



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



ENDURING IN FAITH

MARCH — APRIL 2020
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STANDING FIRM

Sometimes we feel defeated to the depths of the soul, ready to wave the white flag. We perceive there's no way forward. In those moments, we have the choice to give up hope, or persevere with tenacity, doggedly hanging in there despite overwhelming odds, fatigue, and even logical reason.

Surely, the Holy Roman Empire felt like that at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. Besieged by the Ottoman Empire for two months, things looked extremely bleak for the Christian troops who were falling over from exhaustion and were outnumbered 140,000 to 11,000.

What followed is a lesson in the rewards of tenacity. The Christian forces defending the walls of Vienna were on their last legs when a Catholic Polish contingent led by King Sobieski courageously came to their aid, thus saving Vienna and Christendom in that region. Afterwards, Sobieski declared, "*Veni, vidi, Deus vicit*" (I came, I saw, God conquered).

We all feel spiritually defeated at one point or another. But as that battle showed, there is hope for us who feel that way. For simplicity, call it a "soul fight" since the body and the spirit are at odds with each other during such "repining restlessness" as the poet George Herbert put it.

The point is, soul fights will come. We can either remain in our existential weariness or scrounge up what tenacity we have left in our tanks and put it to good use. If we do that, the Bible shows time and time again that God, ever faithful, comes to our aid. Abraham. Sarah. Moses. Ruth. Esther. All tenaciously served the Lord. All received God's abundant grace and boldness to keep fighting the good fight.

But you don't have to look at the "big names" in the Bible to see that truth. Look at little-known Shammah, a faithful soldier in David's army, who stood his ground against the Philistines (seemingly all to save a lentil patch) after his comrades had long departed. The motivation for his heroism was deeper, of course, and God "wrought a great victory" through his tenacity. Shammah went down in Scripture as one of David's three "mighty men."

In this very issue, we submit to you more evidence of the rewards of tenacity: Roger Hinesh (pg. 42) and our Vietnamese brothers and sisters in faith (pg. 30) who left their home behind in order to continue worshipping God.

Tenacity hurts in the moment but if you put it to work for the right intentions, God comes to your assistance. The Apostle James encourages us to stand tenaciously in Christ: "Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. And let perseverance be perfect."

Juan Guajardo, Editor



Armando Munoz works with grandson Diego Munoz during Grandparents Day at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School, Jan. 29. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Honoring the Old School: Grandparents come to class

FORT WORTH — Grandparents Day honors the substantial role many grandparents play in their grandchild's Catholic education.

Many grandparents influence the decision of where to enroll a student.

"Grandparents know it's worth the sacrifice of sending them to Catholic school," said Rose Hall Welborn, Director of Development for St. Andrew Catholic School in Fort Worth.

She said grandparents have observed changes in education and culture through the years and "want to help their grandkids get a good education and a strong spiritual foundation." Some even make a financial sacrifice and contribute towards the tuition of their grandchildren.

Once the grandchildren are enrolled, school administrators welcome grandparent involvement.

"We have very active grandparents at our school," said Principal Arica Prado at

All Saints Catholic School, who said that in her seven years at the Northside school, she has witnessed an increase in participation.

They come to Mass with their grandkids, have lunch at the school, chaperone field trips, read with children in the classroom, volunteer at festivals, and run carpool to and from school.

"Grandparents have a special role with their grandkids," Prado said. "I see the kids' faces light up when their grandparents are there. They definitely have a beautiful way with their grandkids."

Linda Kuntz, principal of Our Lady of Victory School in Fort Worth, said Grandparents Day is an important date on the school calendar. "Catholic education entails the whole family, and we want to incorporate the whole family in every aspect."

Highlights of the day are a Mass or prayer service, visits to the classrooms, and student performances.

Catholic schools focus on raising servant leaders

GRAPEVINE — Second graders at Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine used red, white, and pink construction paper, markers, and glue to create Valentine's cards with personal notes for elderly parishioners who are homebound or in assisted living centers.

"I like that it helps other people feel better," said second-grader Jacob Elliott.

Their teacher Tory Hoss said that students write to the elderly several times a year. After students sent cards at Thanksgiving, one of the recipients wrote back to say how much the letter meant to him.

Hoss said the service activity helps her students become more aware of the needs of others.

Meanwhile, seventh and eighth graders

participated in panel discussions about community service to answer questions from students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

Older students talked about helping as altar servers, assisting at Vacation Bible School, volunteering at community dinners, delivering food to the elderly and children in need, and much more.

Deacon Jeff Heiple, principal at Holy Trinity, said helping others is an important part of the Catholic faith.

Across the diocese, Catholic schools share the foundational practice of serving others.

"Through service, we teach kids empathy, humility, and gratitude," Dcn. Heiple said.

— Sandra Engelland



Sara Paglialunga, at center, with the staff of the diocesan Tribunal at their new office. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Diocesan Tribunal moves from east Fort Worth to St. Patrick campus

FORT WORTH — The staff for the diocesan Tribunal started off 2020 in a new home just across the street from St. Patrick Cathedral’s Religious Formation Building.

The new space was formerly St. Patrick’s annex building. Parking is available on the west and east sides of the building, which was remodeled to offer a more welcoming space for couples applying for a declaration of nullity.

“This place is probably easier to reach for everyone,” Rotal Lawyer and Tribunal Judge Sara Paglialunga said. “[Diocesan officials] moved us here for the good of everybody in the diocese.”

While the building has no signage indicating “Tribunal Offices” due to security reasons, a sign clearly points out the address, 229 Texas Street, Fort

Worth, 76102.

Despite relocating, the tribunal has stayed on top of cases and delivering sentences.

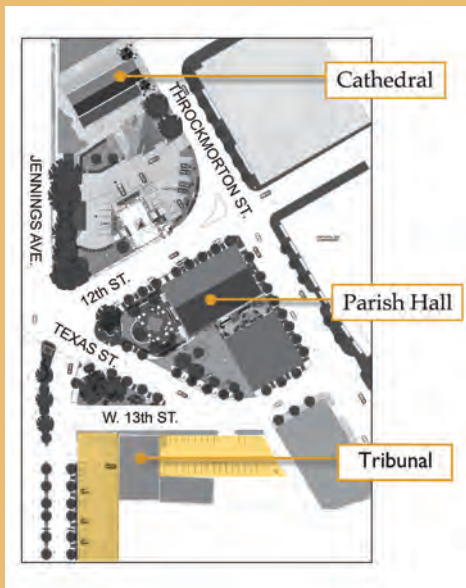
The staff has completely sifted through a backlog dating back to 2013, concluding all cases older than

2018, and beginning some 2019 cases under the briefer marriage nullity process mandated by Pope Francis in his 2015 document *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* (“The Lord Jesus, Gentle Judge”).

To qualify for the expedited process, both spouses

must “agree about the declaration of nullity of the marriage, and both say the marriage was invalid from the beginning for the same reasons,” Paglialunga said.

— Juan Guajardo



OFFICIAL ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL F. OLSON

REV. PEDRO ROMERO GUTIERREZ, OFM Cap. Parochial Vicar at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Administrator** of the same parish, effective February 10.

REV. MICHAEL HIGGINS, TOR New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, effective January 31.

REV. JOHN MARK KLAUS, TOR Parochial Vicar at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, has been appointed **Parochial Administrator** of the same parish, effective January 8.

REV. LUCAS ALEJANDRO OLIVERA, OFM Cap. Pastor at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, has been recalled by his religious order, effective February 10.

REV. JOSEPH TETLOW, SJ Returning to Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House, effective January 1.



Bishop Michael Olson anoints the altar during the dedication Mass of St. John Paul II Church in Denton. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Formation Day focuses on period of purification

FORT WORTH — Each year, ministers, directors of religious education, and RCIA instructors across the diocese come together for a day highlighting the importance of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and an opportunity for continued learning and renewal.

“The purpose overall is to strengthen a person’s understanding of RCIA and what it really is,” diocesan Director of Evangelization and Catechesis Marlon De La Torre said of the Feb. 1 Diocesan Formation Day held at St. Andrew Church in Fort Worth. “It’s not a class; it’s a journey, and we want people to understand that. This is the Church’s rhythm of bringing someone closer to Christ. It’s a process.”

The diocese began

scheduling annual formation days more than a decade ago. This year’s edition focused on the period of purification — the Lenten period of reflection and examination of motivation for those preparing to enter the Church.

Steven Greene, Director of Kino Catechetical Institute for the Diocese of Phoenix, said, “The period of purification is meant to be a period of deep solidarity between those of us who are fully initiated members of the mystical body of Christ and those candidates and elect who are still journeying toward full communion within the Church. It’s a bit like purgatory, a time of sacrifice and suffering intended to perfect us.”

— Matthew Smith

A day long prayed for: St. John Paul II church dedicated

DENTON — After years of attending Mass in classrooms and various locations around campus, students and parishioners at St. John Paul II have a place to call home. Bishop Michael Olson on Feb. 15 consecrated the new altar and dedicated the church building located at 909 McCormick Street in Denton.

Rachel Zayas, team director of FOCUS, a national organization serving college campuses across the nation, said the new building will provide stability and give students a place to love and serve others.

“It’s been a long time coming but it has finally paid off,” Zayas told the *North Texas Catholic*. “The bones finally fit the heart.”

“The spirit of the Church has always been here. But now we have the

structure,” she said.

Zayas was one of at least 200 in attendance at the special Mass, which included a prayer of dedication followed by Bishop Olson anointing the altar and walls with sacred chrism.

Bishop Olson told parishioners, “This day has been long prayed for.”

At the end of the Mass, Father Kyle Walterscheid, pastor of St. John Paul II Parish, thanked Bishop Olson and a host of other people, including Bert Hesse, who refurbished the high altar and handcrafted the main altar.

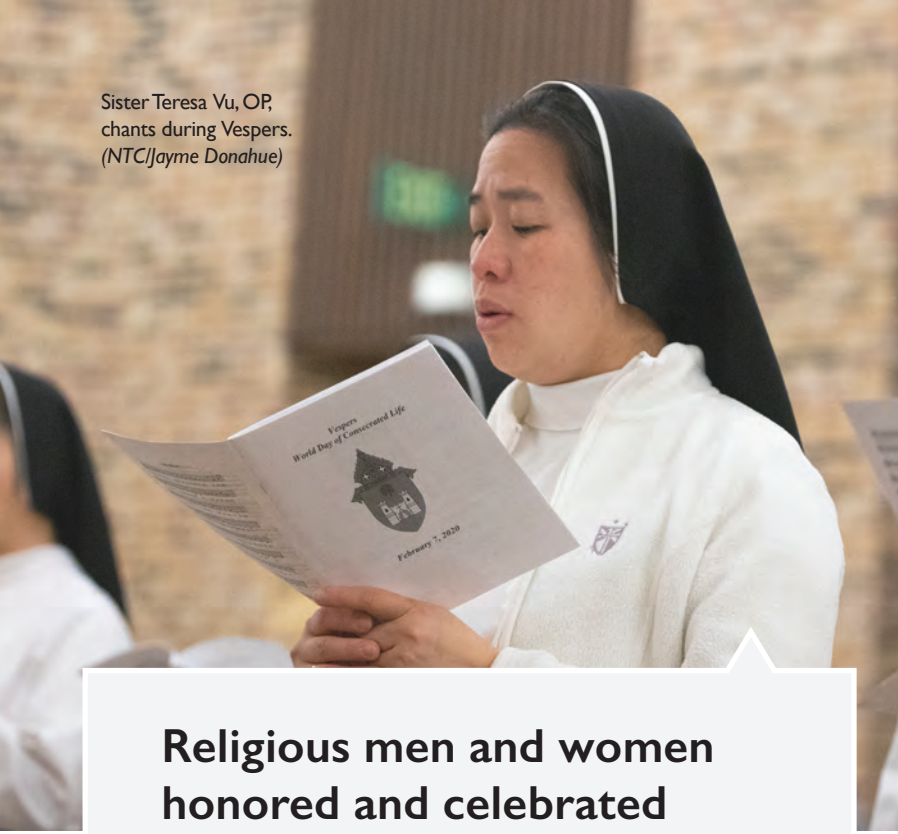
“This celebration and dedication of this Church is a momentous occasion that shall be remembered for many years to come,” Fr. Walterscheid said.

— Susan McFarland



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

Sister Teresa Vu, OP,
chants during Vespers.
(NTC/Jayme Donahue)



Religious men and women honored and celebrated

FORT WORTH — “I would do it all over again.” With conviction in her voice and a twinkle in her eye, Sister Teresa Rodriguez, HCG, reflected on her vows with the religious order Hermanas Catequistas Guadalupanas. On Feb. 14, she marked 50 years of teaching children and their parents as a religious sister.

She said, “I’m as excited as the first day I pronounced my vows. I’m evaluating and looking back, and I have enjoyed every bit.”

Sr. Teresa is “excited and amazed” at how quickly time has passed since she first took her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. However, the urgency of her mission hasn’t waned. She said, “It’s exciting especially when you give yourself to the people so that they can know who God is and why they’re the Church and why they’re Catholic. It’s exciting to evangelize.”

Sr. Teresa is one of 53 religious women working in the diocese. Those sisters,

and the 58 religious order priests in the diocese, were invited to St. Bartholomew Parish on Feb. 7 to celebrate World Day of Consecrated Life with Solemn Vespers followed by dinner.

The annual celebration honors and prays for those living a consecrated life in a religious order. The Diocese of Fort Worth is served by 13 religious orders of sisters and 12 orders of priests.

Prayer and celebration are hallmarks of the evening. After Father Maurice Moon, a diocesan priest, led the vespers, the group of about 60 moved to the parish hall, which was soon filled with joy, laughter, and animated conversations.

Father Albert Kanjirathumkal, HGN, drove two hours from St. Mary Parish in Henrietta to attend. He pointed out other priests had traveled farther, and the evening is worth the drive. “I get to see all my brother priests and pray with them. It’s a great experience,” he said.

In Memoriam

SR. MARGUERITE CONNORS, SHSp

December 15, 2019



Sister Marguerite Connors, SHSp, was a former teacher, principal, and administrator who served the diocese as school superintendent from 1994 to 2004. She joined the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate in 1949.

DON MILLER

December 26, 2019



Don Miller’s career in Catholic schools spanned 48 years. He worked as a teacher, coach, principal, and CEO in Iowa before becoming Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Fort Worth from 2004 to 2014.

REV. RICHARD ELDREDGE, TOR

December 28, 2019



Father Richard Eldredge, TOR, was pastor of Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville since 2007. His 24-year tenure in the diocese included St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington and Sacred Heart Parish in Seymour.

RICHARD MATHEWS

January 4, 2020



Richard Mathews joined the Diocese of Fort Worth as Safe Environment Director in 2017. His leadership and previous experience in child abuse prevention served the diocese well as he enhanced the program.

SR. MARY MERDIAN, SSMN

January 26, 2020



Sister Mary Merdian, SSMN, joined the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur in 1957. Known for her laughter and her leadership, she taught and served as principal in schools, including St. Andrew Catholic School.

SR. TERESA NASCHE, SHSp

February 3, 2020



Sister Teresa Nasche, SHSp, lived her lifelong dedication to students, the struggling poor, and the sick as a Sister of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate. She taught at St. George and Our Mother of Mercy Schools.

Full obituaries are available at NorthTexasCatholic.org.

WELCOMING *the* STRANGER

Refugees fleeing war-torn countries for the unknown thrive in Fort Worth despite their past trauma

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

After living in a refugee camp in western Tanzania for 23 years, Lusambya Mkuma and Apendeki Mbeleci received some very welcome news. They were approved for resettlement in the United States and could look forward to starting life again in a new home.

With help from Catholic Charities Fort Worth, the married couple moved into an apartment with their four children, found jobs and began experiencing a stability they hadn't known since escaping war-torn Congo in 1996.

"We were literally afraid of being killed because of the war," explained Mkuma with help from a Swahili interpreter. "The rebels who invaded the Congo were conducting mass killings."

A medical aide/nurse in his homeland, he was part of the persecuted Wabembe tribe. His wife was targeted because she looked Rwandan.

"Millions were killed, and women mutilated," he added.

Compared to years spent in the crowded, tent-filled Nyarugusu refugee camp — one of the largest in the world — Mkuma considers living in Fort Worth "a paradise" and sending his children to school "a dream come true." But the 53-year-old meat packing house employee still has one overwhelming concern. A sister, who is physically

disabled, remains in Nyarugusu.

"She was attacked in the camp and I'm desperate to get her here," he pleaded.

Efforts to bring his sister to Texas could prove difficult in the future. An executive order, issued by the Trump administration last September, gave state and local officials veto power over refugee resettlement in their communities after June 2020. Texas Governor Greg Abbott announced Jan. 10 that Texas would no longer resettle refugees — a move that generated outrage from faith-based agencies, like Catholic Charities, which routinely assist newcomers to the U.S. as part of their ministry.

Texas was the first state to reject the resettlement of refugees, according to Catholic News Service.

