21:1-5a
Gospel) John 13:31-33a, 34-35

By Jean Denton

In today’s Gospel, Jesus urges His disciples to take care of each other when He’s gone. But when he says, “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another,” He emphasizes that the love He hopes will remain among them is of an uncommon kind.

For God, love is unconditional and absolute. But for us human beings, it seems, all love isn’t so equal. Nevertheless, Jesus calls us to hold each other in the kind of unconditional love that He has for all of us.

I can understand what Jesus

“I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”
— John 13:34



is getting at. The other day, one of my grown children was complaining to me about a sibling — also one of my children, by the way, so I didn’t much like hearing it. In fact, I was stung as though I’d been the object of the criticism myself.

That wasn’t the intention. This child was simply airing out minor family issues. I’d certainly listened to criticisms among the siblings before. No one meant to hurt me or each other, and the complaints always were prefaced by

a sincere, “I love (sibling), but ...”

I know that. But I wish they’d consider my feelings and see each other through my eyes as a parent, where even when my child goes wrong, I first recognize his inherent goodness, then instinctively love and defend him.

However, such an attitude doesn’t come easily in our daily encounters with others — even friends.

When I catch myself complaining about someone, I often stop because I sense God’s disapproval of my behavior — not out of consideration for his love of

that person.

Today’s Scriptures take us beyond morality to living as one of Jesus’ own: loving others not only as He loves me, but also as He loves them.

Revelation’s image of God dwelling with us is of God living and loving his entire human family — being not just my God but our God.

Jesus lived briefly among us in the flesh. Like a parent loving his children and desiring that they embrace each other in that same love after he passes on, Jesus tells his disciples that the world will know they belong to Him when they share his unconditional love with one another in every encounter.

QUESTIONS:

Where in your life are you currently experiencing concerns or conflicts involving others? How does trying to see others through God’s eyes change your attitude toward them? How does it change you?



El Papa saluda a la multitud en Tuxtla Gutierrez el 15 de febrero. (Foto CNS/Paul Haring)



El Papa toca la imagen original de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe el 13 de febrero. (Foto CNS/ Paul Haring)



El Papa Francisco en la Ciudad de México el 12 de febrero. (Foto CNS/ Gustavo Camacho, Presidencia de México)

Las palabras finales del Papa Francisco para MÉXICO

CIUDAD JUÁREZ (ACI) - EL PAPA FRANCISCO SE DESPIDE DE MÉXICO CON ESTAS SENTIDAS PALABRAS QUE HA DIRIGIDO A TODA LA NACIÓN. A CONTINUACIÓN EL TEXTO COMPLETO DE SU ALOCUCIÓN FINAL EN EL PAÍS:

Señor obispo de Ciudad Juárez, José Guadalupe Torres Campos, queridos hermanos en el Episcopado, autoridades, señoras y señores, amigos todos:

Muchas gracias, Señor Obispo, por sus sentidas palabras, es el momento de dar gracias a Nuestro Señor por haberme permitido esta visita a México. La que siempre sorprende, México es una sorpresa.

No quisiera irme sin agradecer el esfuerzo de quienes han hecho posible esta peregrinación. Agradezco a todas las autoridades federales y locales, el interés y la solícita ayuda con la que han contribuido al buen desarrollo

de este propósito. A su vez, quisiera agradecer de corazón a todos los que han colaborado de distintos modos en esta visita pastoral. A tantos servidores anónimos que desde el silencio han dado lo mejor de sí para que estos días fueran una fiesta de familia, gracias. Me he sentido acogido, recibido por el cariño, la fiesta, la esperanza de esta gran familia mexicana, gracias por haberme abierto las puertas de sus vidas, de su Nación.

El escritor mexicano Octavio Paz dice en su poema Hermandad:
Soy hombre: duro poco y es enorme la noche. Pero miro hacia arriba: las estrellas escriben. Sin entender comprendo: también soy escritura y en este mismo instante alguien me deletrea.

Tomando estas bellas palabras, me atrevo a sugerir que aquello que nos deletrea y nos marca el camino es la presencia misteriosa pero real de Dios

en la carne concreta de todas las personas, especialmente de las más pobres y necesitadas de México.

La noche nos puede parecer enorme y muy oscura, pero en estos días he podido constatar que en este pueblo existen muchas luces que anuncian la esperanza; he podido ver en muchos de sus testimonios, en sus rostros, la presencia de Dios que sigue caminando en esta tierra, guiándolos y sosteniéndolos en la esperanza; muchos hombres y mujeres, con su esfuerzo de cada día, hacen posible que esta sociedad mexicana no se quede a oscuras. Muchos hombres y mujeres a lo largo de las calles cuando pasaba levantaban

sus hijos, me los mostraban. Son el futuro de México, cuidémoslos, amémoslos. Esos chicos son profetas del mañana, son signo de un nuevo amanecer y les aseguro que por ahí en algún momento sentía como ganas de llorar al ver tanta esperanza en un pueblo tan sufrido.

Que María, la Madre de Guadalupe, siga visitándonos, siga caminando por estas tierras, México no se entiende sin Ella, siga ayudándonos a ser misioneros y testigos de misericordia y reconciliación.

Nuevamente, muchas gracias por esta tan cálida hospitalidad mexicana.

El Papa Francisco en México

Fotos de todas las paradas del Santo Padre y varios artículos sobre su visita de febrero 12-17 están disponibles en:

northtexascatholic.org/noticias-news

Al cierre del Año de la Vida Consagrada, los religiosos reciben ánimos para seguir sirviendo a Dios

por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen
fotos por Donna Ryckaert

CUANDO BRIDGET HAASE TENÍA 9 AÑOS Y CRECÍA EN LOUISIANA, SE CRUZÓ EN EL CAMINO CON UN HOMBRE SIN PIERNAS USANDO UNA TABLA CON RUEDAS PARA IR POR LAS BANQUETAS.

Estaba sucio y descuidado, y ella recuerda voltear a ver a su madre y comentar, “apuesto a que ese hombre apesta!” Aprovechando el momento, la sabia madre se agachó y le dijo amablemente, “preciosa, Dios está en ese hombre”. Observando al hombre avanzando poco a poco por la calle, Bridget replicó sin rodeos, “Yo no veo a Dios”. Las siguientes palabras que la niña oyó cambiaron para siempre su forma de ver el mundo.

“Sigue mirando”, le dijo su madre.