ORDER HALTED

On Jan. 15, a federal judge temporarily halted the administration's policy that gave states the ability to opt out of resettling vulnerable people fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries. In his 31-page opinion, Judge Peter J. Messitte of the U.S. District Court in Maryland said the executive order is likely "unlawful" and undermines the role of resettlement agencies by leaving the decision to receive refugees solely in the hands of states and local government.

The Trump administration is expected to appeal the ruling. Refugee resettlement in the U.S. has declined during this

administration, from approximately 85,000 in fiscal year 2016 to about 30,000 refugees in 2018.

Texas accepted more refugees than any other state. In 2019, the number of resettled refugees calling Texas home was 2,460, according to State Department data.

Catholic Charities Fort Worth hopes to manage 225 refugee cases this year.

Following Gov. Abbott's announcement not to participate in refugee resettlement, the faith-based nonprofit was flooded with messages supporting the agency's work "welcoming the stranger," according to Catholic Charities CEO Michael Grace.

He believes detractors may not understand what defines a refugee.

"A lot of people are conflating the refugee issue with undocumented immigration. That's our fear," Grace explained. "They don't understand the refugee issue on its own merit."

In a letter presented to Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley and members of the Commissioners Court on Jan. 14, the CEO outlined how fear of civil war, famine, and genocide forces people to leave their home countries.

"These individuals have survived against incredible odds. They need safety and the chance to move forward," he wrote.

Refugees chosen for resettlement undergo intensive security vetting and do not choose where they are relocated.

"But those placed in Texas consider

A Burundian woman and two children, who fled their country, wait to be registered as refugees at Nyarugusu camp in northwest Tanzania on June 11, 2015. (Stephanie Aglietti/AFP via Getty Images)



it a godsend,” Grace continued. “Once here, they build careers, purchase homes, gain citizenship, and become vital members of the community. And we are proud to be part of their story.”

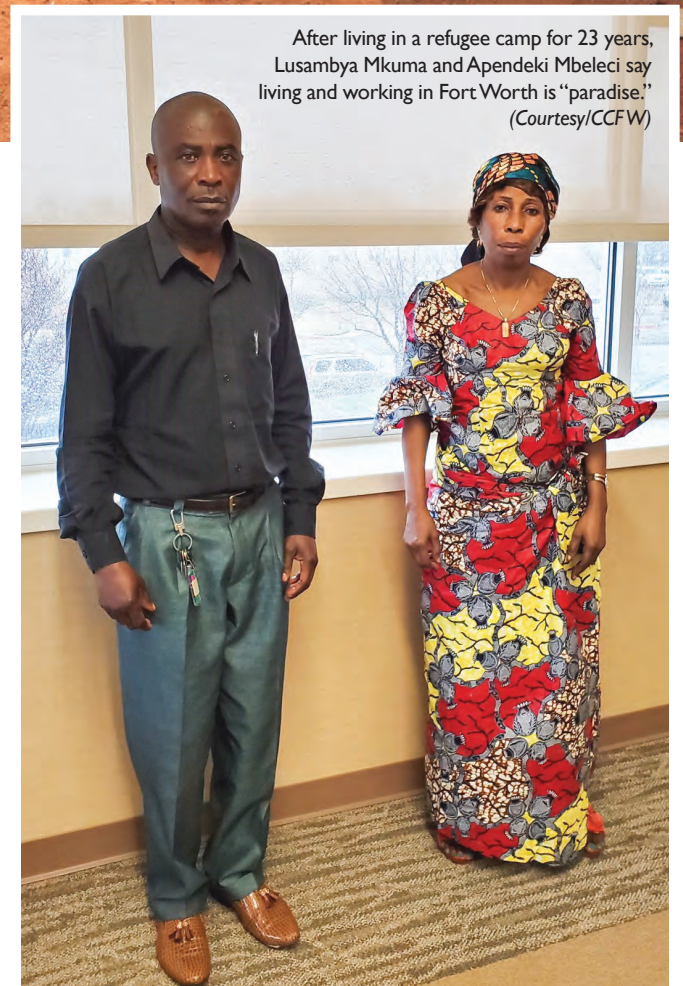
During the meeting, county commissioners voted unanimously, 5-0, to opt into the refugee resettlement program.

LOCAL REFUGEES THRIVE

Bishop Michael Olson issued a public statement urging Gov. Abbott to reconsider his decision. Ninety-six percent of refugees resettled in Fort Worth by Catholic Charities reach self-sufficiency and employment within six months of arrival and “made our communities even more vibrant,” he asserted.

Born in a Philippines refugee camp, Hien Vo is one those success stories. Sponsored by an American family, she was just seven months old when her Vietnamese mother brought her to Texas. Kim Vo fled her homeland in the late 1980s after experiencing unrelenting persecution from the communist government.

“I grew up hearing about Vietnam after the communists took over,” explained Vo, now a 27-year-old import/export logistics professional. “It was very difficult for people from a Catholic



After living in a refugee camp for 23 years, Lusambya Mkuma and Apendeki Mbeleci say living and working in Fort Worth is “paradise.” (Courtesy/CCFW)

Continued on Page 10



Hien Vo, center, with her parents Tai and Kim Vo, arrived as a refugee. Now she's a college graduate. (Courtesy/Vo family)

From Page 9

background. They couldn't go to college and couldn't attend Mass."

Kim Vo was one of the "boat people" who escaped the country in the dead of night with only the clothes on her back and a very small statue of the Blessed Mother. Crowded into a small fishing vessel, the young refugee feared death as the boat rolled and pitched through rough seas.

"My mother put that statue at the head of the boat, and she prayed incessantly," Hien Vo said, repeating a tale she's heard many times. "She credits her survival to Mother Mary."

Vo's parents met at the refugee camp but couldn't relocate to the U.S. together because of a paperwork problem. Mother and child settled in Arlington in 1993 with her father, Tai Vo, following two years later.

"My mom came here with a small child, a few clothes, and only \$50, and without her husband" she continued. "They told me they couldn't have gotten through it without their faith."

Refugee Services sent the family to North Texas because Kim Vo had relatives in the area. They also had the support of a parish family, first at St. Matthew and later at Vietnamese Martyrs Church in Arlington where Hien Vo teaches a Confirmation class. A first-generation college graduate, she's now working toward a master's degree in management from Harvard University's extension school.

"My parents came here so I could have the life they weren't able to have," Hien Vo commented. "I'm so grateful and fortunate."

The young Catholic professional is disappointed Texas is refusing to accept new

refugees. She questions why she's been given opportunities others are denied.

"I've been blessed with basic human rights and the right to profess my faith — something many refugees do not have," Hien Vo said. "I believe it is my responsibility to be a voice and do what I can to help those in need. God blesses us and, in turn, we should use those blessings to love our brothers and sisters more."

GIVING BACK

Susan Hensley observed firsthand the trauma that followed refugees to their new country. The retired educator spent most of her career teaching English to young students who arrived in Fort Worth from Myanmar, Nepal, Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Vietnam.

"Most of them were born in refugee camps so they didn't know any other life," she explained. "They would talk about kidnappings or living in the forest after the refugee camp burned down."

Encouraged to express their thoughts through writing, the students crafted autobiographical stories that captured the horrors their families endured. One young woman described being born in 1994 during the genocide of 800,000 Tutsis by the ethnic Hutu tribe in Rwanda. After an uncle was killed and her mother disappeared, the author was cared for by a grandmother. She was only two months old.

Reunited with her mother 15 years later in the U.S., the refugee remembers her grandmother's departing words as she left Africa — "Help everyone no matter what. Treat everyone as you want to be treated and always go for your dreams."

Many of Hensley's students achieved the dream of higher education and became doctors, teachers, and school administrators.

"I learned more from my students than they ever learned from me," admitted the former ESL teacher. "It was amazing to teach those kids and see their strength, love of family, and appreciation for the opportunities they were given."

Seeing America through the eyes of a refugee makes you realize how blessed we are, Hensley pointed out.

"They come here not to take from our country but to give. They always told me they wanted to give back to their family and give back to this country." 🇺🇸



Michael Short instructs Guardian Ministry volunteers on how to fire a gun using only one arm during a day-long firearms training. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

SECURING OUR safety

As part of efforts to make the Diocese of Fort Worth safer for all, Michael Short named first Director of Security

By Juan Guajardo

On Nov. 5, 2017, a small white clapboard church in the 600-person town of Sutherland Springs, just outside San Antonio, became a place of horror rather than one of worship.

A gunman wearing tactical gear and wielding a semiautomatic AR-15 rifle opened fire in First Baptist Church, killing 26 parishioners ranging from 18 months to 77 years of age. The shooting lasted mere minutes.

In other parts of the country, sacred spaces have also been the sites of tragedy due to mass shootings, as was the case with Emanuel African Methodist Church in

2015 and with Tree of Life Synagogue in 2018.

More recently, a gunman entered the 10:30 a.m. service at West Freeway Church of Christ in White Settlement and killed two congregants before Jack Wilson, a member of the church's security team, returned fire and killed him. The whole ordeal lasted six seconds.

That reality isn't lost on parish and diocesan leaders in the Diocese of Fort Worth. To ensure the safety of the faithful in the diocese's 91 parishes and 19 schools, former Lewisville Police Detective Michael

Continued on Page 12



At a recent Guardian Ministry training, several parish volunteers practiced shooting from various positions under the careful supervision of Michael Short and his team of instructors. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 11

Short was named Director of Security for the Diocese of Fort Worth Feb. 10.

Short's hire will help speed up Bishop Michael Olson's current diocesan security plan and ensure its uniform implementation in all churches and schools.

"In my new full-time position with the Diocese of Fort Worth, I will continue implementing the security program that was started by Guardian Response, but will now be more available to connect with the various parishes and schools in order to serve their community's specific security needs," Short said.

A police officer with the Lewisville Police Department for 15 years, Short

brings a wealth of experience in various levels of law enforcement and crime prevention. He served as a patrol officer for 10 years during which he spent six years training recruits as a field training officer. Short was also a member of the SWAT team for 10 years where he served as a team leader and explosive breacher. Short had also been assigned as a detective to the Burglary and Property Crimes Unit and most recently served as a detective in the Crimes Against Children Unit with the Lewisville Police Department.

In addition to real-world experience, Short served as an instructor for firearms, hostage rescue, active shooter response, and breaching. Short graduated from the University of North Texas with a



“I am excited about the opportunity to work with the Diocese of Fort Worth in this new capacity and bring my experience in law enforcement to help equip and empower those in our parishes and schools to protect our most vital asset: each other.”

— Michael Short

bachelor’s in criminal justice and holds a master’s degree in business administration from Texas A&M University-Commerce.

“Security is my department’s biggest concern, and having him dedicated to this would really help us carry this out per Bishop Michael Olson’s mandate,” said Steve Becht, diocesan director of real estate and construction. “Mike is a man of God, a very devout Catholic. He views this [job] as his mission and wants to do this for the Church and for Christ.”

A lifelong Catholic, Short and his wife Chasity have five children, one of whom, Dominic, was featured in a short film called “Dominic’s Vocation” by the Respect Life Office in 2013. The Short family attends St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Keller.

MOVING TOWARD A SAFER FUTURE

Sharing the “justly warranted concerns for safety” of members of his flock following the deadly shooting spree in Sutherland Springs, Bishop Olson in early 2018 enlisted the help of Short — then splitting time with the police department and his security firm, Guardian Response — to assist the diocese in establishing a multi-layered security program.

The first phase of that plan, a broad security assessment of each school and parish, revealed “considerable variation in their thoroughness and in the types of security to be employed,” the

bishop said.

The second phase is establishing a discreet security program at each parish and school that employs a variety of measures to ensure the safety and security of the faithful and students. One aspect of the program is to select, train, and deploy parishioners to respond during emergencies in an armed capacity.



Michael Short

Becht said many parishioners likely will not notice who belongs to the Guardian Ministry team, but it will be a collaborative effort to identify emergencies early, summon first responders, and respond quickly when necessary. The Guardian Ministry trains volunteers across different ministries to take a community approach to providing immediate response.

“You really need a community of people who are watching out for one another and able to respond quickly,” Short said.

Although the vast majority of parishes have begun executing that security plan, Short’s full-time presence will allow that to move along more quickly. Guardian Response will continue to work with the diocese to provide firearms training to parishioners who are members of the armed Guardian teams.

To provide the best outcome in an emergency situation, armed ministry members undergo a day-long intensive firearms safety and proficiency training where they also build skills useful in stressful scenarios such as drawing a gun

quickly from a concealed holster and learning to neutralize an armed intruder in the parking lot or in a crowded church. Early detection and containment of an intruder are also taught.

Other members of the Guardian Ministry team include medical personnel who are trained in first aid and “Stop the Bleed” techniques. Other team members are ushers or greeters who receive training in identifying suspicious behaviors and body language in order to detect and prevent problems early.

Finally, Short and Guardian Response have implemented several steps to make sure “armed guardians comply with and are very identifiable to law enforcement.”

Even with many parishes already in the process of forming and training their armed ministry teams, there is a need for more volunteer Guardians, and Short encourages men or women interested in the ministry to approach their pastor.

CUTTING EDGE APPROACH

Short said the comprehensive approach to security is unique and forward looking. Instead of being a piecemeal approach, every parish in the diocese will work under a common framework.

“The Fort Worth Diocese, by establishing a Guardian Ministry at the diocesan level, is at the forefront of current church security standards of practice,” he said. “The initiative enables all of the parishes and schools to speak a common language, support one another, and have a unified incident command structure.”

Becht agreed.

“It’s all to benefit the people in all of our parishes,” he said. 🇺🇸



ON THE
threshold



GOOD COMPANY: Pope Francis meets with U.S. bishops from Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas during their *ad limina* visits to the Vatican Jan. 20, 2020. **Bishop Michael Olson** is pictured second from the right (top row). (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Bishop Olson brings diocese to Vatican for *ad limina* visit

By Susan Moses

Bishop Michael Olson traveled to Rome with 17 brother bishops plus “the entire Diocese of Fort Worth, in prayer, in spirit, and in heart” for his first “*ad limina apostolorum*” visit.

While not physically near, the people of the diocese were ever present, because in the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch – “Where the bishop is, there is the Church,” Bishop Olson explained.

Ad limina apostolorum, which means “on the threshold of the Apostles,” takes its name from the pilgrimage to the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul. The week-long visit includes an extended conversation with Pope Francis; Masses at the Roman basilicas of St. Peter, St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. John Lateran, and St. Mary Major; and appointments at Vatican offices.

Unlike previous popes, Pope Francis hosts an open and unstructured conversation with the groups of bishops. His meeting with Bishop Olson and the other bishops of Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas lasted two-and-a-half hours.

An “informal but important conversation among brothers,” the discussion covered evangelization, refugees, right-to-life, vocations, and the pastoral care of priests and seminarians, Bishop Olson said.

“The Holy Father’s chief concern about the Church in the United States is the tendency toward radical individualism and congregationalism, the inclination to see ourselves as not belonging to the Church, but instead viewing the Church as a smorgasbord

where you pick and choose,” Bishop Olson recalled.

Bishop Olson shares the concern and noted that some Catholics identify more strongly with a political party than with the Church.

The pope, observing that U.S. policies extend beyond the country’s borders and aware of the upcoming presidential election, offered some advice to the bishops on how to give counsel and guidance to the flock in a polarized political landscape.

The pope suggested, “First, pray. Then state you are a pastor, not a politician. Articulate Jesus’ teachings on moral issues and what the Church teaches. Encourage and direct the people to pray, which is the beginning of formation of conscience. And, if you do it right, people will be very angry with you,” the bishop recounted, recalling Pope Francis’ truth leavened with humor.

Pope Francis thanked the bishops and the Church in the U.S. for its positive attitude towards refugees. “Despite the current struggles, we are leaders, compared to the rest of the world,” said Bishop Olson. “He encouraged us to not turn away from refugees, to listen to our better angels.”

ON THE THRESHOLD

Bishop Olson found praying at the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul particularly meaningful.

For the Diocese of Fort Worth, he prayed, “For peace. For protection of young people. For vocations. For family life. For renewal of priests, that they will

Continued on Page 16

ld



Building ties around the world

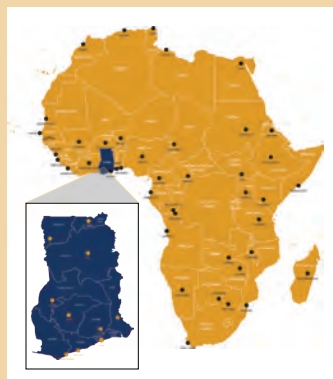
Bishop Michael Olson and Father Maurice Moon take a group photo with clergy from the Archdiocese of Kumasi. (Courtesy photo/Father Maurice Moon)

By Susan Moses

The 6,295 miles between Fort Worth and Kumasi, Ghana is not as far as it appears. The distance became even smaller the last week of January, when Bishop Michael Olson and Father Maurice Moon visited the African country.

For many years, the Archdiocese of Kumasi has sent missionary priests to locations in Europe and the U.S., including the Diocese of Fort Worth. Currently, Father Philip Brembah, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington, and Monsignor Francis Tawiah, parochial vicar of St. Philip the Apostle Parish, are assigned to the diocese.

To increase solidarity between Kumasi and Fort Worth, and to gain a better cultural understanding of the many Ghanaian immigrants in our diocese, Bishop Olson accepted a long-standing offer to visit from Kumasi Archbishop Gabriel Anokye.



GHANA (INSET)

On their first day, the Texans celebrated a four-hour Mass with Archbishop Anokye, who preached for an hour in Twi and English. Fr. Moon observed that Mass in Ghana is very similar to a Mass in the diocese, but it includes more elaborate processions. For example, an extended procession occurs before the Gospel reading, and, at the collection, each person dances up the aisle to drop his offering in the basket, in the order of the day of the week he was born.

During the trip, Bishop Olson made a point to meet the families of Fr. Brembah and Msgr. Tawiah “to thank them for the gift of their sons as brother priests,” he said.

In the days following, the bishop and Fr. Moon became acquainted

with seminarians at St. Gregory the Great Provincial Major Seminary, and they visited with religious sisters who run a shelter and trade school for homeless women.

Also, they soaked up the history and culture of the region by touring museums

be shepherds after the heart of Christ.”

Standing before the tombs of the martyred Apostles, “I was conscious of my vocation as successor to the Apostles, and I am willing to give my life for the truth, for salvation,” said the bishop.

Father Jonathan Wallis, who accompanied Bishop Olson, was also moved at visiting the tombs of our fathers in faith.

The priest, who serves as dean of men and director of seminary formation at St. Joseph Seminary College, said, “Seeing the bishops united around the tomb of St. Peter, reciting the Creed, then visiting the person who occupies the chair of St. Peter — the Pope — demonstrates that there’s something greater than yourself. We can get caught up in our daily concerns, but this is about salvation, about eternity, about leading others to Christ.”

At the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Bishop Olson prayed at the cathedra, the chair of the Bishop of Rome: Pope Francis. “I prayed for him and his ministry,” said the prelate. “And I thought about the day I will stand before Christ seated on His throne and give an accounting of my ministry as bishop.”

During the five-day *ad limina* visit, the bishops individually visited about ten dicasteries, or departments of the Roman Curia,

and by watching dancing performances.

Bishop Olson had a memorable sixth anniversary as Bishop of Fort Worth, celebrating Mass with the assembly of priests of the Kumasi Archdiocese.

After a week in Kumasi, Bishop Olson and Fr. Moon returned to Fort Worth. The chaplain of Nolan Catholic High School said he gained a new sense of gratitude for good roads and reliable transportation.

The visit to Ghana affirmed and



Pope Francis shakes hands with Bishop Michael F. Olson during the *ad limina* visit with U.S. bishops from Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas Jan. 20, 2020. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

which administer particular aspects of the Church, such as clergy, family life, or Catholic education.

Prior to the meetings, the dicasteries received relevant sections of the quinquennial report for the Diocese of Fort Worth. This document, submitted last summer, details the state-of-the-diocese in 23 sections and is compiled prior to each *ad limina* visit.

Bishop Olson said the Diocese of Fort Worth received praise for the V Encuentro conference, and the Vatican was “supportive and encouraging” of the diocese’s safe environment program, noting the efforts of priests, teachers, deacons, and lay people who work to protect young people and

vulnerable adults.

Bishop Olson concluded his appointments with the dicasteries feeling “clearly, firmly supported by the Holy See in my ministry and responsibility as bishop of Fort Worth.”

Every bishop in the world is required to make an *ad limina* visit regularly. U.S. bishops are divided into 14 regions, the first of which visited in early November 2019, and the last of which finished in late February. The previous round of *ad limina* visits for U.S. bishops was eight years ago.

Currently, there are 3,017 dioceses, prelatures, and vicariates across the world, according to the Vatican.

The “Directory for the *Ad Limina* Visit”

compares today’s *ad limina* visits to the meeting between Paul and Peter, which helped both apostles in their respective ministries. The direct contact between the bishops and the pope promotes and guards the unity of faith, while giving the pope “authoritative information on the actual situation of the various Churches.”

Accompanying Bishop Olson, Father Wallis observed the give and take between the bishops and the Holy See.

He said, “The bishops carried the daily lives of the people in the diocese, their hopes, their dreams, and their sufferings to the Vatican, and the bishops carried back the blessing of the Holy Father to us.” 🇺🇸

strengthened the relationship between the two dioceses. The Kumasi people and clergy were grateful for the rare visit from an American bishop, according to Bishop Olson. The personal connection “promotes our lives as brothers and sisters in Christ. Ghana is not just a place where we get priests.”

The week also provided insights into how the Catholic faith is lived in vastly different societies.

Bishop Olson was impressed with the spirit of evangelization in Ghana. Fr. Moon noted the poverty of the community, yet he was impressed by how generous the people were with their time and the little that they owned. He said, “They don’t have much money, and their focus is on their family and their faith.

“They haven’t been as affected by materialism and secularism as the West has. I think we can learn a lot from the

Church in Africa — their simplicity; their willingness to sacrifice everything for their faith, for their family,” he reflected.

The Scripture verse “Man does not live on bread alone” took on extra meaning for Fr. Moon in light of the visit. He said, “In the West, we have all the bread we want, but we are still unhappy. In Africa, they don’t have much bread, but they are still extremely happy and joyful and at peace.” 🇺🇸

Father Dennis Smith celebrates the Divine Liturgy at St. Basil Byzantine Church in Irving. (NTC/Ben Torres)





PRIESTS forever

A peek into the lives of retired clergy reveals a passionate dedication to their vocation

By Kiki Hayden

During the Eucharistic prayers of the Easter Sunday Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish a few years ago, Father Dennis Smith felt lightheaded. “You have to finish the consecration,” he told himself — and soon collapsed behind the altar. Upon awaking, Fr. Smith tried to finish praying.

“I was apparently very insistent,” he recalled. “And my sister... said, ‘Let him finish... otherwise he’s going to stress out.’” After the Eucharistic prayer, the paramedics whisked him into the sacristy of the Keller church.

Fr. Smith had suffered what his cardiologist later described as a “heart event.”

“As if the resurrection isn’t dramatic enough,” laughed Fr. Smith. “I don’t want to upstage the risen Christ!” After heart surgery, he soon returned to his usual routine: celebrating Mass and taking care of his dogs.

Fr. Smith retired in 2015 — two years prior to his heart event. He is one of about a dozen retired priests

who keep celebrating the sacraments faithfully, wherever and whenever they are needed — not letting their health, age, or retired status stop them from glorifying God.

The *North Texas Catholic* recently spoke with three retired priests of the diocese who continue to live their vocations wholeheartedly.

CARING FOR GOD’S CREATURES

When the weather is cool, you might find Fr. Smith on St. Elizabeth Ann Seton’s baseball field playing with his rescue dogs. Paco and Bandit aren’t good at fetch, but they sure can run. At home, Fr. Smith referees high-speed dog chases around the house.

During his heart surgery, Fr. Smith boarded his dogs. “I don’t like to board them... because there’s no one there overnight.” His dogs are accustomed to sleeping in his bed.

“But I’m going to have to start thinking about [boarding them],” Fr. Smith said, shaking his head slowly, “because realistically the time is

Continued on Page 20

Father Bob Strittmatter distributes Communion during a 7 a.m. Mass at Our Mother of Mercy in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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coming when I'm going to probably have to go into the hospital again."

For now, Fr. Smith is on a heart-healthy diet and takes medications. He doesn't travel anymore and has gone blind in his left eye, but this hasn't kept him away from the sacraments. On February 2, 2020, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Fr. Smith celebrated his 45th priestly anniversary Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish.

"I don't care to be eulogized because I'm not dead yet," he said during his homily, "and as far as canonized, well, I still have such a long, long way to go on the road to sanctity. To verify that, ask either one of my two sisters."

He then spoke of bearing the light of Christ, moving his hand as if conducting a choir, saying, "Old Simeon, inspired by the Holy Spirit... sings with joy, 'Now my eyes have seen your salvation, Lord. This is the light of revelation to the gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.'"

The anniversary reception in the school gym was standing room only. Several tables displayed photographs

of Fr. Smith's life, including pictures of first communions, weddings, and even a white-water rafting vacation with friends. Fr. Smith sat at a long table with his sisters and closest friends, grinning and greeting everyone who walked by. His eldest sister, Cecelia Gilbreath, told the *NTC*, "I came to keep him in line. And I failed!"

His younger sister, Vicki Nejtek, shook her head, adding, "He is always the light bearer — the peacemaker."

Jake Squibbs's family has known Fr. Smith for many years. "He is truly a gift to God's people... He lives his life exactly as he speaks... And we love his singing!"

At St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Fr. Smith hears confessions, gives parish retreats, celebrates funeral Masses, and frequently celebrates the Roman Catholic Mass.

MORE PHOTOS

To see photos of Father Dennis Smith's 45th anniversary of ordination, visit NorthTexasCatholic.org and click 'Photo Galleries' under the Gallery tab.



He even occasionally celebrates Mass at home with his "congregation of two"— his dogs, of course.

He also celebrates the Byzantine Catholic Divine Liturgy, which is almost identical to the liturgy celebrated in Greek Orthodox Churches. Fr. Smith converted to Catholicism from Greek Orthodoxy and his spirituality is enriched by both the Eastern and Western rites. According to Fr. Smith, Eastern Catholicism emphasizes the mystery of God, while Roman Catholicism seeks to define and clarify.

Eastern Catholic Churches are in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

"It means having the best of both worlds," he said. Fr. Smith celebrates Divine Liturgy at St. Basil the Great Byzantine Catholic Parish in Irving when their pastor is away. Parishioners



Retired priest Monsignor Ray Mullan plays the keyboard at his home in Mansfield. (NTC/Ben Torres)

of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton “have visited at various times when I was serving the liturgy,” Fr. Smith said, “and they have all been both enlightened and edified.”

What is the difference between active priesthood and retirement?

“I don’t have to go to staff meetings,” Fr. Smith said. He has more time to pray. “Not simply saying my prayers,” he explained, “but really praying.”

AN ARTIST FOR CHRIST

Monsignor Ray Mullan is a man of the arts. One wall of his sitting room is lined with bookshelves, five of them devoted to the complete works of P.G. Wodehouse, a British satirist known for wordplay.

Msgr. Mullan practices that art himself; he has written (and memorized) lengthy humorous poems for his brother and sister-in-law and their children. He has also written several plays, most recently an Easter play in which the Apostles recall the events of Christ’s passion.

“But this is my pride and joy,” Msgr.

Mullan said with a smile, leaning heavily on his cane to cross the room toward his electric keyboard. Every day, Msgr. Mullan plays music. He has even composed a liturgical setting for the Mass.

Msgr. Mullan says his retirement is “a gift from heaven.” During his active ministry (he’s been a priest for 57 years), he was often involved in three different ministries at the same time. “I am quite astonished at the energy I must have had back then,” he said.

In his homeland of South Africa, he ministered to inmates and soldiers during a season of intense racism and fear. Here in Texas, he encourages parishioners to learn the language(s) of their neighbors. “The message from God [at Pentecost] was: Let language never be a source of division among you...we are Americans. We are not English, we are not Spanish.”

Upon moving to Texas, Msgr. Mullan was surprised at the size of the parishes. He was relieved to have fewer responsibilities than his previous

assignments in South Africa but was still very busy. Eventually, his diagnosis of Parkinson’s disease forced him to retire. The first three months, he stayed home, barely able to walk due to the strong tremors. After resting a few months, he “bloomed and blossomed.”

Parkinson’s is a progressive disease. The priest receives treatment to slow its progression and remains as active as he can, celebrating weekday Masses at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield at 12:10 p.m. and glorifying the Lord through music and writing.

“I see myself health-wise failing,” he said, his gaze turned downward. He later wrote in an email: “To ‘take up’ [the cross] means much more than just to endure the cross, it means to accept and embrace it. And when we do, Jesus unites us to Himself, and in some wonderfully mysterious but real way, we participate in His great act of redeeming the world.”

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“I’ve been a happy person all my life,” he said. “No matter where I’ve been, God has blessed me with friends.”

He glanced upward toward heaven. “What have You got in store for me tomorrow?” he asked. Then he shrugged and smiled. “I guess I’ll find out in the morning.”

RUNNING WITH PERSEVERANCE

Each evening, Father Bob Strittmatter records his voicemail answering message, detailing what is in store for him tomorrow. He states the date and time of recording, when and where he will celebrate Mass, and lists his appointments, from haircuts to running.

Other than allergy shots and occasional aspirin, “I don’t take any medicine,” said Fr. Strittmatter in his steady Texas twang. Instead, he jogs, runs, and walks three times a week — a practice he refers to as “physical therapy.”

“And I lift weights,” he added. “I tell people that’s less expensive than going to the doctor.”

Fr. Strittmatter reports that he hasn’t often been sick — except for having polio as a child, a stomach tumor several years ago, and an ambiguous heart blockage that mysteriously disappeared. Fortunately, his stomach tumor wasn’t cancerous — a 1-in-20 chance, according to his doctor.

“The doctor told me there’s a higher power at work here,” Fr. Strittmatter recalled. A similar rarity occurred when his cardiologist scheduled Fr. Strittmatter for heart surgery. Testing had revealed a blockage, but when Fr. Strittmatter woke up after the operation, the doctor reported

that everything was clear and no surgery was needed.

The priest, who was ordained in 1966, retired in June 2017.

So why did he retire? “I reached the age of retirement,” he said. “But by the same token, I’m enjoying my retirement.”

He fills his days with “a lot of prayer and study, and I still need some time to do the runnin’... I’m not bored by any means.”

Fr. Strittmatter keeps himself busy serving many parishes throughout the diocese. In the fall, he was scheduled to celebrate Mass at Our Mother of Mercy in Fort Worth, St. Francis Village in Crowley, and even St. Patrick Cathedral — sometimes all in one week. He can celebrate Mass in English and Spanish.

On days he isn’t scheduled to a parish, Fr. Strittmatter celebrates Mass at home in his kitchen as the sun rises. He only misses Mass when he is too sick or on a plane. “Receiving His body and blood every day — that’s real important,” Fr. Strittmatter said.

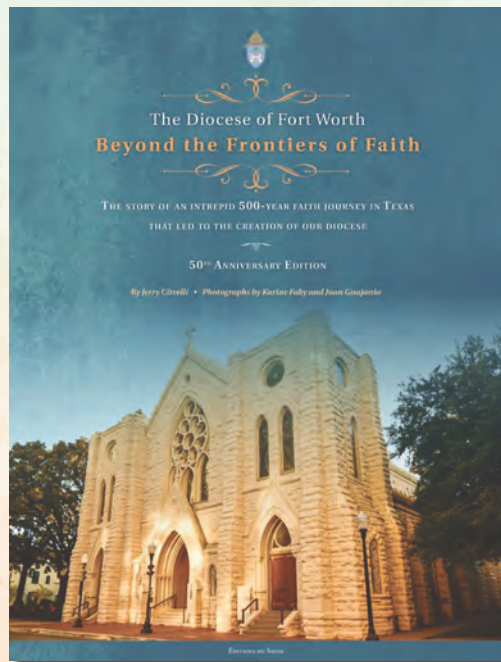
“I have a desire to celebrate Mass every day,” he continued. “The world certainly needs the benefits of Mass. Jesus died on the cross for everybody. The more prayer we offer, the more sacrifice made — it’s for the benefit of the whole world.”

Even when their health creates obstacles, he and the other priests of the diocese remain dedicated to their vocations. And they definitely still keep busy.

Fr. Strittmatter smiled and explained, “Retirement means there are no days off.”

“You’re a priest forever — into eternity,” said Msgr. Mullan. “You never lose your priesthood.” 🇺🇸

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provide for the future
of the diocese



Renée Underwood
holds a photo of Stanley
Guminski. (NTC/Juan
Guajardo)

By Susan Moses

In celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Diocese of Fort Worth, we've had the opportunity to reflect on some of the forebears in the faith in North Texas.

For example, Father Jean Marie Guyot, the French-born missionary who built St. Patrick Cathedral with his physical and spiritual labors. The Flusche brothers, German immigrants who established settlements and parishes in five locations in the diocese. The Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, who founded 29 schools in Texas and laid the foundations for Fort Worth's hospital district. Father Peter Levy, a circuit-riding French missionary who launched four parishes in counties just south of the Red River.

Then, there are the unsung heroes without whom the diocese couldn't flourish.

Case in point — Stanley "Steve" Guminski, who left his entire estate to the Diocese of Fort Worth upon his death in 1976.

Associate Director of the Advancement Foundation Renée Underwood likens

Guminski and other donors to the women in *Luke 8:1-3* who provided for Jesus and His Apostles from their resources.