Ursulina por más de 50 años, la Hermana Bridget ha pasado toda la vida buscando a Dios en la gente de todas partes—en los rostros de los pobres en los Montes Apalaches, en los hambrientos en Sudán, en las meseras deprimidas y en las aseadoras de baños en los aeropuertos. Usando su don de narradora, la misionera les dijo a los sacerdotes, hermanos y hermanas reunidas el 5 de Feb. en la Iglesia de San Francisco de Asís, en Grapevine, cómo el percibir “los momentos sagrados” cada día puede aliviar la rutina cotidiana del ministerio.

Ya sea que hayamos profesado votos o no, cuando buscamos estos momentos, despertamos el mundo a la esperanza”, dijo la Hna. Bridget quien narró sus experiencias en el libro *Doors to the Sacred*. “Dios llega entre sorpresas y disfraces. Cuando nos abrimos a la presencia de Dios, evitamos una noción preconcebida del rostro de Dios en nuestra vida diaria”.

La presentación, en dos partes, de la oradora fue uno de los eventos planeados por la Diócesis de Fort Worth para marcar la clausura del Año de la Vida Consagrada. Otras actividades el 5 de febrero en la parroquia de Grapevine incluyeron un mini retiro para jóvenes adultos, una conferencia por el Arzobispo de Indianápolis, Joseph W. Tobin, y una Misa concelebrada por el Obispo Michael Olson y por el Arzobispo Tobin.

El Año de la Vida Consagrada comenzó el primer domingo de Adviento en 2014 y terminó el 2 de febrero, 2016—designado como el Día Mundial de la Vida Consagrada. Durante la observancia especial, el Papa pidió a las religiosas y religiosos que vieran su pasado con gratitud, vivan su presente con pasión, y acojan el futuro con esperanza.

Ofreciendo consejo sobre como cumplir estas directivas, la Hna. Bridget compartió con su audiencia una historia acerca

de la Bienaventurada Madre Teresa. Un entrevistador le preguntó a la fundadora de las Misioneras de la Caridad, que pronto será canonizada, si conocía el Evangelio. Sin pestañear, la diminuta monja admitió, “Sí. Tengo el Evangelio en la punta de mis dedos”.

Impresionado porque la ocupada monja tuviera tiempo de memorizar la Escritura, el reportero la miró mientras la Madre Teresa contaba en cada dedo, “por mí lo hicieron”.

“Tenemos que ser la respuesta a las oraciones de la gente por esperanza, apoyo y ánimo. Tenemos que ofrecer la dulzura de la atención a cada persona que encontramos”, afirmó la Hna. Bridget. Ojalá vivamos siempre con el Evangelio en la punta de nuestros dedos”.

Como terapeuta familiar en Cook Children’s Medical Center, la Hermana Janette Hernandez, MCDP, se identificó con la petición de la oradora de “buscar a Dios en todas partes”.

“Me encantó que llamara a Dios el Dios de las interrupciones”, indicó la Hna. Janette. “Cuando Él interrumpe nuestras vidas, lo que importa es estar ahí presente y aceptar lo que Él está pidiéndonos en ese momento”.

El Padre Alexander Ambrose, HGN, dijo que las pláticas de la tarde ofrecieron enriquecimiento espiritual.

“Es estimulante”. En momentos tristes, mensajes

como este nos dan vida”, explicó el vicario parroquial de la Catedral de San Patricio. “Podemos salir al mundo fuertes, felices y recordando que trabajamos para el Señor.

En su discurso ante el clero, religiosas y jóvenes adultos católicos, el Arzobispo Tobin dijo que el Año de la Vida Consagrada fue una oportunidad para reflexionar sobre lo que se espera de la vida consagrada y lo que el futuro reserva para la gente que profesa los votos religiosos.

“¿Cuál es la mayor contribución que los religiosos hacen a la Iglesia? En las palabras del Papa Benedicto, es su testimonio al amor”, dijo el arzobispo quien es miembro de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor (Los Redentoristas). Ya que el amor es el más sublime de los dones carismáticos, su testimonio esencial es lo que se necesita en el mundo”.

El obispo, que fue párroco por muchos años y después superior general de los Redentoristas, le dijo a su audiencia que avanzando, la gente consagrada exhibirá—en una u otra forma—tres características: testimonio de la primacía de Dios, testimonio de una comunidad marcada por el amor fraternal, y una misión que está al margen de la Iglesia y de la sociedad. Las personas consagradas no son visibles en la Iglesia por la ropa que usan, sino por los valores que sostienen.



El Arzobispo Joseph Tobin de Indianápolis da una conferencia en un mini-retiro. También dio la homilía en la Misa de clausura.



Una hermana dominica platica con una mujer joven durante el evento de clausura.



La Hna. Bridget Haase, OSU, da una plática a los religiosos acerca de buscar a Dios en los rostros de los demás.

“Antes que nada, la gente consagrada en la Iglesia debería ser especialista en la fe”, afirmó el Arzobispo Tobin, “y al mismo tiempo, salir prudenientemente a acompañar a los creyentes que buscan una forma más exacta de vivir su propia fe”.

La diócesis reinstala *Nihil Obstat* para el matrimonio

LAS PAREJAS QUE INICIEN SU PREPARACIÓN MATRIMONIAL ESTE AÑO, TENDRÁN AL TRIBUNAL VERIFICANDO SU DOCUMENTACIÓN.

El Tribunal confirma que todos los pasos requeridos por la Iglesia Católica para contraer un matrimonio válido se han cumplido por ambos, la novia y el novio.

El Rvdmo. Anh Tran, JCL, vicario judicial del Tribunal, revisa la documentación asegurándose de que se han cumplido los requisitos. Luego el P. Tran concede el decreto de Nihil Obstat y lo envía a la parroquia. Nihil Obstat es Latín por “nada impide”.

“La Iglesia y el estado dan al sacerdote o al diácono el poder de funcionar como ministro del matrimonio conjuntamente con su ordenación, y él no puede actuar fuera de esa facultad”, explicó el P. Tran. “Los primeros años de la diócesis, el Obispo Cassata requería el Nihil Obstat. Hemos instituido esta medida para asegurarnos que el diácono o el sacerdote está siguiendo todos los pasos requeridos por la Iglesia y la ley civil para que un matrimonio sea válido.