"From the earliest beginnings of the Church, grateful, generous stewards have made possible the important work of ministry," she said.

Established in 2009 as a separate, nonprofit corporation and renamed in 2013, the Advancement Foundation operates exclusively to support the charitable, religious, and educational mission of the Diocese of Fort Worth.

For most parishioners in the diocese, the Advancement Foundation is most visible through the Annual Diocesan Appeal. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, the Annual Appeal provided more than \$3 million in operating grants to under-resourced schools and parishes, plus supported diocesan ministries such as Catholic Charities Fort Worth, retired and infirm priests, formation for deacons and seminarians, and prison ministry, to name a few.

The Advancement Foundation also steps up when parishes or schools launch a capital campaign to build new facilities or

expand existing ones. Its resources are additionally available to help parishes understand and enhance stewardship.

Another purpose of the Advancement Foundation which is less visible than the Annual Appeal or parish involvement is its management of \$92 million in assets for the enduring stability and financial health of the diocese.

The Advancement Foundation receives overall guidance and supervision from its Board of Directors — five laypeople with financial and business expertise, four priests, and the CFO of the diocese — who meet a few times each year.

Joe Monteleone, a certified public accountant who has served on the board for more than two years, said, "The Advancement Board provides oversight to the Foundation activities to make sure that money is raised, collected, and disbursed as the donors intend."

Monteleone explained some funds are collected and go out immediately, like the operating grant to pay for curriculum

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resources at St. Maria Goretti Catholic School collected during the Annual Diocesan Appeal. Other funds are endowments managed according to the signed agreements that establish them, and those assets are invested by external money managers.

Designated gifts, capital campaign pledges, and donations to the Annual Diocesan Appeal have one thing in common: the funds can only be used for their original purpose.

THANK YOU, BOOMERS

Underwood, a certified fundraising executive with 11 years' experience, said that previous generations would often designate a gift to a parish or the diocese with a single line in their will.

But now, thanks to the Boomer generation, planned giving has undergone a transformation. She explained, "Today's donors are more specific about what they want their money to do."

"What aspects of the faith are most important to the donor? Is it seminarian formation, or a Catholic school, or retired religious? Where is their heart, what matters to them?" Underwood said, describing how the Foundation helps match the gift with the donor's passion.

By setting up an endowment or making a provision in estate plans, the donor establishes a perpetual gift that can support forever the ministry of their choice, their parish, the diocese, or a Catholic school.

These gifts are invested in accordance with Catholic values, following guidelines from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Monteleone, who sits on the board of several nonprofits, including Cristo Rey Fort Worth High School, said, "We are the Catholic Church. We don't want

to invest [in a company] if they don't match our values."

The three external financial managers screen the businesses before investing. At Bishop Olson's recommendation, an outside consultant provides a secondary screening "so we are even more stringent than what the USCCB requires, and we still enjoy favorable earnings on the investment," Monteleone said.

External auditors complete an annual audit of the Advancement Foundation, posted on the Foundation's website, **AdvancementFoundation.org**. (The Diocese of Fort Worth, although separate structurally and financially from the Advancement Foundation, is equally transparent. It displays annual financial statements at **FWDiocese.org** dating back to 2004.)

"The Advancement Foundation and its board are very keen on issues going on in the diocese. Everybody exercises due diligence with the stewardship of assets. It's all about filling the needs of the Church, of the diocese, of the parish," Monteleone said.

One of the biggest needs is growth, both now and in the future. Currently, the Advancement Foundation is assisting 23 parishes with capital campaigns. And if the population of North Texas grows 2.6 percent each year through 2030, as projected by the North Central Texas Council of Governments, the diocese will need to increase the size and number of its parishes.

Underwood said, "People who came along before me, or this current bishop, or past bishops, laid the foundational structures for supporting the diocese. In gratitude for their legacy, we strive each day to ensure we are good stewards of the assets that support our parishes and ministries." 🇺🇸

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David and Roseanne Greer (left) and Richard and Antonieta Grantvedt (center) kiss during the sign of peace at the Milestone Anniversary Mass at Our Lady Fatima Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)

LASTING LOVE

Three couples
Three stories
One faith

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

What do the words “domestic church” mean? For David and Roseanne Greer, it describes their role as the primary catechists of William, 4, Bridget, 2, and 5-month-old Andrew.

“That also involves being an example of faith to our kids,” David explained. “It’s our vocation — a part of marriage.”

The Franciscan University graduates, who will celebrate their 10th wedding anniversary in June, joined more than 60 other couples and their relatives at the diocesan Marriage Anniversary Mass held Feb. 16 at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Fort Worth.

Every year, the U.S. Catholic Church promotes the spiritual and social benefits of marriage and family life — greater

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happiness, better health, reduced poverty, and more resilient children — during National Marriage Week. The theme for the 2020 observance, Feb. 7-14, was “Stories from the Domestic Church.”

As part of that celebration, the diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life recognizes the gifts of sacramental marriage with an annual Mass. This year’s event was open to all Catholic couples marking a five, 10, 20, or other milestone anniversary. Previous years honored husbands and wives celebrating a golden or silver wedding jubilee.

“I think it shows young people that marriages can not only endure but thrive,” said Chris Vaughan, director of marriage and family life. “Everyone goes through hardships. It’s encouraging to see older folks who have stayed married.”

Welcoming the congregation at the beginning of the Mass, Bishop Michael Olson congratulated the anniversary couples and thanked them for their “ministry as husband and wives.”

The world thinks of marriage as a contract between two people.

“But Christ teaches it is a covenant,” the bishop explained in his homily. “Married life becomes a means by which a husband and wife sanctify each other.”

Marriage is more than something that benefits the individual.

“It calls you to give ever more generously to each other, your families, and society as a whole,” he continued. “Married life, lived out with all of its challenges, struggles, and joys, prepares us for eternal life.”

Vows exchanged by the couples many years ago in front of family and friends spoke of permanence, fidelity, exclusivity, and openness to God’s gift of children.

Living that commitment of married life involves mercy, forgiveness, and patience and is even more important today.

“At a time when we live in a culture so wrapped in itself — so narcissistic and unkind in its discourse — married life offers witness and testimony for the rest of society,” the bishop suggested. “As you thank God for the gift of married life, may He continue to bless you as you continue your journey and witness of fidelity and joy.”

The bishop’s words struck a chord with Roseanne Greer. In our culture, children are often the priority when it comes to family.

“But it’s also important to remember the husband and wife and that foundation of the domestic church,” said the St. Patrick parishioner. “We are the instrument to get each other to heaven. It’s so beautiful to have a Mass celebrating and highlighting that.” ✝

THERE'S MORE TO MARRIAGE

See the video and more photos of the Milestone Anniversary Mass. Go to NorthTexasCatholic.org and click on “Galleries.”



A couple brings the gifts to Bishop Michael Olson at the Anniversary Mass on Feb. 16. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Edison and Amparo Morales

50



A shared faith and culture brought Edison and Amparo Morales together more than 50 years ago.

A native of the Philippines, Edison was recruited at the age of 25 to work for the Boeing Company in Seattle. Amparo, also born in the Philippines, came to the U.S. as a child and was studying medical technology at the University of Washington.

“Coming to the USA was a dream come true for many reasons,” said the mechanical engineer, who met his future bride on his birthday in 1967.

They married on St. Valentine’s Day 1970 in Seattle’s St. Mary Church in front of a large gathering of family and friends. The years that followed were blessed with the birth of four boys (one died shortly after birth) and frequent moves around the country to accommodate Edison’s successful career in the aerospace and nuclear industries. Before settling in Granbury where Edison worked at the Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant, the Morales family lived in St. Louis, Chicago, Denver, and

Richland, Washington.

“It was a challenge,” admitted Amparo, who was responsible for selling the house and supervising movers after her husband would leave for a job in a new city. “We went where he went and made the best of it.”

Edison praised his wife for her willingness to interrupt her own career path to follow him. Though it was a struggle, the frequent relocations allowed his family to experience different parts of the country.

“The secret to a happy marriage is give and take,” the retiree emphasized. “It’s also important to be understanding to one another.”

Both raised in devoutly Catholic families, the couple said going to church together

helped them weather the ups and downs of married life. They joined St. Frances Cabrini Parish 33 years ago.

“You learn a lot about each other when you’re married,” Amparo added. “It requires a lot of patience and tolerance. In the end, that’s what really matters.”

The Morales’ will celebrate their golden wedding anniversary with many of the people who witnessed their wedding vows 50 years ago.

“Our three boys are treating us to a Caribbean cruise in June,” she enthused. “My brothers and sisters are coming as well as nieces and nephews. It will be a wonderful family get together.” ✨

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Amparo and Edison Morales kneel during the consecration at the Milestone Anniversary Mass. (NTC/ Jayme Donahue)

Teacy and Paul Bernardy

45

The words, “in sickness and in health,” spoken on their wedding day more than four decades ago, took on new meaning for Teacy and Paul Bernardy quite unexpectedly. During a pleasure cruise to celebrate her 65th birthday in 2018, Teacy suddenly felt a pain in the middle of her back and the discomfort quickly worsened.

The St. Andrew parishioner went to 13 doctors before one provided relief for an illness no one was able to pinpoint. Bedridden most of the time, the real estate agent had

no energy and relied on pain medications to get through the day.

“Paul cared for me the entire time,” said the former Catholic schoolteacher turned real estate agent. “He was there to support me when I became frustrated and angry.”

The attentive husband went to medical appointments, charted medications, and drove his spouse to meet clients.

“I never would have survived without him,” Teacy said.

College sweethearts, the Bernardys met at the University of Dallas and began dating when Teacy was a junior. They married on July 5, 1975 in Holy Family Church with Monsignor Don Fischer, UD’s chaplain, as the principal Mass celebrant.

A Chicago native raised in a Catholic family, Paul Bernardy grew up in a time when marriage was a lifetime commitment for everyone.

“Even though we went through hard times, [divorce] was never an option,” he

said. “We always had that in the back of our minds.”

Remembering not only why he fell in love with Teacy, but also reflecting on the person he was during their courtship, guided the associate funeral director through some tough moments.

“I had to ask myself, am I that same person during the difficult times? Am I behaving the same way?” he said. “That’s helped me a couple of times to evaluate how I’m acting.”

The nucleus of a family that includes four children, their spouses, and 12 grandchildren, the Bernardys look back on 45 years of marriage with thoughtful gratitude. Marriage, they insist, is not a 50/50 proposition.

“Getting married isn’t about two people. It takes three,” Teacy insisted. “If we weren’t focused on God, faith, and our beliefs, our marriage wouldn’t be what it is. Whenever we struggled — and all couples



NTC/Jayne Donahue

David and Julie Kinch

25



struggle — we've always turned to God to help us grow stronger."

And there was an upside to Teacy's medical crisis.

"It made us realize how fortunate we are to have each other," she added.

Months of caregiving also proved valuable to her husband.

"God is always trying to teach me something," suggested Paul, who leads Scripture studies and organizes retreats at St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth. "I think he was trying to tell me we needed to spend more time together." 🇺🇸



After 45 years of marriage, the couple (center) has four children and 12 grandchildren. (Courtesy/Bernardy family)

Life takes you down some interesting paths, especially with some promptings of the Holy Spirit."

That's how David Kinch describes the twists and turns he and wife, Julie, experienced during their 25 years of marriage. After meeting through a mutual friend freshman year, the Texas Christian University students bonded two years later in Oxford, England, during a study abroad program. They married on May 28, 1995, in Brownsville's Sacred Heart Church — the groom's boyhood parish.

"People associate their wedding day with being nervous, but it was joyous and I remember savoring every moment," David said, recalling the small gathering of family and friends.

A successful marriage requires true partnership, "and as the years passed, our communication improved," explained Julie Kinch. "That helped us when we moved and added children to our household."

The ability to share their private thoughts and feelings helped the couple survive one of the most painful events in any marriage — the loss of a pregnancy.

A miscarriage can unearth a tsunami of emotions ranging from anger and guilt to despair.

"We were expecting twins and one of the most challenging times was grieving that loss," David explained. "Faith certainly helped."

Julie, who miscarried at 16 weeks after two successful pregnancies, didn't tell many people. Support came from a Catholic Scripture study group she attended.

"At the time, there was a ministry at St. Andrew Church for people who had suffered miscarriage or stillbirth, so that was very helpful," she remembered. "And I found saying the Rosary comforting"

The loss of those babies profoundly affected the family.

"After it happened, we made a lot of changes in our household that put us on the path we're on today," David admitted. "It was painful, but God was trying to nudge us in a different direction. The twins were instrumental in that."

Deciding to refocus his attention on the needs of his wife and sons, Arthur and Joshua, David decided to quit a job that required a lot of travel and weekends in

the office.

"It was keeping me away from my family so we took a leap of faith," added the family's breadwinner, who had nothing lined up when he gave notice. "Through this whole process, we knew what needed to be done and we trusted the Holy Spirit that everything would fall into place."

It did. Just as his wife became pregnant with their third son, Nathan, he found employment closer to home.

"Our youngest, in particular, benefited from that," David said.

His improved work schedule also allowed him to contemplate the idea of becoming a permanent deacon. Today, the St. Andrew parishioner is part of the class of 2022 diaconate formation program. Wives are supportive participants in the process.

As they approach their 25th wedding anniversary, the Kinches offer this advice to new married couples.

"It sounds simplistic but trust in God," David counseled. "Recognize the love you have for your spouse and be that love. And listen to one another. Truly getting to know one another requires that listening." 🇺🇸

Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese Catholics fled the country's communist regime in boats similar to the one pictured here awaiting rescue by the USS Blue Ridge in 1984.
(U.S. Navy/James Franzen)

A FAITH EN pe



DURING Persecution

A strong faith, born out of persecution, has enabled the Vietnamese Catholic community to survive and thrive

By Jerry Circelli

The forceful communist takeover of the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon on April 30, 1975, touched off an exodus of biblical proportions.

During the course of the next two decades, 3 million people from South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos fled their homelands, with an estimated 800,000 Vietnamese refugees escaping on boats, according to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. *USA Today* has called it “the biggest exodus in peacetime the world has ever seen.”

Tens of thousands of South Vietnamese, unable or unwilling to flee, were systematically killed by the communists or sent off to prisons, otherwise known as “re-education camps.” Some estimates place the number of people who died in captivity at 165,000.

Those on the communist hit list were people aligned with the South Vietnamese government, those who supported United States military forces, and faithful Catholics. All were considered threats to the North Vietnamese invaders who were intent on “unifying” the nation under their rule.

One of the refugees who escaped by boat in 1979 was a 16-year-old boy who, 14 years later, would become a Diocese of Fort Worth priest: Father Hoa

Nguyen, pastor of Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth. Like so many of his fellow countrymen in South Vietnam, Fr. Nguyen has always placed Christ and the Catholic Church at the center of his life. This tradition in faith started long ago in Vietnam and has strengthened Christ’s Church in the United States and throughout the world.

“The faithful in Vietnam grew up in a persecuted country,” said Fr. Nguyen. “Between 1700 and 1800, the total number of Vietnamese Catholics was about 200,000. [During persecutions in the 19th century] about 130,000 were executed — more than half.

“We grew out of that persecution throughout history. And during the Vietnam War, it was chaos for Vietnamese Catholics. Communism and Catholicism never matched.”

To preserve their lives and protect their faith, Vietnamese Catholics remained on the move.

“That’s why Catholics in Vietnam had to live together by forming our own communities,” Fr. Nguyen continued. Those communities, he explained, were always formed around the Catholic Church.

“Even in our own land, the

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Vietnamese people moved from north to south and had to make their own community. They built a church and more Catholics would move there and try to have their home around the church,” the priest explained.

STRENGTHENING CHRIST’S CHURCH IN NORTH TEXAS

When the persecuted Catholics arrived in North Texas and elsewhere in the United States, spirits rose and their faith flourished.

“The Vietnamese Catholic community excelled,” said Fr. Nguyen. “God always works in that way. In times of persecution and oppression, people preserve their faith and survive. When the time is right, the power of God is released.”

Fr. Nguyen likened the unleashing of the power of God to the tireless work of Saint Pope John Paul II. While pope, he stood strongly against communist oppression of the faithful in Poland and elsewhere. More than 40 years ago, his work, his example, and his words helped restore religious freedom in Poland and bring down communism in other parts of Europe.

“It was like that when the Vietnamese people came to this country,” Fr. Nguyen said.

Helping Catholicism grow in North Texas has been a major contribution of the refugees who arrived here with unshakable faith, Fr. Nguyen said.

Four predominantly Vietnamese parishes are now part of the Diocese of Fort Worth. They include a total of more than 3,000 families at Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in Wichita Falls; Christ the King Parish and Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Fort Worth; and Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington.

These parishes are staffed by Vietnamese priests from the Congregation of the Mother of the Redeemer (CRM), formerly named the Congregation of the Mother Co-Redemptrix. In all, 10 CRM priests serve in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

One of them is Father Jim Khoi, CRM, pastor of Immaculate Conception of Mary.



Father Jim Khoi, CRM, celebrates Mass Feb. 9 at Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in Wichita Falls, a thriving faith community that is predominantly home to Vietnamese families. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

In 1975, Fr. Khoi was among 170 of the order’s priests and brothers summoned for an emergency meeting with the order’s founder, Father Dominic Tran Dinh Thu. Fr. Dominic told the men to prepare for escape as the communists moved ever closer to the takeover of Saigon and all of South Vietnam.

“He told us about a plan to leave Vietnam,” said Fr. Khoi, who was a brother at the time. “He said he did not know where we would end up, but he entrusted us with a mission — to maintain and expand our order and to evangelize.”

The religious order men would ultimately honor their founder’s wishes in a big way, but not before enduring many trials and tribulations.

Shortly after their meeting with the founder, the 170 men followed through on an escape plan and boarded five already overcrowded fishing boats and set off into the South China Sea. The date was April 30, 1975 — the same day the United States evacuated its embassy in Saigon.

“We sailed out into the ocean,” Fr. Khoi said, “but we did not know where we were going. We did not even have

Father Hoa Nguyen lifts the Book of the Gospels as he prepares to deliver the Gospel at Holy Family Parish Feb. 8 (NTC/Joseph Barringhaus)



a destination. We all asked each other where we were headed, and no one had an answer. We just entrusted everything to God.”

During their several days at sea, the escapees prayed for a miracle, and it came in the form of U.S. Navy sailors who spotted them adrift, rescued the now-homeless people, and delivered them to refugee camps in Guam and the Wake Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean. In the following weeks, the priests and brothers were transported by C-130 aircraft to Fort Chaffee in Arkansas and to refugee camps in California and Pennsylvania.

Eventually, the men were reunited in Carthage, Missouri, at a vacant Oblate seminary.

The 170 men, once lost at sea with no destination charted, went on to help form Our Lady of the Assumption provincial house in Carthage, recognized by the Holy See in 1985, and to minister to hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees in the United States.

Today, according to Fr. Khoi, the number of CRM religious order priests has grown to include more than 100 men. They serve Catholics of Vietnamese heritage throughout the United States.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, the religious order also opened the Holy Family Religious and Retreat Center in Fort Worth.

Established five years ago, the facility accommodates the faithful for overnight

retreats and serves as a venue for religious events for Catholics throughout Texas and Oklahoma.

Fr. Khoi said that neither he nor his fellow CRM priests and brothers could have imagined where their work would have taken them, but he is not surprised.

“We have always trusted in God’s work and God’s providence. If He wants something to happen, it happens,” Fr. Khoi said.

“We continue to follow our main directives to evangelize and to maintain the charism of our order,” he continued. That charism includes devotion to Mary; proclaiming the Gospel, especially for Vietnamese people and the poor; and to live a consecrated life, following the example of Jesus Christ.

Father Dominic, who helped the religious men gain their freedom, died in Vietnam in 2007, but living on is his directive — to expand the order and to evangelize. The CRM priests and

Editor’s Note: This is Part IV of our series of historical features

during the 50th anniversary of the Diocese of Fort Worth.



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brothers never faltered in their mission.

KEEPING CHRIST AT THE CENTER OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Working in strong unison with these priests are several thousand Vietnamese Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Worth who share similar stories of faith and survival.

Among them is Jack Hoang, who left South Vietnam in 1976, after communists occupied his home and forced him to work day and night for them, building roads and laboring at other arduous tasks. Hoang fled his homeland on a small fishing boat with his wife, Nancy, seven months pregnant; brother Michael, who now serves as a deacon at Our Lady of Fatima Parish; as well as more than a dozen others.

After four days and nights at sea, navigating by the stars, the refugees reached Thailand. They lived offshore on their boat for a month, followed by another month in the remote Thai highlands. Through the entire ordeal, they sustained themselves on only meager rations of rice and water.

With the help of the Red Cross, Jack



ABOVE: Jack and Nancy Hoang are pictured in the small boat in which they fled the brutal Communist regime in Vietnam in 1976. (Courtesy/Hoang Family)

TOP: Now, they are proud parents of seven children (from left): John, Julie, Joyce, Jeannie, Jennifer, Joseph, and James. In addition, they dote on nine grandchildren. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

and his family were soon reunited with other family members in the Beaumont, Texas, area.

Fifteen days after their arrival in the United States, Nancy gave birth to the couple's first child. Jack obtained the necessary education to become an electrical technician, eventually relocating to Fort Worth, where he worked for General Dynamics and Lockheed. A long-time member of

Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Jack credits God for his survival and that of his family.

"I know that God helped us," Jack said. "We might have died on that ocean, but we prayed every day, and God provided for us."

Jack's daughter Jennifer added that her mother always stressed the power of

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Three sisters, of a group of nine from the Lovers of the Holy Cross order, renew their vows at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington Aug. 11, 2019. (NTC/Ben Torres)

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prayer. “And when I look at what they went through,” Jennifer said, “that right there is proof enough for me.”

Jack and Nancy were blessed with seven children, now ranging from 23 to 43 years of age, all born in the U.S. The parents ensured that their children would come to know Christ and His teachings.

“Every night we would read parts of the Bible,” Jennifer recalled, “and then my dad would summarize it. And each day he would always relate it to what was going on in our lives. If we had a tough day at school or if you came across situations where you are tempted to steal, or lie, or to disobey, he would summarize parts of the Bible to help us reflect on those situations and how we can change and act in the way God wants us to act.”

To this day, Jennifer said, her father still keeps the faith alive via group emails to family and friends relating the Bible to relevant events of modern times.

PHOTO GALLERY

See more photos of our local Vietnamese Catholic community by visiting NorthTexasCatholic.org and clicking on ‘Photo Galleries’ under the Gallery tab.



“I do it every morning,” Jack said, “because I know that the Bible can help people.”

The Hoang family has remained close and strongly connected with the Church, Jennifer said, crediting her father’s creativity and determination to ensure his children would have a lasting relationship with God.

EVANGELIZATION FOR A NEW GENERATION

Ensuring that youth understand and remain faithful to Christ can be a challenge for all parents and the Church in general. The Vietnamese community is no exception.

While the early Vietnamese refugees

grew ever stronger in faith as a result of their epic struggles to survive and escape oppression, many of their children and grandchildren did not share their experience.

At Vietnamese Martyrs Parish, two sisters from the Lovers of the Holy Cross religious order of women in Vietnam are on a mission to bring Vietnamese youth closer to Christ. Sister Theresa Tran serves as director of religious formation and catechesis at the parish, while Sister Maria Chu works as director of religious education. The sisters minister to more than 1,600 families.

Both Sr. Theresa and Sr. Maria were born in Vietnam after the takeover by communists, entered their religious order in

Young girls in traditional Vietnamese dress perform during a 2017 dedication ceremony for a new statue of Our Lady of Fatima at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Vietnam, and each earned bachelor's and master's degrees in the United States. They were assigned by their order to Vietnamese Martyrs in 2017.

The sisters are of a generation between those who struggled to be free of religious oppression and younger generations striving to stay astride of two cultures — Vietnamese and American. What unites them all is faith in Jesus Christ.

“For the older generation,” Sr. Theresa said, “the more they suffered, the more they remained faithful to God. The suffering made them stronger and motivated them to keep their faith and to trust in God. When they came to the United States, they continued to build their relationship with God and continued to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.”

In Vietnamese culture, Sr. Theresa explained, families share meals together, pray together, and maintain a strong relationship with God.

“What traditionally has kept families

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BRINGING VIBRANCY TO CHRIST'S CHURCH IN NORTH TEXAS

Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Worth took a page out of *Romans* when they opened their arms to welcome refugees from war-ravaged Vietnam beginning in 1975.

The result has been nothing short of remarkable and dynamic growth for Christ's Church in North Texas. More than 3,000 Vietnamese Catholic families worship at four Vietnamese parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth, several men of Vietnamese heritage have responded to Christ's call to serve as diocesan priests, and 10 Vietnamese

religious order priests lead the faithful.

In addition, second- and third-generation Vietnamese faithful continue to be a growing part of the faithful base of the 1 million Catholics in the sprawling diocese.

Although the early Vietnamese Catholics who arrived in Texas and other parts of the nation were stripped of nearly everything they owned by communists who overran their country in 1975, the refugees never lost their Catholic faith and identity.

When Vietnamese Catholics began

to settle in North Texas, one of their priorities was to organize faith communities to keep Christ at the center of their lives. It was important to them in Vietnam and remained important in their new American homes.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, these communities grew in Wichita Falls, Fort Worth, and Arlington. They include:

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY PARISH, WICHITA FALLS

In Wichita Falls, Sacred Heart Parish provided an early spiritual home for the local Vietnamese community. In 1983, the Vietnamese faithful received permission from the diocese to purchase a former Baptist church. After a successful fundraising campaign, the community converted the building into a Catholic sanctuary. This became Assumption of Mary Mission. The Vietnamese attending the mission undertook yet another fundraising campaign to build a more permanent home.

Following their success in this multi-year endeavor, a new church was built in 2005. At that time, the mission was elevated to parish status, taking its present name, Immaculate Conception of Mary. The parish is now home to 90 families, including about 250 people.

CHRIST THE KING PARISH, FORT WORTH

In Fort Worth, St. George Parish provided a home for local Vietnamese Catholics in the mid 1970s. In the spring of 1996, more than 20 years after first practicing their faith at St. George, Vietnamese Catholics purchased a Lutheran church and converted it to a

Vietnamese Martyrs parishioners celebrate the Lunar New Year in grand fashion. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Catholic house of worship. Upon completion of the building conversion, the new church was sanctified and became Christ the King. In 2004, they added a parish hall to the church. To accommodate the growing number of faithful, parishioners expanded the church structure in 2012, nearly doubling its seating capacity. Christ the King is now home to 700 families,

including about 2,000 people.

OUR LADY OF FATIMA PARISH, FORT WORTH

Also in Fort Worth, parishioners at St. Rita Parish welcomed Vietnamese refugees beginning in the mid-1970s. With permission from the diocese, the faithful purchased a nearby grocery store

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together is their strong Catholic faith,” Sr. Theresa said.

Parents and grandparents from Vietnam have always wanted to maintain that tradition in the United States, she said. “They urge their children to be holy, to be good, to be faithful to their Church. They want them to be involved in the Church.”

For teenagers, honoring those

traditions can sometimes be a challenge, said Sr. Theresa, stressing the importance of listening to youngsters and creating programs that keep them engaged with their parents and the Church. The earlier children are involved with their families at their parishes, the better, she said.

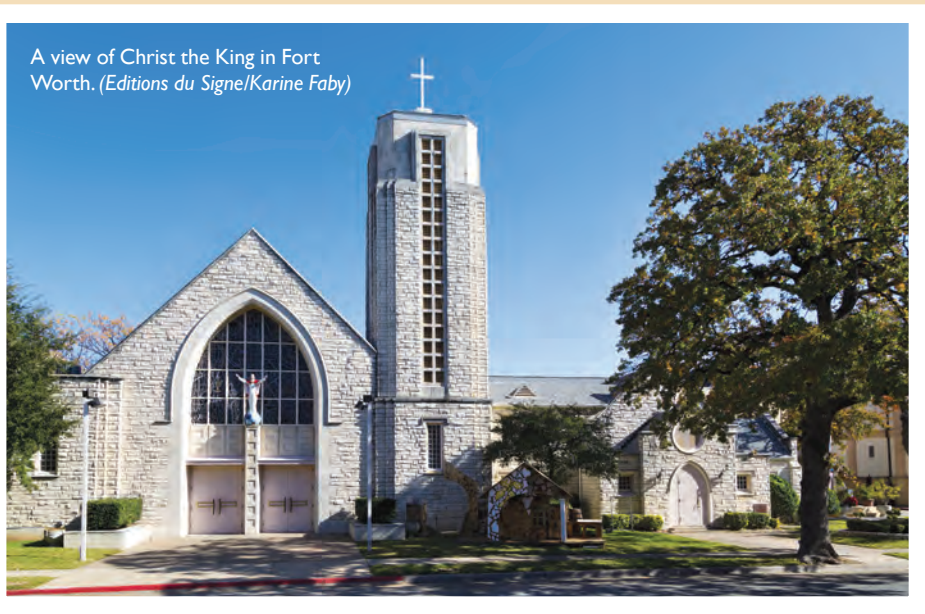
“So we do our best to help them to be faithful Catholics,” Sr. Theresa said. “That is our job, our responsibility.”

Sr. Maria agreed and hopes all

Catholics will follow the example of the Vietnamese Martyrs. Several groups of these martyrs were persecuted and killed in Vietnam for standing up for their Catholic faith from 1798 to 1861.

The name of the parish in Arlington, where the Lovers of the Holy Cross sisters serve, honors those slain martyrs.

“They lived for God and they died for God,” Sr. Maria said, “and now they teach us how to live out our faith in God.”



A view of Christ the King in Fort Worth. (Editions du Signe/Karine Faby)

in 1999 with plans to convert it into a Catholic church that could one day become their spiritual home. In 2001, the Vietnamese community converted the store into a beautiful 60,000-square-foot worship facility. The spacious structure includes a 20,000-square-foot parish hall, a gymnasium, religious education classrooms, meeting rooms, and a

full-size restaurant-style kitchen. With its completion, the new church adopted the name Our Lady of Fatima. In 2017, Bishop Michael Olson dedicated a 14-foot statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which fittingly graces the entrance to the church and serves as a local landmark. Our Lady of Fatima is home to 500 families.

VIETNAMESE MARTYRS PARISH, ARLINGTON

In Arlington, parishioners at St. Matthew Parish welcomed Vietnamese Catholics and offered to share their worship facility. In 1998, the Vietnamese community received permission from the diocese to purchase a Food Lion grocery store and convert it into a Catholic Church. By the year 2000, the worship

facility transformation was complete and became Vietnamese Martyrs. With a parish population more than doubling by 2008, local Vietnamese Catholics raised several million dollars to build a new church on a grand scale. At the end of 2011, then Bishop Kevin Vann dedicated and consecrated the new church with 3,000 people in attendance. People included parishioners, priests, religious orders, benefactors, and City of Arlington officials.

Today, Vietnamese Martyrs Parish is home to 1,600 families and is one of the largest Vietnamese churches in the United States, complete with a 75-foot bell tower and larger-than-life marble and granite Stations of the Cross. About 750,000 pounds of marble and granite, cut in Vietnam, were used in the overall construction of the church. 🇺🇸

A LONG HISTORY IN THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

Fr. Nguyen echoed the same sentiments about the Vietnamese Martyrs and the example they set for the faithful who came after them.

“In Vietnam, our faith was born out of persecution ... The blood of the Vietnamese martyrs has granted to us the ability to integrate, to connect, to live, and to survive through our faith.”

Those faithful endeavors by people of Vietnamese heritage have been occurring for most of the 50 years of the existence of the Diocese of Fort Worth in North Texas. At the same time, the Vietnamese Catholic community has played an important role in the diocese’s rapid growth.

“We are always thankful to the American community for embracing us, and inviting us to be part of the diocese,”

said Fr. Nguyen.

“When the American community embraced us, it allowed the Vietnamese to come together to celebrate the Holy Eucharist,” he continued. “And from the Eucharist we were able to form the Church, and the Church has given us the Eucharist.

“That is why today the Vietnamese community in this diocese has become very strong.” 🇺🇸

STANDING FIRM IN PRAYER

After 12 years, Good Shepherd parishioner still prays, works for father's release from captivity in Iran

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

The last time Stephanie Levinson Curry spoke to her dad, she was a new mother caring for a four-month-old baby who wouldn't sleep at night. Tired and discouraged, the 28-year-old reached out to her parents, Christine and Bob Levinson, for advice.

"My dad answered the phone," Curry said, remembering the February 28, 2007, conversation. "In a comforting way he told me to listen to my mother who had raised seven children. He was always encouraging and supportive."

Nine days later, on March 9, 2007, his 59th birthday, the ex-FBI agent was kidnapped on Kish Island in Iran during what his family believed was a business trip. Twelve years later, his whereabouts are still unknown, making him the longest-held hostage in U.S. history.

Following a first-time admission from Iran that an "open case" on Levinson exists in its court system, the U.S. State Department recently added \$20 million to an existing \$5



Stephanie Curry holds a photo of her father, Bob Levinson, with her husband Randy, son Ryan, and daughter Grace at their home in North Richland Hills. Levinson is the longest-held hostage in U.S. history. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

million reward offered by the FBI for information leading to the location, recovery, and return of the missing husband and father.

Curry, a cradle Catholic who belongs to Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, hopes renewed efforts by the Trump administration to free all Americans wrongfully detained in Iran will bring her father home.

“We miss him terribly,” uttered the daughter-turned-advocate who handles incoming emails and social media posts about her dad’s case. “He now has nine grandchildren but only met one. It’s difficult knowing he’s missing out on time with his children and grandbabies.”