Por lo menos un mes antes de la boda, el sacerdote o el diácono de la parroquia entrega la documentación completa, incluyendo:

- Cuestionario prenupcial
- Actas de Bautismo o de Profesión de Fe
- Declaración, jurada por testigos, de libertad para contraer matrimonio
- Petición de Dispensa o de Permiso, si es necesario
- Prueba de que se ha completado la preparación matrimonial
- Copia de la licencia de matrimonio
- Carta de licencias ministeriales para sacerdotes que no pertenezcan a las Diócesis de Fort Worth o Dallas
- Si alguna de las partes ha sido casada anteriormente, también se requiere el Decreto de Nulidad y/o Decreto de Falta de Forma Canónica

REQUISITOS PARA LA PREPARACIÓN MATRIMONIAL

Según Chris Vaughan, director de Matrimonio y Vida Familiar de la diócesis, una pareja que desee casarse debe ponerse en contacto con su parroquia por lo menos de nueve a 12 meses antes de la fecha

La Iglesia enseña que el matrimonio es más que simplemente una institución social y legal; es la respuesta de dos personas al llamado de Dios.



prevista para la boda. En la entrevista inicial, el sacerdote, diácono, u otra persona designada por el párroco, explica el proceso de preparación matrimonial, determina si la pareja está en libertad de casarse (de acuerdo con la ley eclesial y la ley civil), e identifica alguna necesidad especial.

El matrimonio es visto por la Iglesia como una vocación para toda la vida. Para preparar a la novia y al novio para esta vocación, la diócesis requiere formación teológica y preparación de sus habilidades para su vida en común, antes de que ocurra la boda.

La Diócesis usa el curso Pre-Cana para la formación teológica para que los novios entiendan la enseñanza católica sobre el matrimonio. Las clases, que tienen lugar en varios lugares en la diócesis, cubren temas tales como el matrimonio como sacramento y los principios bíblicos y eclesiales para el Santo Matrimonio.

La preparación para su vida en común es a través del programa Fully Engaged, con el que la pareja hace un inventario premarital que evalúa actitudes en temas como finanzas, intimidad, comunicación, crianza de los hijos y división del trabajo. Después de calificar el cuestionario, una pareja acompañante se reúne, alrededor de cuatro veces, con la pareja comprometida para discutir sobre las áreas donde están de acuerdo o en desacuerdo.

Para las parejas en edad de tener hijos, la diócesis también requiere instrucción sobre planificación familiar natural que se ofrece en

salones de clase o en línea.

Individualmente las parroquias pueden recomendar preparación matrimonial adicional.

ENSEÑANZA CATÓLICA SOBRE EL MATRIMONIO

La Iglesia enseña que el matrimonio es más que simplemente una institución social y legal; es la respuesta de dos personas al llamado de Dios. La preparación matrimonial es un proceso para discernir ese llamado y para descubrir los recursos para transformar la atracción inicial en un compromiso para toda la vida.

Jesús, San Pablo, el Segundo Concilio Vaticano y el Santo Papa Juan Pablo II son solo algunas de las fuentes de sabiduría acerca del sacramento del Santo Matrimonio. Miles de páginas se han escrito sobre ese tema, pero tres de los más importantes principios de la enseñanza de la Iglesia son, que el matrimonio es sagrado en el plan de Dios, que es permanente, fiel y fructífero, y que es un símbolo vivo del amor de Dios por su pueblo.

En el sacramento del Santo Matrimonio, Dios trae a los esposos la divina gracia que necesitan para vivir una vida de santidad y servicio en su propia relación como pareja, en su familia, y en su comunidad. En actos diarios de bondad, servicio, amor mutuo y perdón, las parejas casadas están llamadas a imitar, aunque imperfectamente, el amor incondicional que Dios ofrece a todos nosotros.

Sean ‘protectores del don de la vida’ dice el Obispo Olson en la Misa anual de Respeto a la Vida

por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen
Corresponsal

DESPUÉS DE TRES NIÑOS, MARY Y PETER MACDONALD QUERÍAN UNA NIÑA. CUANDO LA RUBIA BEBITA NACIÓ, LA LLAMARON ESPERANZA.

Ese sentimiento usaron para explicar porque trajeron a la pequeña a la Misa anual de Respeto a la Vida celebrada el 28 de enero en la Catedral de San Patricio.

“Tenemos la esperanza de que su generación crezca respetando la vida”, dijo Mary MacDonald, quien tiene dos jovencitos con necesidades especiales. “El aborto es matar, y la gente que se esfuerza porque termine necesita oraciones. Venimos a la Misa cada año porque de eso se trata—oración”.

Más de trescientos trabajadores pro-vida, partidarios y familias—como los MacDonald—asisten a la liturgia anual que conmemora la legalización del aborto el 22 de enero de 1973 cuando la Suprema Corte decidió el caso Roe vs. Wade.

Durante la Misa—concelebrada por el Obispo Michael Olson, el rector de San Patricio, Msgr. Joseph Pemberton, y otros sacerdotes diocesanos—voluntarios llevaron 57 veladoras, representando los 57 millones de bebés que han sido abortados en los E. U. desde 1973, al altar donde las colocaron en una plataforma de cinco niveles.

Frente a esta plataforma Betsy Kopor, coordinadora de los Ministerios de Raquel, colocó el Libro de los Inocentes.

“El libro contiene los nombres de niños muertos por aborto cuyos padres asistieron a un retiro de los Ministerios de Raquel”, explicó ella, refiriéndose al programa basado en

la fe, que ofrece la diócesis, para la recuperación después del aborto. “Ellos nombran a sus bebés durante un servicio conmemorativo. Es muy significativo y les trae cierta conclusión”.

Macaria Gonzalez, quien facilita el retiro de los Ministerios de Raquel para los hispanoparlantes, anima a las mujeres que han abortado a que asistan a la Misa de Respeto a la Vida.

“En esta Misa, honramos a nuestros niños que han muerto en este holocausto”, ella observó.

El retiro de los Ministerios de Raquel, que se lleva a cabo varias veces al año, proporciona sanación emocional y espiritual.

“Nos libera del dolor”, continuó Gonzalez. “Encontramos felicidad en saber que Dios está con nuestros niños”.

El Obispo Olson dijo que la Misa de Respeto a la Vida no sólo celebra el don de la vida, sino que también es una oportunidad para orar por los afectados por pecar contra la vida—especialmente el aborto. Le dijo a la congregación que vivimos en una sociedad y cultura que quiere tomar la verdad y hacerla una idea o concepto abstracto, con solo cambiar el momento donde se inicia la vida.

El Obispo Olson dijo que nosotros sabemos cuándo empieza la vida. Es “el punto de partida que sabemos, por fe y por razón, que los seres humanos existen y que los seres humanos tienen vida. Y él dijo que sabemos “que la vida es algo bueno que se transmite en una relación de amor”.

Hecha a imagen y semejanza de Dios, la gente goza de un estatus único y digno en la creación.

“Pero también estamos destinados a desarrollarnos como



Durante su homilía el 28 de enero, el Obispo Michael Olson animó a la congregación a no tener miedo de “dejar de lado nuestra comodidad por el bien de los más vulnerables”.
(Foto por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen / NTC)

participantes en la creación y a ser protectores del don de la vida—vida humana que es divina por el bautismo y humana por el don de la naturaleza y la comprensión”, agregó el obispo.

Los seres humanos tienen libre albedrío, pero elegir requiere compromiso con la fe y verdadero razonamiento. No se trata solo de derechos o de crear un mundo individualmente definido, sin importar las responsabilidades que las personas deben sentir unas por otras.

“Cuando partimos de la premisa de que solo soy un individuo y el mundo es por mí creado y formado a mi imagen, terminamos formando una cultura que elige resolver sus problemas matando gente”, enfatizó el obispo.

Preguntas difíciles sobre la fe son básicas, aseguró el obispo a la asamblea.

“El Señor nos ama, nos creó en su amor y nos formó a su imagen”, dijo para concluir. “Él compartió con nosotros la responsabilidad de amar a nuestro prójimo como a nosotros mismos y dejar de lado nuestra comodidad por el bien de los

más vulnerables y más necesitados”.

Esta año, la Misa de Respeto a la Vida incluyó una colecta especial para Mother and Unborn Baby Care Center en Fort Worth.

“La colecta es en recuerdo y honor del Capitán Charles Pelletier quien fue, absolutamente, uno de los mejores defensores de la vida que yo haya conocido”, dijo Michael Demma, director diocesano de la oficina de Respeto a la Vida, quien presentó la canasta con donaciones.

Pelletier, quien fundó el centro en 1984, falleció el 14 de enero.

Para recordar las almas perdidas por el aborto, Cad Swan, de 9 años y Melissa, su mamá, llevaron una vela al altar.

El aborto es un concepto difícil de comprender para un estudiante de cuarto año, concedió la madre embarazada. El estudiante de la escuela de San Andrés se pregunta por qué alguien escogería terminar la vida de un bebé en lugar de darlo en adopción.

“Yo espero que esa sea la forma de pensar de esta nueva generación.”, dijo Swan. “Siempre podemos esperar el fin del aborto”.

“Era forastero ... y tú me recibiste...”

Las parroquias de la diócesis ayudan a familias de inmigrantes y refugiados a empezar una vida nueva en los E. U.

por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen / Corresponsal

ALLEGAR A LOS E. U., LOS INMIGRANTES Y REFUGIADOS SEGUIDO LUCHAN POR SOBREVIVIR. ELIZABETH CHANOINE OYE SUS CONMOVEDORAS HISTORIAS.

Una mujer indocumentada, viviendo sola con sus niños, hablaba muy poquito Inglés y no podía encontrar trabajo.

“Ella empezó a hacer pan para vender en las esquinas”, recuerda la directora de Christian Connection de la Iglesia de San Miguel. “Podemos ver cómo la gente que aplica las normas intervendría en eso y también la policía”.

Ayudar a las familias en peligro y a individuos a evitar situaciones problemáticas y a mejorar su situación en la vida está al centro de Christian Connection. Creado en los noventa como Resources for Recovery, este ministerio de alcance social ayuda a las familias a pagar renta, servicios públicos, medicinas y otros gastos. Veinticinco por ciento de los clientes de Christian Connection son considerados inmigrantes—gente que ha vivido en los E. U. menos de cinco años y que no son ciudadanos.

“Muchas veces, la gente no ayuda a los inmigrantes porque no saben cómo hacerlo”, ella indica. “En Christian Connection tenemos estrategias precisas”.

Financiados por los feligreses de San Miguel, 12 voluntarios usan el enfoque de gestión de casos para encontrar soluciones de largo plazo para personas mayores, madres solteras, exdelincuentes, y desempleados, seguido en asociación con Caridades Católicas de Fort Worth.

“Todo se personaliza”, dice Chanoine, quien ve que inmigrantes Africanos y Centroamericanos solicitan ayuda. “No queremos que los inmigrantes pasen de ser pobres en México a estar en la pobreza también aquí”.

Para que eso no suceda, los ministros discuten acerca de cómo tener acceso a los servicios comunitarios, los animan a que asistan a clases de Inglés (ESL) y persuaden a los inmigrantes vulnerables a solicitar su “tarjeta verde” que les permita trabajar legalmente. Si alguien no entiende las formas de inmigración, “nosotros buscamos a alguien que los ayude”, continuó ella.

Christian Connection trabaja con varios abogados quienes aconsejan a los clientes sobre asuntos legales gratuitamente. Para contrarrestar el alto grado de violencia doméstica contra las mujeres inmigrantes, los gestores administrativos les explican cómo usar el sistema legal Americano para escapar una situación abusiva.

“La filosofía de Christian Connection es crear comunidad con la

gente que servimos”, dijo Chanoine. “Enseñarles a ser productivos, exitosos y felices, es lo que significa ser comunidad. Se trata de la dignidad de la persona humana, la dignidad del trabajo, y la solidaridad con los pobres”.

ALGUNOS RECIÉN LLEGADOS A LOS E. U., que por su estado migratorio no son elegibles para el programa federal de cupones para alimentos, visitan la despensa de alimentos de la Iglesia del Apóstol San Juan en North Richland Hills, donde los feligreses han llenado los estantes con frijoles, galletas, cereales y vegetales enlatados. La Iglesia del Buen Pastor en Colleyville proporciona comida dos veces al mes, y tiendas de comestibles locales contribuyen con carnes frías, ensalada fresca y vegetales.

“Estamos tratando de ofrecer comidas más balanceadas y nutritivas”, explica Colleen Cargile, directora del ministerio social de San Juan.

Además de las 100 familias que

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 44



Esta joven, una refugiada siria, espera sus documentos de inmigración con su familia en un campamento en Alemania en esta foto tomada el año pasado. (Foto por Jazzmany / shutterstock.com)

Las obras de misericordia

NOTA DEL EDITOR: Durante el Año Extraordinario de la Misericordia el NTC resaltará algunos de los increíbles actos de misericordia que suceden aquí en nuestra diócesis y parroquias. Busque artículos especiales sobre obras de misericordia espirituales y corporales en nuestras próximas ediciones.

Caridades Católicas de Fort Worth trabaja para integrar a los refugiados, les ayuda a ser autosuficientes

por Susan Moses
Corresponsal

CUANDO VIVÍA EN KABUL, AFGANISTÁN, MASOOD HAJIZADA LLAMABA A SU ESPOSA, MALALAY, CASI 10 VECES TODOS LOS DÍAS CUANDO VENÍA DEL TRABAJO HACIA SU CASA.