Faith sustains the close-knit family who grew up in south Florida with a Jewish father and a Catholic mother. The decision to raise their brood Catholic was made by both parents.

“Growing up, we all received the sacraments and went to religious education,” Curry pointed out. “My father always supported that strong foundation of faith. He went to our Confirmations and first Communions.”

As an adult, the married mother of Ryan, 13, and Grace, 11, continues to rely on her Catholic faith to cope with the ongoing stress and uncertainty generated by her father’s disappearance. She volunteers at her parish’s Samuel Ministry — a monthly program for special needs families. Her son is a participant.

There have been moments of anger and despair, Curry admitted.

“But I firmly believe God has a plan,” she added quickly. “I have to think [my dad’s] faith and belief in God is keeping him strong so he will come home to us.”

Except for a video received in November 2010 and photos in April 2011, the Levinson family has received no



Family photos show Stephanie Curry and her father Bob Levinson. Levinson is a former FBI agent who was kidnapped by Iran 12 years ago and has never been released. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

information about the man they consider “a hero to thousands.” In December 2007, Christine Levinson and son, Dan, traveled to Iran to learn more about her husband’s disappearance and to meet with representatives of countries sympathetic to the family’s plight. Among them was the papal representative in Iran.

“He was kind and wanted to help,” Curry said, recalling information gleaned from the trip. “It was meaningful to us coming right before the holiday season in 2007.”

Since then, the North Texas resident and her siblings have endured 13 Christmases and countless other celebrations without their father. Her two youngest brothers were just 13 and 16 years old when he checked out of an Iranian hotel and was never seen in public again. She credits her Irish-American mother for holding the family together.

A stay-at-home mom who took care of everyone else’s needs, Christine Levinson was suddenly thrust into the

national and international limelight doing on-air interviews asking for her husband’s release.

“My mother is a rock,” Curry said proudly. “[The kidnapping] turned our world upside down but she’s strong. Her resolve keeps us going.”

For 12 years, the family has maintained the website HelpBobLevinson.com to keep their father’s name in the news and provide a conduit for people who may know something about the case. Early on, informants claimed to have seen Levinson but none of those tips panned out.

“You have your hopes up high that someone saw him in prison but it’s never true,” Curry explained. “Within the first exchange or two, people are asking for money.”

The family is optimistic that increasing the reward money to \$25 million will produce more viable leads.

Forty years ago, Iranian militants held American diplomats and embassy workers hostage for 444 days before releasing them. Bob Levinson’s captivity is 10 times longer.

“That’s staggering,” his daughter said pointedly. “People should be outraged. He’s a person who has had no basic human rights for 12½ years. Even the worst prisoners have family visits and a lawyer. How long can a person keep going even if his faith is strong?”

Curry wants Americans to pray not only for her 71-year-old father’s well-being, but also that his captors develop a sense of mercy and compassion that leads to his release.

Until that happens, she will continue to plead his case before the public.

“My dad is just an absolutely amazing person who radiates so much love,” Curry continued. “At the end of the day, I’m just a daughter trying to get her father home.” 🇺🇸

AN • inside JOB

“Rockin’ Roger” Hinesh, a Boys Town alum, former inmate, and recovering alcoholic, uses his second chance to serve others

By Susan Moses

A Boys Town banner holds a prominent position in front of Roger Hinesh’s home in Wichita Falls.

Enter his home, and Boys Town memorabilia is displayed on every surface. From the shirt that he wears (plus the one on the ironing board) to the decorations on the wall, each available area has a poster, ornamental plate, artwork, photo, blanket, or correspondence regarding the orphanage in Nebraska. Between each item — only an inch or two of space. The prize of his collection is a bronze statue of Father Edward Flanagan, founder of Boys Town in Omaha, Nebraska.

Father Flanagan established the home for wayward boys in 1917 with the philosophy, “There’s no such thing as a bad child. There is only bad environment, bad training, bad example, bad thinking.”

Hinesh hasn’t counted how many Boys Town keepsakes he has. As many as 100? He responded, “Oh, much more than that.”

But Hinesh is not a typical collector. He explained he likes to surround himself



Father Edward Flanagan, the Irish-born priest who founded Boys Town in Nebraska, talks with a group of boys in this undated photo. (CNS photo/courtesy Boys Town)

with the positive, because for years he wallowed in the negative.

His story of 81 years begins in Omaha when his unwed mother gave him up for adoption. He spent much of his childhood in an orphanage until he came to “the home of my heart,” Boys Town, at the age of 14.

He remembers a few years of a nearly idyllic life: going to school, working in the bakery, serving at Mass, singing in the

choir. He found a family among the boys, and a few of the priests were father figures to him.

Then, he discovered rock ‘n’ roll.

At 18, he won a few dance contests and headed to Hollywood. He met some success and danced in 11 movies, most notably Elvis Presley’s “Jailhouse Rock.” He remembers Elvis instructing him, “You’d better move it, Rockin’ Roger.” The nickname stuck.

Roger Hinesh at his Wichita Falls home, which is filled largely with memorabilia from Boys Town, plus items from his movie career and addiction counseling. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Between movie assignments, Rockin' Roger worked in the recording industry, evaluating new musical groups in nightclubs.

Within a few years, he was drinking too heavily to hold a steady job. "It was just one day and one bottle at a time," Hinesh recalled. Addicted to alcohol and drugs, he turned to burglary to support his habit.

His cycle of addiction, crime, and imprisonment continued for the next 20 years in Nebraska and Texas.

Hinesh plunged to rock bottom during his third incarceration when he was placed in solitary confinement. He came to understand that his current path would lead him to spend the rest of his life in prison. He realized his life needed to change, and

change began with him.

Hinesh wrote of the experience in a 2006 newsletter to the Boys Town National Alumni Association. "I got to a point where I was about to lose my mind when I heard a voice saying, 'You're not a bad boy. It's only bad thinking, bad examples.' This voice brought back memories of Boys Town and Father Flanagan."

Over the next year, a prison-based Alcoholics Anonymous chapter helped prepare him for his 1975 release from prison at the age of 37. One of his first stops afterward was Boys Town.

"My life's purpose soon started to change. I started talking to kids throughout the country about making wrong decisions. I actually went back to the Texas prison in

1977 as a guest speaker," Hinesh shared in the alumni newsletter.

For 46 years, Hinesh has "trudged the happy road of sobriety" and spoken to hundreds of inmates, parolees, and addicts about staying sober. "I have learned that change is an inside job. You have to open your heart and want to change," he said.

He hopes his story is an inspiration. Because he's successfully transitioned from addiction to sobriety, and from prison life to the outside world, he wants others to know, "If I can do it, so can you."

Back at home, a crocheted blanket created by prisoners lays on his bed. It repeats the message he shared with the inmates many times, "It's an inside job, baby."

He also talks with students, hoping to prevent them from facing the same problems he did in his youth.

Counseling addicts in prison has taken much of his time and discretionary income. His travel expenses have come from wages he earned in the maintenance department of Midwestern State University, where he worked from 1985 to 2000.

Although he hasn't collected travel reimbursement from the state, Hinesh received something more valuable. Governors of the states of Nebraska and Texas have each issued Hinesh an official pardon in gratitude for his work as a mentor to inmates.

The Sacred Heart parishioner gives credit to God for turning his life around. "Nothing is possible without God," he said.

He also recognizes Fr. Flanagan, who dedicated his life to giving youth second chances. "He made a difference in a lot of people's lives, especially mine," he said. Moving into Boys Town was a second chance for Hinesh. And in the despair of solitary confinement, lessons from Boys Town in spirituality and morality illuminated the way forward. Hinesh has joined those working for the cause of sainthood for Fr. Flanagan, who has been declared a Servant of God.

Surrounded by mementos of his blessings, he said, "I'm grateful that God gave me another chance. So I ask, 'What can I do for people?' I give back; I try to make a difference." 🇺🇸




Strengthen the Faith

ADVICE FOR NEW COUPLES:

“First, our advice would be to put God at the center of your life and to respect each other. Consider each other in any project or situation that may arise, however minimal. Work together as a couple and have a constant dialogue. Don’t forget to tell each other that you love them.”

FAMILY FIRST: The family attends Adoration, the children sing in choir, Elvia is a lector, and their daughter is an altar server. “Many ministries of the Church, and going to retreats, help us better evangelize our families. God prepares us for that call [to evangelize], and we know we must begin with our own children.”

GROWING IN SERVICE: Elvia said being a lector “has helped me to understand the Bible more, and thus have a better relationship with God. For my husband, doing Eucharistic Adoration at night has helped him strengthen his faith as a Catholic Christian, and to fall in love more with the Word of God. Serving has motivated us to invite others to be servants.”

POWER OF PRAYER: “We are more united, we make better decisions as a family, and it strengthens us in every act we do. Without prayer, there is no life.” 



THEY ARE: Elvia and José Carbajal with their children. The family attends Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Clients Take the Driver's Seat

“Susannah,” a 23-year-old single mother, admitted that she once felt like a victim of what she referred to as “so many horrible life circumstances” — a family history of abuse, poverty, and addiction. Things dramatically changed in the way she thought of herself, she said, when she began meeting with her case manager at Catholic Charities Fort Worth.

“I walked into my session, and my case worker invited me to sit behind the desk, while she sat across from me, and she told me that I was in charge of running our meeting,” Susannah marveled.

She continued, “Instead of her telling me what I needed to do, and how I needed to change, it was my job to review my current challenges, and brainstorm with her about the ways that Catholic Charities can partner with me to help me find a job, go back to school, and be a better parent. It felt really empowering. And she’s been with me all the way in working on achieving those goals.”

Dr. Jennifer Strand, CCFW’s director of Research and Evaluation, said she was glad to hear about Susannah’s positive experience. “And we don’t want it to stop there,” she cautioned. “A member of our team of design and evaluation specialists joins clients and case managers at these sessions, so that we can appropriately survey the client and staff member about their interactions and continually evaluate the short- and long-term effectiveness of what



From left: Research and Evaluation team members Bridget Hennessy, Sarah Dunham, Trenton Ormsbee-Hale and Dr. Jennifer Strand at Catholic Charities Fort Worth. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

we are doing to lift clients out of poverty.”

Dr. Strand and her team of three research specialists are focused upon what is known in the world of social sciences as human-centered design.

“This approach allows us to design services that conform to the needs and strengths of the client, rather than asking clients to conform to the needs of our program,” Dr. Strand said. “This means getting to know them, asking them to help us to understand their experiences, and working with them to define their needs. We are committed to supporting them, rather than taking away their dignity by imposing our perspective upon them.”

After establishing this understanding, CCFW case managers work with clients

in problem solving. Difficulties in finding affordable childcare, mental health services, or reliable transportation are common challenges and ones that can be effectively addressed, often with the help of CCFW’s strong network of community partnerships, Dr. Strand explained.

“By using these proven, evidence-based methods in working with clients, while continually evaluating the results of their work, we are seeing impactful benefits,” Dr. Strand said. “Catholic Charities Fort Worth is committed to making sure that our work is effective. It’s inspiring to see that commitment in action each day.”

For more information about CCFW, visit [CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org](https://www.catholiccharitiesfortworth.org) or call 817-534-0814. 📍





Mass First and Mass Last

HE IS: Father Benjamin Hembrom, TOR, pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth.

GROWING UP: Fr. Hembrom's parents emphasized faith and education to their 10 children. Their village in north India only had a government-run school, so he began boarding at a Catholic school when he was five years old.

His parents farmed rice, wheat, and other grains — all dependent upon God sending the right rain at the right time. "By God's grace and the work of my parents, they could pay for our school."

FUTURE SELF: Young Benjamin was inspired by the good work done by his school's religious sisters and priests and wanted to be a priest from an early age.

DEDICATED: While the siblings were young, "my mother dedicated one of her children to serve the world." Her prayers were answered twice. Fr. Hembrom's older sister is a nun in India. After 10th grade, Fr. Hembrom entered a Franciscan seminary.

BACK TO SCHOOL: Ordained May 18, 2009, the Franciscan friar was a teacher, then a principal and parish priest in India before he came to the Diocese of Fort Worth in July 2018.

A FRIAR'S LIFE: Fr. Hembrom enjoys the hospitality and the community life of being a Franciscan.

MISSIONARY MINDSET: "God gave us life. God called me. I am willing to work

anywhere, to go wherever I am needed."

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A PRIEST: "To offer the sacrifice of the Mass, every day. It's the best part of my life. I am called to do that and I offer my life for that. I say each Mass as if it's the last one."


HEROES IN THE FAITH: Fr.

Hembrom is partial to St. Francis of Assisi, as the patron and founder of his order, and St. Theresa of Kolkatta. "She changed the world doing small things. She won the hearts of many by doing it with love, because God loved us."

FREE TIME: In his youth, Fr. Hembrom played soccer and made music. He still plays guitar (and learns violin) when time allows.

FUTURE PLANS: "Whether

I am here or there, I have to do the work of God.

God gives us the insight as the time comes. He will reveal it to us if we are open to Him." 



NTC/Juan Guajardo



Live by His Light

Lent serves as a preparation for the celebration of the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent gives us the opportunity to focus once again on that which is most important and to examine how we are living our lives.

Light and darkness are powerful images in our Christian tradition. Light speaks to that which is beautiful, true, and good.

Darkness speaks to that which is hidden, shameful, and sinful. It is no wonder that Jesus Christ is described in terms of light.

In the first chapter of the *Gospel of St. John*, Jesus Christ is described as the true light that entered the world. His light is given to lead us to salvation. The light of Jesus Christ is the light that directs our path in this world to that of eternal life.

The beauty of the light of Christ entering our world and our lives is symbolized at the beginning of the Easter Vigil. The paschal candle, which is a symbol of Christ, is lit outside of the church. The deacon carries the paschal candle into the darkened church and sings, "Christ, Our Light!" and we respond, "Thanks be to God!"

All the candles in the church are eventually lit from the flame of the paschal candle. The candles that we hold at the Easter Vigil remind us of our lives.

When they are lit from the flame of the paschal candle, we are reminded that Christ is the light of our lives. Without Him, we have no light and no direction.

With Him, we are led by the light of truth.

The architecture of our churches is also based upon the idea of light. The great cathedrals of Europe were designed based on the idea that if Christ is our light, we should build places of worship that are infused with light. The pointed

arches of the gothic cathedrals allowed for massive spaces that were filled with stained glass which allowed an infusion of natural light throughout the church. The presence of so much natural light in the cathedral allowed the faithful to contemplate the beauty and presence of the supernatural light of Christ in their lives.

Using the time of Lent to examine our lives in the light of Christ also allows us to see the impact we have on our neighbor. We read in *Matthew 5:16*, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Lent is a time to not only grow in personal sanctity, but to see how we can serve and bring our neighbor to knowledge and love of Christ through our own personal witness.

Seeing our lives in the light of Jesus Christ is the foundation of every vocation

in the Church. To see God as the source and goal of all things changes how we live in the world. God has created us, sustains our lives, sanctifies us, and leads us to eternal life with Him. Realization of the good that God has given us opens the door for us to make a return to Him.

Following the light of Christ in our daily lives allows us to hear and answer His call. I would encourage everyone who reads this to think about one person who you think would make a good priest or nun. It might be that Jesus Christ is asking them, or you, to consider the priesthood or religious life. Please pray for that person, but also ask them to consider a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

Jesus Christ is the light who enlightens our lives and the world. May we live by His light in our lives, may we show forth His light in our actions, and may we lead others to Him. ✝



Fr. Jonathan Wallis

Ordained to the priesthood in 2007, Father Jonathan Wallis, STL, serves as Dean of Men and Director of Seminarian Formation at St. Joseph Seminary College in Covington, Louisiana, where 17 men from the diocese are enrolled in the four-year college seminary program.



The Here and Now of It

I've been a full-time youth minister working with middle school and high students for the past six years, and it's always amazing to hear their hearts, their dreams, and their visions for their lives.

Before the world tells them they cannot do whatever sets their hearts on fire and before the world crushes what imagination and creativity they've cultivated, there is their heart, set wide open on display in hopeful anticipation.

I love cultivating and uplifting people in their unique gifts and talents because I've come to realize that there is a very specific reason for every single human on earth, and when their time is done, that's it. There's no reincarnation, resuscitation, or coming back as something else. That's it.

In the Bible it says, "You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (*James 4:14*). This can sound a little harsh, until you realize the beauty and gift of time you've been given.

My grandpa died last year in January. He was 94 years old and had lived an amazing life. He fought in WWII, was married to the love of his life for almost 65 years before her passing, was a deacon in the Catholic

Church, had nine amazing children, 24 outstanding grandchildren, and countless great-grandchildren.

At his passing, he was surrounded by his family and loved ones, and it was incredibly peaceful. When we were burying him, this idea of death and the finality of life really hit me. There will never be another Louis Hoffman that walks this earth again. He will never come back as someone else. He was given specific gifts and talents to be used by God for the building up of His Kingdom in this specific moment in history.