Cada explosión, cada disparo que oía, tenía que asegurarse que ella y sus tres hijos estaban bien.

Hajizada empezó a prestar sus servicios de traducción al Ejército de los E. U. al principio de 2002. En 2009 él presentó su solicitud para inmigrar a los E. U. por medio del programa especial de visas para traductores militares. Pero después de años de no oír nada, perdió la esperanza.

Pero a principios del año pasado sus docu-

mentos llegaron. Él y su familia dejaron su tierra, sus familiares, su negocio, su hogar y posesiones para radicarse en Fort Worth, con la ayuda de Caridades Católicas de Fort Worth (CCFW).

De los 15 millones de refugiados en el mundo, cerca de 70,000 llegan a los Estados Unidos anualmente, y CCFW cada año ayuda aproximadamente a 600 de ellos a establecer su nuevo hogar en esta área.

Caridades Católicas tiene 10 programas cuyo principal enfoque es asentar a los refugiados y ayudarles a obtener los recursos y los conocimientos necesarios para prosperar en los Estados Unidos.

Antes de que los refugiados lleguen, CCFW empieza a buscar viviendas apropiadas y a amueblarlas, surtiéndolas de ropa de cama, prendas y alimentos. Empleados y, si es necesario, un traductor reciben a los refugiados en el aeropuerto.

Algunas veces llegan con solo una bolsa de plástico que contiene sus documentos migratorios. Son llevados a su nuevo hogar, donde los espera una comida caliente, propia de su cultura.

Rápidamente, los refugiados inician la transición a sus nuevas vidas. Clases de Inglés y de adaptación a la cultura Americana. Preparación para encontrar trabajo, inscripción de los niños en la escuela. Cuidado médico e inmunizaciones. También se les enseña a usar el transporte público.

“Nuestro objetivo es que los refugiados sean autosuficientes y se integren a nuestra cultura tan pronto como sea posible”, dijo Mike Auman, director de los programas de Servicio a Refugiados de CCFW.

Indudablemente están teniendo éxito. En 2015, 92 por ciento de sus clientes refugiados, a

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 45

dependen de la asistencia de alimentos cada semana, la parroquia tiene un programa de ayuda financiera y “el mundo del bebé” con artículos para el cuarto de los bebés y ropa para niños desde recién nacidos hasta los de escuela primaria. El año pasado, 520 familias indocumentadas—cerca del 14 por ciento del total de clientes—recibieron alimentos de la dispensa de San Juan.

“La mayoría de los refugiados con los que trabajamos son asilados (gente que busca o ha logrado el asilo político). Han estado en el país algún tiempo, han usado ya la ayuda inmediata y ahora buscan opciones más duraderas”, dijo Cargile.

Para subsistir hasta el fin de mes, muchos inmigrantes y refugiados venden pan, tamales y fruta a sus vecinos. Limpiar casas es otra forma de ganar el dinero tan necesario.

“Se trata de mantener unidas a las familias”, dice Cargile, indicando que muchos indocumentados tienen niños que son ciudadanos. “Y tenemos la obligación de cuidar a la gente de nuestra comunidad”.

Para promover una mejor comprensión hacia los inmigrantes, la Iglesia del Apóstol San Juan presentará el 2 de abril un programa para tratar los retos que los nuevos residentes enfrentan cuando llegan a los E. U. Durante el taller, el Padre Hoa Nguyen, párroco de la iglesia, compartirá sus experiencias como refugiado cuando llegó de Vietnam.

CARIDADES CATÓLICAS DE FORT WORTH ofrece un simulacro de refugiados para ayudar a los estudiantes de escuelas católicas a entender la difícil situación de la gente que huye de la persecución, de la guerra o de la pobreza en sus propios países.

“Tratamos de darles la sensación de este cambio repentino en la vida de alguien”, dice Paul Cmkovich, director de relaciones parroquiales de Caridades Católicas.

Estudiantes del octavo año aprenden por qué la gente se ve

forzada a dejar su tierra, y las dificultades que experimentan cuando tratan de inscribirse en una escuela o de encontrar trabajo. Más tarde en el día, se les pregunta a los estudiantes cómo se sintieron acerca de lo que vieron en el simulacro.

La visita a Caridades Católicas usualmente inspira a los estudiantes a organizar una campaña de donación de artículos específicamente necesarios para los refugiados.

“El propósito de la formación en la enseñanza social es sembrar el fuego de la caridad en los corazones de los fieles y formar individuos en la fe, para que comprendan lo que el Gran Mandamiento significa”, afirma Cmkovich. “Amar a tu prójimo como a ti mismo no es un crédito adicional; es parte de ser una fiel persona católica”.

Después de asistir al programa de simulacro de refugiados en 2015, los estudiantes del octavo año de la escuela de San José en Arlington abordaron su proyecto de “expansión de la fe” con un nuevo propósito. Los estudiantes, que ya se graduaron, armaron muebles en el Hope Center para las familias de refugiados que Caridades Católicas está reinstalando.

“Pienso que el programa abrió sus ojos a lo que es estar solo en el mundo o en un campo de refugiados”, dice Judy Gavin, maestra del octavo grado. “Los hizo más cuidadosos con los demás y con los extranjeros porque se dieron cuenta de uno nunca sabe por lo que alguien ha pasado”.

EL PROGRAMA GRATIS DE INGLÉS (ESL) en la Iglesia de San Judas en Mansfield, adapta su currículum a las necesidades de los inmigrantes y refugiados inscritos, de acuerdo con su directora Julie Cosby. Iniciado en 2008 por las Hna. Rita Claire Davis, SSMN y la Hna. Cecile Faget, SSMN, por iniciativa parroquial, las clases de ESL sirven actualmente a 213 estudiantes de diversos antecedentes. La mayoría hablan Vietnamita o Español. Una

beca de educación para adultos del Distrito Escolar de Fort Worth financia la instrucción en la iglesia y en el internet.

“Nuestros estudiantes pueden encontrar mejores trabajos o seguir estudios superiores”, dice Cosby, quien hace cinco años se unió al programa como maestra. “Muchos de ellos eran profesionistas en sus propios países. Su acreditación es buena, pero su Inglés no”.

Otros participantes en ESL apenas están alfabetizados en su idioma nativo.

“Y ese es nuestro reto”, agrega la directora.

La Iglesia de San Judas proporciona los salones, el laboratorio de computación y voluntarios de la comunidad parroquial. El Padre George Foley, párroco de San Judas, mantiene motivados a los estudiantes.

Habiendo recibido su ciudadanía hace apenas pocos años, el originario de South Africa puede comprender sus esfuerzos. “Él habla con los grupos y les da ánimo”, indica Cosby.

LOS PADRES FRANCISCANOS CA- PUCHINOS de la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe ayudan a la población inmigrante del área cercana proporcionándoles espacio para clases de ciudadanía. La sesión de diez semanas se ofrece dos veces al año en la iglesia del norte de Fort Worth, y prepara a la gente para el examen de ciudadanía y para la entrevista.

En 2007, los feligreses de la Sagrada Familia ayudaron a una familia refugiada de Burundi a establecerse en el Norte de Texas. Fue una experiencia que el Diácono Mike Mocek nunca olvidó.

“Estuvimos con ellos como un año y los ayudamos a comprar lo necesario para su apartamento”, añade. Varias personas trabajaron con ellos de diversas formas. Tuvieron altas y bajas, pero progresaron”.

Hoy, el grupo de JustFaith de la Sagrada Familia visita a los residentes



Victoria y Alma Ramirez, de la parroquia de San José, mudan una mesa para ser utilizada por refugiados. Ellas fueron voluntarias como parte del proyecto “expansión de fe” de San José en el 2015. (Foto por Donna Ryckaert / NTC)



La Hermana Rita Claire ayuda a una estudiante en una de sus clases de ESL. (Foto por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen / NTC)

en un complejo de apartamentos en el Oeste de Fort Worth que cuenta con un gran número de inmigrantes. Ellos ofrecen compañía, y el otoño pasado patrocinaron en ese lugar las actividades de National Night Out.

¿Por qué es importante relacionarse con los inmigrantes, los pobres, y otros olvidados miembros de la sociedad?

“Porque eso estamos llamados a hacer” responde el diácono. “Nuestro bautismo nos llama a acercarnos a los pobres y a los inmigrantes”.

Muchas veces no nos damos cuenta de la lucha de los seres humanos que han huido de las horribles circunstancias de su patria.

“Necesitan ser bienvenidos y aceptados”, él afirma. “Ellos merecen nuestra ayuda”.

los cuatro meses, tenían empleo y pagaban sus cuentas, y el 96 por ciento lograba esa meta a los seis meses.

Hajizada, quien llegó el 22 de julio, encontró trabajo en la bodega de Amazon cerca del aeropuerto Alliance y para noviembre ya pagada sus gastos. Como trabaja cuatro días por semana en Amazon, ya empezó a buscar trabajo de medio tiempo para los otros tres días.

“Puedo pagar por todo lo que necesitamos, pero me gustaría tener un poco extra. Tengo la mentalidad y la fuerza para trabajar, y quiero dejar los beneficios del gobierno para otros que los necesiten”, dijo él.

Según Auman, el trabajo devuelve la dignidad al refugiado. Hajizada está de acuerdo, “Mi consejo a otros refugiados es que se valgan por sí mismos. Es bueno para ellos, y es bueno para su futuro”.

Alice Kigera, principal administradora del programa de subvenciones para refugiados, dijo, “Entre los muchos conceptos erróneos acerca de los refugiados es que ellos llegan aquí con poca educación y permanecen en un bajo nivel socioeconómico. Pero cada refugiado tiene una historia única. Algunos han vivido años en campos de refugiados y son analfabetos o con escasa educación. Otros son doctores, abogados, profesores o ingenieros”.

Kigera continuó, “La mayoría están ansiosos por maximizar sus oportunidades económicas. Conocemos a 70 familias que en los dos primeros años de estar en los E. U. han trabajado y ahorrado lo suficiente para comprar una casa, o han abierto una tienda u otros negocios pequeños”.

Cuando Basil Mahmood, un ingeniero civil de Irak, llegó en 2010, tomó el examen de certificación de ingeniería civil; pero no lo pasó, así que se enfocó en obtener su licencia comercial de manejo (CDL). Caridades Católicas lo ayudó con la mitad de \$3,000, costo del entrenamiento. Después de obtener su CDL trabajó, subiendo de ser empleado de aeropuerto a chofer de un remolque alquilado, y luego a tener su propio camión y compañía de transporte en general.

Su esposa, también ingeniero civil en Irak, actualmente está inscrita en la carrera de ingeniería civil y se graduará en 2017. Ellos esperan empezar su propio negocio de construcción.

Otra prioridad de los refugiados es dominar el Inglés. Caridades Católicas ofrece clases de Inglés hasta cinco años después de su asentamiento. La mayoría empieza con seis a nueve horas de

Masood Hajizada dejó su negocio en Afganistán para asegurar que sus hijos tuvieran un futuro a salvo. (Foto por Susan Moses / NTC)



“En la comunidad católica encontramos apoyo consistente. Sus corazones están con los refugiados y hacen mucho por ellos”

— Alice Kigera

clase cada semana, y 94 por ciento muestra un progreso notable después de 40 horas. La meta es que los refugiados rápidamente sepan suficiente Inglés para obtener un empleo.

Después de un año en los E. U., se requiere que los refugiados soliciten su “tarjeta verde”, equivalente a residencia permanente. Después de cinco años, los refugiados pueden, y se les anima a, solicitar su ciudadanía.

Mahmood, su esposa y sus dos hijas obtuvieron su ciudadanía el año pasado.

“Éste es mi hogar ahora. Veo a mis niñas jugar y están muy bien; qué más puede uno querer en la vida que eso”, él declaró.

PERO HAY RETOS

Pero, a lo largo del camino, Caridades Católicas encuentra barreras para lograr que los refugiados sean autosuficientes. Los patrones

que se han asociado con CCFW aprecian la ética laboral y la formalidad de los refugiados. Pero, a menudo no los consideran para un ascenso cuando se presenta la oportunidad.

Simplemente, encontrar lugares de trabajo y viviendas baratas cerca de las rutas del transporte público, presenta otra dificultad.

AYUDA A LOS REFUGIADOS HOY EN DÍA

Actualmente, cerca del 33 por ciento de los refugiados que llegan al condado Tarrant vienen de Burma, que con Irak, Afganistán, Somalia y el Congo son los cinco a la cabeza.

Para servir a estos refugiados, CCFW emplea a 29 individuos que trabajan ante todo en los programas de refugiados, y que junto con una amplia red de voluntarios que ayudan, entre muchas otras tareas, a entrenar a los estudiantes, y a enseñarles Inglés. Otros voluntarios asisten donando artículos para el hogar o dinero.

“Dependemos del apoyo de la comunidad para recibir a los refugiados, para ser sus abogados y para ofrecerles trabajo”, dijo Kigera. “El clima político va y viene, algunas veces a favor de los refugiados, otras no. Pero en la comunidad católica encontramos apoyo consistente. Sus corazones están con los refugiados y hacen mucho por ellos”.