What will people say about you? You've been given particular gifts and talents to be used by God in this moment now. There is a reason why you exist in 2020 and not 150 years ago, or 500 years ago, or even 1,000 years ago. If you have breath in your lungs today, it's because you were created for now. You will never have this moment again and life is so incredibly short.

Now is the time to banish fear, fall into the arms of Jesus, and walk boldly in the direction of where He's leading you. Now is the time to pray and discern and seek wise counsel. The world needs your "yes" now. Not next year, not when you have it all figured out or even when you know your next step. Now.

Don't allow this Lent to go by without

growing closer to Jesus in a definite way. Whether that's by upping your prayer game, intentionally setting more time to just be in a quiet place with the One who created your heart, or it's taking more deliberate acts of fasting and almsgiving, offering up your suffering and ache for the reparation of sins all over the world. The Lord wastes none of our efforts. Life is too short to not take advantage of the incredible moments of grace offered to you at every moment during every day.

Know that I am praying for you and am incredibly honored to walk this life with you.

"Who knows but that you were brought to the Kingdom for a time like this?" (*Esther 4:14*). ✝



Ali Hoffman

Ali Hoffman is a Co-Coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Carrollton. She also does modern calligraphy and watercolor encouragement and prayer cards. You can find more of her work on Instagram at [TheOodlesOfDoodles](#).

Lent? I Give Up

Over the years I have tried a lot of different options in my attempt to have a fruitful Lent. I have given up things like specific foods and even food groups, the snooze button, television, music, and many other things.

I have also added things to my routine like more prayer time, extra Masses during the week, going to Adoration, reading the Bible more, or praying a daily Rosary. This year I think I am going to try something new. I am going to give up myself.

Before I get into that, let's talk about the purpose of Lenten practices. At the heart of all the giving up and doing extra things is an attempt to grow in holiness. As "*Lumen Gentium*" says in Chapter 5, "The Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification' (*1 Thes. 4:3*; cf. *Eph. 1:4*)."

We are all called to grow in holiness. Notice I used the verb "grow" — it is a word that implies movement, not stillness. Holiness is a journey, not a destination. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says this about holiness: "Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ" (*CCC 2014*).

So, basically, we are all called to

continually grow closer to Jesus. Our Lenten practices ideally help us achieve this goal. Thus, my decision to "give up myself" is how I plan to grow closer to Jesus this year.



Jeff Hedglen

What I mean by giving up myself, put simply, is to give up my preference for things and the way things happen in my day. I want to give up striving for things to be "my way or the highway" and I want to defer to others. This will probably

take many forms. I will attempt to be more courteous when driving and let vehicles in ahead of me when traffic slows down. I will sit in the middle of the pew at Mass and leave the ends for people who actually need it (like late arrivers, or families with children, or people serving at Mass). I will do my best to accommodate others' time schedules even when I am inconvenienced.

So, basically, when I can, I will allow the preferences of others to supersede my own. I say "when I can" because I do not think the Lord wants me to skip work for 40 days to take care of everyone's preferences, nor does God want me to have everyone's preferences for how I use my bank account determine my finances during Lent. I expect to be inconvenienced, not kicked out of my house for misappropriation of family funds.

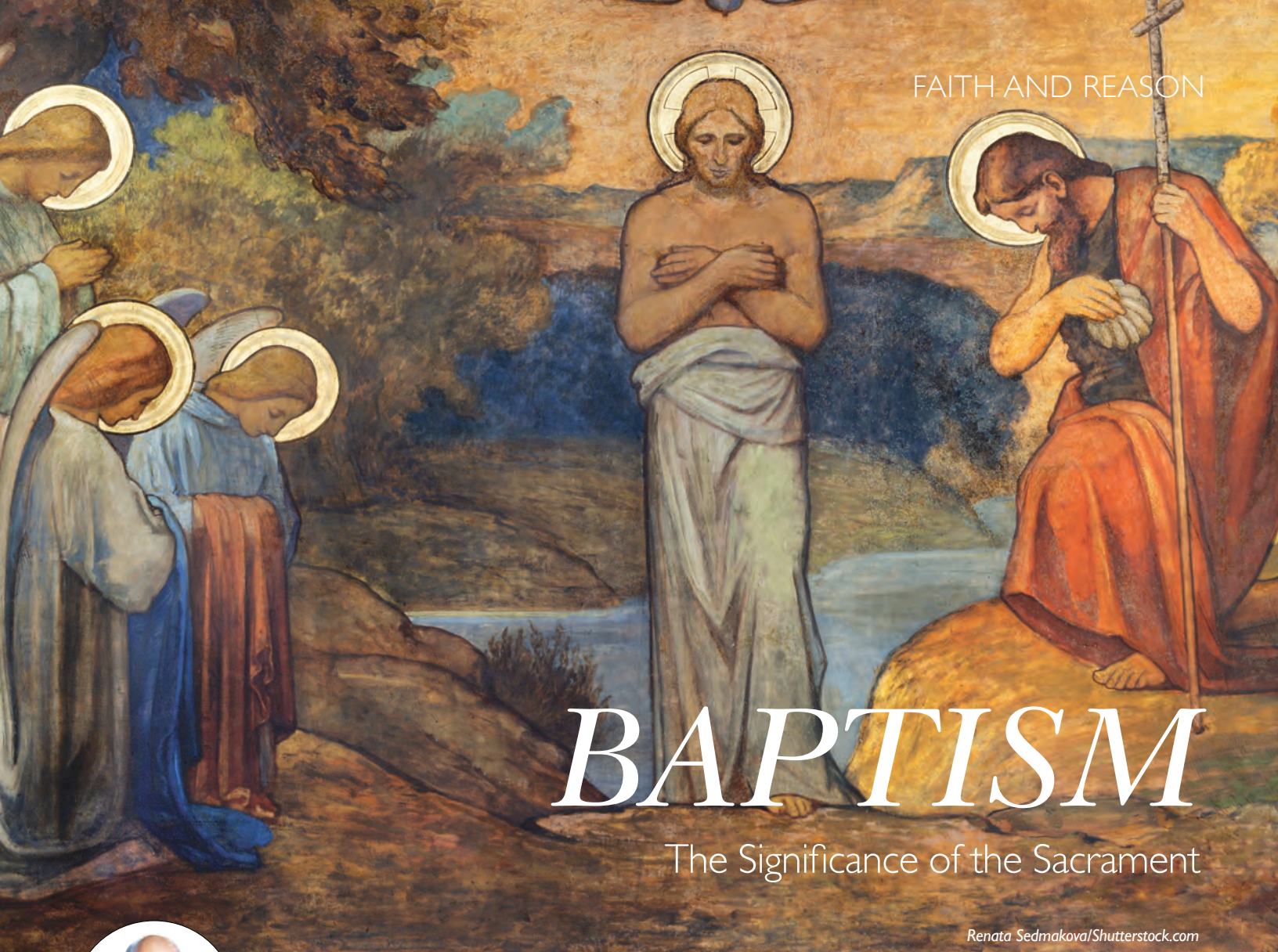
I was drawn to this idea when I recalled a homily I heard years ago from Father Raphael Eagle, TOR. He said you know how much you love by how much you sacrifice. Sacrifice much, you love much. If you sacrifice a little, you love a little.

This definition of love has always been very challenging to me. So, this Lent I want to love more, thus I am going to sacrifice more.

One of the abiding images of Lent is to walk with Jesus on His way of suffering, and the purpose of our Lenten practices is to help us achieve this to some degree. My day-to-day life is pretty much on my own terms. Thus, this Lent I hope to die to myself, my whims, my preferences, and in doing so draw closer to Jesus, who is the model of self-sacrifice.

The depth and severity of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is what makes His resurrection so powerful. The deeper the sacrifice, the more profound the love. Thus, the more serious and devout we can enter into this Lenten season, the greater and more meaningful will be our celebration on Easter Sunday. 🇺🇸

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



BAPTISM

The Significance of the Sacrament

Renata Sedmakova/Shutterstock.com



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

A unique characteristic attributed to God that tends to be overshadowed is His gift of proposals. Often, we identify God as only directing, commanding, chastising, or forgiving someone. As the principle author of all life, He provides His own children (us) with the opportunity to believe in Him or not, in other words, a proposal to believe in a divine being.

When you take this concept and associate it with His Son Jesus Christ's first sacramental act (Baptism), we can see that God's consummate proposals to obey, love, and serve Him take on a greater significance and meaning through Jesus, the Word made flesh. Why? Because in the Incarnate Word, Jesus fulfills God's divine proposal by way of Christ's Baptism as the entrance into God's kingdom of

heaven (*Mt 28:17-20; Jn 3:5-7; Acts 2:37-42*). Christ provides distinctive matter and form to God's divine proposal through the initiation of this sacrament of Baptism.

In Baptism, Christ fulfills the law of God with respect to the coming of the Messiah who would release the people of God from the wages of sin. Christ instituted the sacrament of Baptism as the new divine way of entering God's kingdom and thus releasing us from the pain of sin while still retaining the inclination to sin (concupiscence). The sacrament of Baptism provides an opportunity for an infant child (at a parent's request), or for an adult, to publicly make a profession of faith before God to humbly seek His kingdom. This begins a journey of faith that will hopefully bring us one day to see God our Father face to face.



What is the significance of Baptism?

The sacrament of Baptism instituted by Christ (*Matt 28:17-20; Jn 3:5-7; Acts 2:37-42*) serves as the first sacrament of initiation and allows the person who genuinely and honestly desires to live a life centered on Jesus Christ to enter His kingdom.

Christ instituted the sacrament of Baptism as the new divine way of entering God's kingdom, replacing the previously held Jewish custom of initiation by way of circumcision. The sacrament of Baptism takes away original sin even though after Baptism we still possess an inclination to sin (concupiscence). The first sacrament of initiation officially enters us into the kingdom, and the reception of Baptism signifies a baptism into the life and death of Jesus Christ.



Why do we baptize infants?

When Christ called out to the faithful to seek the kingdom of God after His Baptism, he spoke not just to individuals, he spoke to families, initiating a "first parental catechesis" on the significance of Baptism and the

necessity to be baptized in order to enter the kingdom of God, which also includes children. We see a clear example of this in *Acts 2:37-42*, where all were baptized in order to hand on the message of Christ.



Why not wait until the child will remember it?

The sacrament of Baptism, as with all the sacraments, is centered on Christ, who is the author of the sacramental life, and in association with this gift is the immediate grace one receives to more faithfully and humbly worship the one true God.



Why did Jesus get baptized?

To specifically fulfill the law of God as proclaimed by the prophets of the One who is to come to save humanity from their sinful ways. In order to do this, Christ introduced a clear, simple, and holy way for all who desire to enter the kingdom of God to do so by way of immersion with water that signifies and represents the cleansing of God's children; e.g., Noah's ark, the parting of the Red Sea, and the Rock of Horeb.

Jesus was baptized to open the gates of heaven to all of God's children who had rejected the promises of God and spurned God for the worship of false idols. The sacrament of Baptism and its matter and form bring a proper worship back to God.



Do we recognize the Baptisms of other denominations?

Yes, as long as the Baptism is administered with the baptismal formula of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and water is used for Baptism. ✝

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To Report Misconduct:

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

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

To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

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

- ▶ If someone is in immediate danger call 911.
- ▶ Call the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (CPS) at 800-252-5400.
- ▶ Immediately report the alleged abuse to your supervisor, priest, or principal and submit the Confidential Notice of Concern with CPS report information, contact information on all concerned, description of abuse, dates if known, and how you learned of the abuse.

For more information about our abuse prevention policies and programs, visit fwdioc.org/safe-environment



WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Watch the full video and find out more about this and other faith topics through the following:

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

EN LA DEFENSA DE la vida

Primera serie de charlas en español da herramientas
a la comunidad hispana para defender la vida

Por Violeta Rocha

Obtener mayor formación sobre la defensa de la vida es algo que Saúl y Martha Elena Castro, consideran “importante y necesario para los hispanos”, por lo que el 7 de febrero, se unieron a más de 60 feligreses que aprovecharon la primera de una serie de cuatro charlas en español, titulada “La Dignidad Humana”, impartida en el gimnasio de la escuela San Pedro el Apóstol, en White Settlement.

“Debemos prepararnos para poder servir a los demás, nos alegra mucho que comiencen con estas charlas en nuestro idioma, porque la gente busca mucha información en español”, aseguró Martha Elena Castro, quien junto a su esposo ayudan en las clases de Planificación Natural, en su Parroquia del Inmaculado Corazón de María de Fort Worth.

Con esa inquietud de ofrecer mayores recursos para la comunidad hispana en la Diócesis de Fort Worth, el Departamento de Respeto a la Vida presenta por primera vez esta serie de cuatro charlas en español.

“Uno de nuestros mayores roles es la catequesis, la educación... ayudar a entender que la Iglesia enseña a respetar la vida, pero también hablar del por qué, y qué hay detrás de esa enseñanza”, señaló Theresa Schauf, coordinadora del Departamento de Respeto a la Vida.

“Así que nuestra esperanza es propagar esa enseñanza mediante estas charlas en inglés y en español”.

“Estamos muy emocionados. En esta primera charla pensamos que con 20 personas sería una buena asistencia y llegaron más de 60 personas”, agregó Schauf.

El Padre Manuel Holguín, párroco de la Parroquia San Pedro Apóstol, a cargo de la primera charla, “La Dignidad Humana”, (del mismo nombre que la serie de charlas), enfatizó que “estamos viviendo en una sociedad que está en contra de la dignidad humana”, y para mantener esa dignidad “que viene de Dios”, debemos mantenernos en la búsqueda del ser más trascendental, que es Dios, mostrando con nuestras acciones y decisiones que realmente nos reconocemos como creación de Dios.

“Dios nos ve como lo más preciado que ha creado... y por eso debo cuidar mi dignidad”, dijo Padre Holguín.

“Cuando sientas que se te ha pisoteado tu dignidad, voltea la mirada a Él que te dignifica y hacia Él que te creó con amor, que es Dios”, dijo el Padre Holguín a los presentes, enfatizando que la dignidad humana es la base de la vida, y que el aborto, la eutanasia, o los anticonceptivos, son un “atentado contra la dignidad que viene del cielo”.

Padre Holguín recordó a los asistentes

La Dignidad Humana:

Acompañenos a una serie de charlas en español de pro-vida. Las charlas se llevarán a cabo en el gimnasio de la escuela San Pedro el Apóstol, 1201 S. Cherry Lane, Fort Worth, 76108, a las 7pm.

Marzo 13, 2020: Presentado por Marlon De La Torre, Director del Departamento de Evangelización y Catequesis.

Tema “Asuntos Pro-Vida”

Abril 17, 2020: Presentada por Brenda Reyes de Lara, coordinadora de Planificación Natural de la Familia.

Tema “Planificación Familiar”

Mayo 8, 2020: Presentado por el matrimonio Carlos Canseco y Elsy Acatitla.

Tema “La Familia”

su compromiso como Iglesia doméstica e invitó a los padres a hablar con sus hijos para formar gente de vida y no dejarse impregnar de la cultura de muerte.

Marisela Loera, 35, no sólo decidió asistir a esta charla por estar embarazada de su tercer hijo, y para que sus dos hijas

Un grupo de feligreses escucha al Padre Holguín el 7 de febrero durante la primera clase de la serie de charlas de pro-vida en español en la Parroquia de San Pedro Apóstol de Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



mayores “conozcan más de Dios” pero también para poder ser una mano de apoyo a quien lo necesite.

Loera lamentó que una amiga suya había abortado. “Me enteré muy tarde, y me dolió mucho no haberle dado una palabra de ánimo, y con estas charlas pienso que puedo ayudar a otras personas”, aseguró.

Para Aracely Acevedo de Rodríguez, asistente administrativa del Departamento de Respeto a la Vida, representa gran emoción poder iniciar “totalmente en español” los diferentes recursos que normalmente se realizan en inglés.

Acevedo relata que una simple pregunta de su mamá la hizo darse cuenta de la necesidad de actuar para ayudar a la comunidad de habla hispana de la Diócesis.

“Platiqué muy contenta con mi mamá sobre todas las actividades que hacemos en Respeto a la Vida, y me dice, ‘¿y para nosotros los hispanos, ¿qué hay?’ Me quedé muy pensativa...hablé con

Theresa Schauf que, en seguida, dijo ‘sí’. Marlon De La Torre, nuestro director, nos apoyó de inmediato, y comenzamos a darle uso a los recursos que ya tenemos aquí”, recordó.

Meses después, la respuesta a esta pregunta es esta serie de cuatro charlas, las cuales continuarán presentándose en el gimnasio de la escuela de San Pedro Apóstol.

“Es una prioridad que nuestra comunidad se informe, y debemos extender aún más estas charlas...el número de asistentes a la primera charla nos dice que estamos necesitados de información, pero también abiertos a instruirnos más a lo que la Iglesia enseña y lo que el Evangelio enseña, que es la verdad de la vida”, aseveró el Padre

El Padre Holguín presenta el primer tema de la nueva serie de clases de pro-vida en español. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Holguín.