Aumán agregó, “La doctrina social católica incluye la opción preferencial por los pobres y la solidaridad con nuestro prójimo. ¿Quién es nuestro hermano y hermana? No es raza; tampoco es geografía—todos somos hermanos y hermanas. ¿Y los pobres? Son los que llegan aquí sin nada. Podemos darles la mano y trabajar con ellos aquí mismo.”

LA MISERICORDIA DURANTE ESTE TIEMPO CUARESIMAL

POR EL PADRE CARMELO MELE, OP



El Padre Carmelo Mele, de la ORDEN DE PREDICADORES (LOS DOMINICOS), ordenado como sacerdote en 1980, es el director del INSTITUTO JUAN PABLO II y de la CATEQUESIS PARA ADULTOS HISPANOS de la DIÓCESIS DE FORT WORTH.

BAJO EL DESIERTO CHILENO

Hace seis años treinta y tres mineros estuvieron atrapados bajo el desierto en Chile. Eran personas de diferentes temperamentos y religiones. Algunos querían hacer cualquiera cosa para salvarse. Otros se dieron por vencidos. Hubo católicos, evangélicos, testigos de Jehová, y ateos. Jamás se habrían congregado para rezar si estuvieran afuera. Pero en su apuro la súplica era la goma que los tenía unidos. Rezaron todos los días: “No somos los mejores hombres; pero, Señor, ten piedad de nosotros”. También confesaron sus faltas. Un hombre dijo que tomaba demasiado. Otro, que se enojaba con demasiada rapidez. Y otro admitió que no era buen padre para su hija. Así fue con todos.

De una manera los mineros tenían la suerte. Pues, a todos nosotros nos hace falta la misericordia de Dios, pero pocos se dan cuenta de la necesidad. Andamos tan confiados como perros sueltos buscando la ventura. De hecho, cuando se les abrió un hoyo a los mineros, la solidaridad entre ellos se desvaneció. En lugar de recordar sus pecados y pedir la misericordia, pusieron sus vistas en cosas materiales como lucrar por contar su historia.

LA MISERICORDIA EN LA CUARESMA Y EN EL EVANGELIO DE LUCAS

Sin embargo, nosotros no estamos sin recursos para superar el

egoísmo. Ahora caminamos por la Cuaresma, el tiempo indicado para considerar la pecaminosidad. Además tenemos a nuestra disposición el Evangelio según San Lucas que cuenta particularmente de la misericordia de Dios. Este año las dos ayudas coinciden en las lecturas evangélicas de los domingos cuaresmales. El hecho que es el Año de la Misericordia pone aún más énfasis en lo deseable de arrepentirnos.

El cuarto domingo de la Cuaresma leemos la parábola suprema de la misericordia. Jesús cuenta del padre pródigo con el amor para sus dos hijos. Dice que el padre se muestra ansioso de perdonar a su hijo menor por haber derrochado su herencia. El joven sólo tiene que arrepentirse de su tontería. Habla Jesús también de la bondad del padre cuando su hijo mayor se enoja con él por haber perdonado a su hermano. La historia toca profundamente el corazón. Como el padre, Dios es profuso en su misericordia. El pecador sólo tiene que pedir perdón para ser reconciliado.

El evangelio de Lucas no se contenta con contar parábolas de la misericordia de Dios, sino atestigua a Jesús practicando esa misericordia. El Domingo de Ramos, la lectura de la pasión destaca a Jesús mostrándose como la faz de la misericordia de Dios en diferentes maneras. Sólo se mencionan tres aquí. Primero Jesús reza a Dios Padre que perdone a la gente por haberlo crucificado. Este es el

momento más ilustrativo del reto primordial de Jesús: “Ama a tus enemigos”. Entonces Jesús mismo promete al malhechor crucificado a su par la entrada al Paraíso. El criminal sólo le ha pedido la consideración cuando Jesús ocupara su trono. Finalmente, el Evangelio de Lucas recuerda a los judíos volviendo del Calvario golpeando sus pechos en arrepentimiento. Es un gesto significativo. La muerte de Jesús les ha hecho dispuestos a recibir la salvación con la predicación en Pentecostés.

NO SE LIMITA LA MISERICORDIA

En la Biblia la primera instancia de la misericordia es de Dios para perdonar a los pecadores. Pero no se termina con acciones espirituales ni con las personas divinas. Más bien se extiende la misericordia a necesidades físicas e implica la colaboración de otras personas humanas. Cuando los leprosos y el ciego piden la misericordia de Jesús, reciben la sanación de sus debilidades (Lucas 17,11-19 y 18,35-43). De hecho, Jesús anda siempre cumpliendo las bienaventuranzas concretas de este tercer evangelio (Lucas 6,20-23).

A través de la Biblia la misericordia no se limita a la acción de Dios, sino se espera de los seres humanos. La famosa declaración de parte de Dios dicho por el profeta Miqueas pone en manifiesto esta expectativa: “¡Ya se te ha declarado lo que es bueno! Ya se te ha dicho lo que de ti espera el Señor: Practicar la justicia,

amar la misericordia, y humillarte ante tu Dios” (Miqueas 6,8). Jesús recalca esta enseñanza fundamental en el intercambio entre sí mismo y el maestro de la ley después de relatar la parábola del Buen Samaritano. Vale la pena repetir el diálogo: “Según tu parecer, ¿cuál de estos tres se hizo el prójimo del hombre que cayó en manos de los salteadores?” El maestro de la Ley contestó: ‘El que mostró la misericordia con él.’ Y Jesús le dijo: ‘Vete y haz tú lo mismo’ (10,36-37).

YA ES EL MOMENTO PROPICIO

La cuaresma es el tiempo más propicio para pedir la misericordia de Dios y para mostrar la misericordia a los demás. Son cuarenta días para compensar por nuestras faltas. Apenas se puede evitar el pecado en nuestra sociedad tan saturada con el egoísmo. Por eso, nos arrepentimos de nuestra participación en el orgullo descontrolado. Por otro lado, en todas partes hay personas lastimadas por los excesos de la cultura de la abundancia. A ellos nos dirigimos para cumplir la voluntad del Señor. Tenemos como guía a Jesucristo como el Evangelio según San Lucas en este Año de la Misericordia nos presenta con perspicaz abundancia.

FROM PAGE 48

ing, Keefe identified UD's many success stories, then marketed the information to a target audience — mainly alumni and prospective students.

In a high tech world that views a liberal arts education as irrelevant, the administrator underscores the value of mastering Plato's *Republic* or Chaucer in old English. It builds confidence.

"Think about how powerful that is when you go into something like business," Keefe asserts. "If you look at most corporations in the United States, their CEOs are all liberal arts graduates."

The university's stellar academic record is equaled only by the strength of its Catholicism. When Keefe took office, the school prided itself on being "authentically Catholic."

"We immediately changed that to being enthusiastically Catholic," the president says, quickly explaining the change in terminology.

Eighty-three percent of incoming freshman are Catholic, but the admissions office welcomes people of all faiths. An Islamic prayer room is available on campus, and the student body is broadly diverse.

"We're enthusiastically Catholic in that we love individuals and provide them with a nurturing environment," Keefe continues. "That's what a Catholic school does. We're joyful and enthusiastic about our approach and not angry, selfish, or judgmental. We are the Catholic institution [Dallas] Bishop [Kevin] Farrell and Pope Francis call us to be."

Founded in 1956 as a joint effort of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur in Fort Worth and laymen Eugene Constantine Jr. and Edward Maher, the university is sponsored by the Diocese of

Dallas and owned by a Board of Trustees. Bishop Michael Olson is a board member. According to its mission statement, the University of Dallas is shaped "by the long tradition of Catholic learning and acknowledges its commitment to the Catholic Church and its teachings."

Although UD's employment practices are inclusive and many staff members are non-Catholics, Keefe begins the interview process with a sentence that's more of a statement than a question: Do you know how Catholic we are?

"We hire people who want to support our mission and we're clear on that," says the former altar boy who attended Catholic schools through college. "If someone is not comfortable with the Church's teachings on respect for life, I tell them not to come here because they won't be happy."

So far, long lines outside the confessional are the most common complaint reaching the president's desk. Sunday Mass attendance is also high.

But no one gets credit for going to Mass or Eucharistic Adoration.

"They go because they want to," he insists. "There's no question this is a strong Catholic environment."

Keefe was walking through the campus one day when he spotted students writing in chalk on the pavement, "Have you gone to Church today?" Although their intentions were good, the administrator admonished them — not for defacing school property but for the sin of pride.

You don't get people into a church pew by shaming them or making them feel guilty, he told the group.

"You get them into Church by manifesting a joy in the Lord that is so profound, they want to be there, too," he added. "Stop



University of Dallas President Tom Keefe with an artist's rendering of the new administration building planned for the school's entrance. Construction is set to begin in spring/summer 2016. (NTC / Joan Kurkowski-Gillen)

telling people how holy you are and start showing people you care about them, and they will follow you into church."

It's that type of guidance students like Keelin DesRosiers seem to appreciate. The Portland, Maine resident was accepted at Notre Dame University but chose the University of Dallas because of a speech President Keefe gave during her college visit. She wanted a school that would challenge her.

"He talked about the requirements making this a strong academic school and warned us to be ready for that," says the senior majoring in French and English. "I wanted a school that would really push me to learn as much as I possibly could, and I found that here."

DesRosiers says the school's new business building — the first academic construction project in 35 years — symbolizes UD's future.

"That new presence on campus represents where we're going," she says enthusiastically. "During the past four years, I've watched President Keefe's efforts to bring the school into the 21st century. He wants the school to thrive."

Looking back on his brief tenure, Keefe says his greatest accomplishment is the spirit and energy he observes on campus. When he arrived in Texas, the University of Dallas was a dispirited, angry place that was losing \$3 million a year. Last year the school netted \$6 million, and the faculty received raises.

Renewed confidence has UD students walking with a little more spring in their step.

"People stopped looking at their toes and have started looking at the stars," Keefe says optimistically. "We have momentum, and we're headed in the right direction. I believe in 10 to 20 years, UD will be the Ivy League school of the South."

To Report Misconduct

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

- Call Judy Locke, victim assistance coordinator, (817) 945-9340 ext. 201 or e-mail her at jllocke@fwdioc.org
- Or call the Sexual Abuse Hot-line (817) 945-9345 and leave a message.

To Report Abuse

Call the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (Child Protective Services) at (800) 252-5400

GOOD NEWSMAKER

Reflecting on growth after five years at the helm, UD President Tom Keefe sees two major changes when he walks across campus:

Spirit and Energy

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen
Correspondent

Five years ago, Tom Keefe, the eighth president of the University of Dallas, stood inside the Church of the Incarnation during his investiture ceremony and promised to make the struggling liberal arts school a nationally recognized institution.

He's well on his way to achieving that goal. The Princeton Review recently named the University of Dallas one of the nation's best colleges, praising its rigorous core curriculum, passionate professors, and popular semester abroad Rome Program.

Other publications — like *U.S. News and World Report* and *Forbes* — also have recognized the school's academic excellence and impressive placement record for graduates. The Cardinal Newman Society — a nonprofit organization that promotes faithful Catholic education — listed UD among 27 colleges or universities with a strong Catholic identity.

"We've made significant strides," boasts the college president, noting UD ranked above both the University of Texas and Texas Christian University in the Princeton Review's rating of Texas schools. He said UD has the largest



Students attending the University of Dallas join President Tom Keefe during a lighthearted moment on campus, with the school's bell tower — Braniff Memorial Tower — in the background.

(NTC / Joan Kurkowski-Gillen)

est representation of students from outside the state, "with 56 percent of our students coming from outside Texas."

Once the area's best-kept secret, the small Catholic university no longer shies away from advertising its achievements or distinct approach to education. To graduate, every UD underclassmen must pass 19 core courses in philosophy, theology, fine arts, and Western Civilization. It's the highest number of required classes

of any school in the country.

"We represent it as having the largest honors college in America" says Keefe, whose own liberal arts education at St. Benedict's College groomed him for success at the University of Kansas law school. "When UD students graduate, they have this incredible foundation in reading, writing, and critical thinking. We're preparing them for careers that don't exist yet."

The college president's vision-

ary attitude is one prospective students appreciate. While other private colleges and universities are troubled by decreased enrollments, UD welcomed its largest freshman class last year. Many career-driven young people are drawn to the quiet Irving campus by impressive post-graduate statistics.

Ninety percent of the UD graduates applying to law school are accepted, and the figure is only slightly lower (85 percent) for medical school applicants. The vast majority of alumni (80 percent) attend graduate school within five years of receiving a diploma from UD.

"Our admission rate into medical and law school rivals Ivy League schools," the college president pointed out. "We're an extraordinarily good school, but we weren't being recognized as an extraordinarily good school by many people."

Using skills in leadership, strategic development, and alumni relations honed while working at St. Louis University and other U.S. institutions of higher learn-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47