El deseo es informar, y “extender una cultura de vida”, continuó diciendo el Padre Holguín, para que entiendan “la gran bendición que cada uno de nosotros somos, por el simple hecho de haber sido creados a imagen y semejanza de Dios, y desde pequeños, jóvenes y adultos, que entiendan la dignidad que viene del cielo para poder vivir con libertad y la felicidad a la que Dios nos invita”. 🇺🇸



Uno de los miembros del ministerio armado participa de la capacitación intensiva de un día para la seguridad y competencia en el uso de las armas de fuego. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

VELANDO POR NUESTRA seguridad

Se nombra a Michael Short como Director de Seguridad como parte de los esfuerzos por hacer que la Diócesis sea más segura para todos los fieles

Por Juan Guajardo

El 15 de noviembre del 2017 una pequeña iglesia blanca de madera en la ciudad de Sutherland Springs, en las afueras de San Antonio, que era templo de adoración se convirtió en un lugar de horror.

Un hombre armado que vestía equipo táctico y empuñaba un rifle semiautomático AR-15 abrió fuego en la Primera Iglesia Bautista y mató a 26 feligreses que tenían entre 18 meses y 77 años de edad. El tiroteo duró unos minutos.

En otras áreas del país los espacios sagrados también se han convertido en lugares de tragedia debido a los tiroteos masivos, como fue el caso de la Iglesia Metodista Africana Emanuel en el 2015 y la Sinagoga del Árbol de la Vida en el 2018.

Hace poco un hombre armado entró en la Iglesia de Cristo West Freeway en White Settlement durante el servicio de las 10:30 am y mató a dos congregantes antes de que Jack Wilson, miembro del equipo de seguridad de la iglesia, respondiera al tiroteo con su propia arma y lo matara. El calvario duró seis segundos.

Esta triste realidad no pasa desapercibida entre los líderes parroquiales y diocesanos de la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Para garantizar la seguridad de los fieles en las 91 parroquias y 19 escuelas de la Diócesis, el ex detective de la policía de Lewisville Michael Short fue nombrado el 10 de febrero como Director de Seguridad de la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

La contratación de Short ayudará a acelerar la ejecución del plan de seguridad diocesano actual y garantizará su implementación uniforme en todas las parroquias y escuelas.

“En mi nuevo puesto a tiempo completo en la Diócesis de Fort Worth, continuaré implementando el programa de seguridad que inició

Guardian Response, pero ahora estaré más disponible para comunicarme y colaborar con las diferentes parroquias y escuelas para servir mejor las necesidades de seguridad específicas de cada comunidad”, dijo Short.

Short trabajó como oficial del Departamento de la Policía de Lewisville durante 15 años y trae consigo una vasta experiencia en varios niveles respecto a la aplicación de la ley y la prevención del crimen. Durante su carrera policial, Short fue detective de la unidad de robos y delitos contra la propiedad, estuvo patrullando por 10 años, se desempeñó como oficial de capacitación de campo durante seis años y fue miembro del equipo SWAT durante 10 años como líder del equipo y la unidad de explosivos.

Recientemente, Short fue asignado como detective de la unidad de delitos contra los niños.

Además de la experiencia del mundo real, Short se desempeñó como instructor en armas de fuego, rescate de rehenes, situaciones de tirador activo y explosivos. Short se graduó de la Universidad del Norte de Texas con una licenciatura en justicia penal y posee una maestría en administración de empresas de Texas A&M University-Commerce.

“La seguridad es la mayor preocupación de mi departamento y tener a Michael dedicado a esto realmente nos ayudará a llevarlo a cabo según el mandato del Obispo Michael Olson”, dijo Steve Becht, Director Diocesano de Bienes Raíces y Construcción. “Mike es un hombre de Dios y un católico muy devoto. Él ve este trabajo como su misión y quiere hacer esto por la Iglesia y por Cristo”.

Un católico de toda la vida, Short y su esposa, Chasity, tienen cinco hijos, uno de los cuales, Dominic, apareció en un cortometraje llamado “La vocación de Dominic” de la Oficina de Respeto a la Vida realizado en el 2013.

MOVERSE HACIA UN FUTURO MÁS SEGURO

Desde el trágico tiroteo en Sutherland



Michael Short, Director de Seguridad en la Diócesis de Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Springs, la Diócesis ha trabajado continuamente para fortalecer la seguridad a nivel parroquial y escolar. Al compartir las “preocupaciones justificadas por la seguridad” de los miembros de su rebaño, el Obispo Olson ordenó a principios del 2018 “que se evalúe la seguridad de cada escuela y Diócesis”.

Esa evaluación reveló “una variación considerable en su minuciosidad y en los tipos de seguridad que se emplearían” entre las escuelas y las parroquias, dijo el Obispo.

Debido a esa preocupación, la Diócesis procuró la ayuda de Short, que en ese entonces dividía su tiempo entre el Departamento de la Policía de Lewisville y su empresa de seguridad, Guardian Response, para que ayudara a las parroquias y las escuelas a mejorar los planes de seguridad.

La segunda fase de ese programa incluye el reclutamiento, la evaluación, y la capacitación de los equipos de voluntarios armados que trabajan en estrecha colaboración con la policía para proporcionar seguridad durante las Misas u otros eventos importantes.

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EN HONOR A LA antigua escuela

Cómo los abuelos desempeñan un papel clave en la educación católica de sus nietos

Por Susan Moses

Si consentir a los nietos fuera un deporte olímpico, Nelda y Gabriel Ramírez serían contendientes para la medalla de oro.

No sólo adoran a sus nietos, sino que toda una comunidad, incluidos los estudiantes, los maestros y los padres del Colegio Católico de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria, llaman a la amada pareja “Momo” y “Popo”.

Nelda, que es una de las cocineras de la cafetería de la escuela, confesó: “Mimo a los maestros y a los niños”. Ella y su esposo, que también trabaja en el comedor, han alimentado a los estudiantes de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria por cuatro años. Cuatro de sus nietos asisten a la escuela y dos se graduaron de la misma.

“Ella es muy acogedora con los estudiantes y conoce los nombres de cada uno de ellos”, dijo la Directora Linda Kuntz.

Su trabajo trae consigo agradables beneficios para la abuela, ya que recibe un abrazo diario y un “Te amo, Momo”, cuando sus dos nietos más pequeños vienen a almorzar.

Nelda alentó a sus hijas a inscribir a sus hijos en la escuela, que fue establecida por las Hermanas de Santa María de Namur en el 1910. “Mis hijas fueron a la escuela pública, pero les dije: ‘Las escuelas públicas no son lo mismo que cuando ustedes eran jóvenes’”, dijo.

No todos los abuelos interactúan con



Los estudiantes de pre-kinder celebran un servicio de oración durante el Día de los Abuelos en el Colegio Católico de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria el 29 de enero del 2020. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

sus nietos en la escuela todos los días, pero muchos juegan un papel importante en la educación católica de sus nietos.

Al igual que Nelda, muchos abuelos hoy día influyen en la decisión de dónde inscribir a un estudiante.

“Los abuelos saben que vale la pena el sacrificio de enviarlos a la escuela católica”, dijo Rose Hall Welborn, Directora de Desarrollo del Colegio Católico de San Andrés de Fort Worth. Ella dijo que los abuelos se percatan de los cambios ocurridos en la educación y la cultura a través de los años y “quieren ayudar a que sus nietos obtengan una buena educación y una base espiritual firme”. Algunos incluso

hacen un sacrificio económico y aportan a la matrícula de sus nietos.

“Quieren que sus nietos estén en una escuela católica, rodeados de familias que tienen la misma brújula moral y que comparten los mismos valores morales. La educación católica hace más fácil criar a un niño. Así ven también a esas familias en la iglesia, lo que da un buen ejemplo”, agregó Hall Welborn. Seis de sus nueve nietos están matriculados en escuelas católicas diocesanas y los otros tres tienen buenas excusas. Pues uno es un bebé y los otros dos viven en Houston.

Una vez que se inscriben los nietos, los administradores escolares agradecen



Armando Muñoz trabaja unos ejercicios de la clase junto a su nieto Diego Muñoz de siete años en el Día de los Abuelos en el Colegio Católico de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria el 29 de enero. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

la participación de los abuelos. “Tenemos abuelos que son muy activos en nuestra escuela”, dijo la Directora Arica Prado del Colegio Católico de Todos los Santos, que comentó además que en los siete años que lleva dirigiendo la escuela ubicada en el Northside de Fort Worth, ha sido testigo del aumento de la participación de los abuelos.

Los abuelos asisten a Misa con sus nietos, almuerzan en la escuela, sirven como acompañantes en las excursiones, leen con los niños en el aula, son voluntarios en los festivales y corren carpool por la mañana y por la tarde.

Como la mayoría de los padres trabajan fuera de la casa, los abuelos son a menudo los principales cuidadores mientras los estudiantes están en la escuela, explicó Prado. Le preguntan a menudo: “¿En qué puedo ayudar? Estoy retirado. Tengo tiempo disponible”.

“Los abuelos desempeñan un papel muy especial en la vida de sus nietos”, dijo Prado. “Veo que las caras de los niños se iluminan cuando ellos están presentes. Definitivamente, hay una relación hermosa entre los abuelos y sus nietos”.

La escuela de Northside, cuya historia data del 1900, cuenta con generaciones de familias que han estudiado en la escuela, dijo Prado.

Eso es también cierto en el Colegio de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria.

Linda Kuntz asistió a la escuela cuando era niña y ha trabajado allí por 27 años. Comenzó como secretaria de la escuela y administradora comercial, enseñó por un tiempo y ahora es la Directora del colegio. “Es un gran círculo. Los padres que se graduaron de la escuela han regresado con sus hijos. Los abuelos enviaron primero a sus hijos y ahora envían a sus nietos a la escuela”, dijo.

ACTIVIDADES ESPECIALES

Muchas escuelas católicas diocesanas organizan el Día de los Abuelos durante la Semana de las Escuelas Católicas. Las principales actividades del día comprenden una Misa o celebración litúrgica de oración, visitas de los abuelos a las aulas y presentaciones de los estudiantes.

Kuntz, Directora de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria, dijo que el Día de los Abuelos es una fecha importante en el calendario escolar. “La educación católica involucra a toda la familia y queremos incorporar a toda la familia en todos los aspectos. Los abuelos recogen a los estudiantes de la escuela e incluso a veces pasan la noche con ellos. Los abuelos son figuras importantes en la vida de los estudiantes católicos y

queremos celebrar a la familia extendida por el papel que desempeñan con nuestros estudiantes”.

Por lo general, se sabe que los abuelos están muy orgullosos de sus nietos, por lo que el día brinda también la oportunidad de presumir de su escuela, dijo Hall Welborn, Directora de Desarrollo de San Andrés desde el 1991.

Hall Welborn dijo que los estudiantes “les muestran a sus abuelos lo buena que es la escuela a la que van, tanto académica como socialmente”. La facultad, a su vez, les muestra a los abuelos el fruto de la educación católica. “Estamos orgullosos de nuestros alumnos de octavo grado. Ése es el producto”.

El papel de los abuelos en la vida de un niño, la educación de un niño y la fe de un niño no deben subestimarse, dijo el Papa Francisco en un discurso en la Jornada Mundial de las Familias en Filadelfia en el 2015.

El Santo Padre dijo: “Debemos prestar especial atención a los niños y los abuelos. Los niños y los jóvenes son el futuro, son la fuerza, los que nos llevan adelante. En ellos ponemos nuestra esperanza. Los abuelos son el recuerdo de la familia, son los que nos dieron la fe, los que nos transmitieron nuestra fe”. 🇺🇸



Papa Francisco saluda a Obispo Michael Olson durante su visita *ad limina* con los obispos estadounidenses de Arkansas, Oklahoma y Texas el 20 de enero del 2020. (CNS foto/Vatican Media)

EN LOS PASOS DE los apóstoles

El Obispo Michael Olson lleva a la Diócesis al Vaticano en su visita *ad limina*

Por Susan Moses

El Obispo Michael Olson viajó a Roma con 17 hermanos obispos más “toda la Diócesis de Fort Worth, en oración, en espíritu y en el corazón” para su primera visita “*ad limina apostolorum*”.

Aunque no estaban físicamente cerca, la gente de la Diócesis siempre estuvo presente, porque según las palabras de San Ignacio de Antioquía: “Donde está el obispo, allí está la Iglesia”, explicó el Obispo Olson.

Ad limina apostolorum, que significa “en el umbral de los Apóstoles”, toma su nombre de la peregrinación a los sepulcros de San Pedro y San Pablo. La visita de una semana incluye una larga conversación con el Papa Francisco; Misas en las basílicas romanas de San Pedro, San Pablo Extramuros, San Juan de Letrán y Santa María la Mayor; y reuniones en las oficinas del Vaticano.

A diferencia de los papas anteriores, el Papa Francisco celebra una conversación abierta y no estructurada con los grupos de obispos. Su reunión con el Obispo Olson y los otros obispos de Texas, Oklahoma y Arkansas duró dos horas y media.

Fue una “conversación informal, pero importante entre hermanos”. La discusión entre todos cubrió la evangelización, los refugiados, el derecho a la vida, las vocaciones y el cuidado pastoral de los sacerdotes y los seminaristas, dijo el Obispo Olson.

“La principal preocupación del Santo Padre sobre la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos es la tendencia hacia el individualismo radical y el congregacionalismo, la inclinación a vernos a nosotros mismos como no pertenecientes a la Iglesia, sino a ver a la Iglesia como una mezcla heterogénea donde escoges y eliges lo que quieres”, el Obispo Olson recordó.

El Obispo Olson comparte esa preocupación del Santo Padre y señaló que algunos católicos se identifican más fuertemente con un partido político que con la Iglesia.



El Padre Jonathan Wallis, STL, a la derecha, escucha a Su Santidad Papa Francisco mientras habla con el clero durante la reunión con los obispos de Arkansas, Oklahoma y Texas. (CNS foto/Vatican Media)

El Papa, al observar que las políticas de los EE. UU. se extienden más allá de las fronteras del país y consciente de las próximas elecciones presidenciales, ofreció algunos consejos a los obispos sobre cómo asesorar y orientar al rebaño en un panorama político polarizado.

El papa sugirió: “Primero, oras. Luego declaras que eres un pastor, no un político. Expresa las enseñanzas de Jesús sobre cuestiones morales y lo que enseña la Iglesia. Anima y lleva a la gente a orar, que es el comienzo de la formación de la conciencia. Y, si lo haces bien, la gente se va a enojar mucho contigo”, contó el Obispo Olson, recordando la verdad dicha con humor por el Papa Francisco.

El Papa Francisco agradeció a los obispos y a la Iglesia de los Estados Unidos por su actitud positiva hacia los refugiados. “A pesar de las luchas actuales, somos líderes, en comparación con el resto del mundo”, dijo el Obispo Olson. “Nos exhortó a no alejarnos de los refugiados, a escuchar a nuestros mejores ángeles”

EN EL UMBRAL

Al Obispo Olson le pareció especialmente significativo rezar en los sepulcros de San Pedro y San Pablo.

Rezó allí por la Diócesis de Fort Worth y pidió: “Por la paz. Por la protección de los jóvenes. Por las vocaciones. Por la vida familiar. Por la renovación de los sacerdotes, para que sean pastores según el corazón de Cristo”.

De pie ante los sepulcros de los Santos Apóstoles mártires Pedro y Pablo, “estaba consciente de mi vocación como sucesor de los Apóstoles, y estoy dispuesto a dar mi vida por la verdad, por la salvación”, dijo el Obispo.

El Padre Jonathan Wallis, que acompañó al Obispo Olson, también se conmovió con fe al visitar los sepulcros de los Santos Apóstoles.

El sacerdote, que se desempeña como Decano de Estudiantes y Director de Formación en el Seminario del St. Joseph

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BIEN ACOMPAÑADOS: Su Santidad Papa Francisco se reúne con los obispos estadounidenses de Arkansas, Oklahoma y Texas durante sus visitas *ad limina* al Vaticano. 20 de enero del 2020. (CNS foto/Vatican Media)

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Seminary College, comentó: “Al ver a los obispos reunidos alrededor del sepulcro de San Pedro, recitando el Credo y la visita al Papa Francisco, la persona que ocupa la Cátedra de San Pedro, demuestra que hay algo más grande que tú. Podemos quedar atrapados en nuestras preocupaciones diarias, pero se trata de la salvación, de la eternidad, de llevar a otros a Cristo”.

En la Basílica de San Juan de Letrán, el Obispo Olson rezó en la cátedra, la sede del Obispo de Roma: el Papa Francisco. “Recé por él y su ministerio”, dijo el prelado. “Y pensé en el día en que estaré ante Cristo sentado en Su trono y rendiré cuentas de mi ministerio como obispo”.

Durante la visita *ad limina* de cinco días, los obispos visitaron individualmente unos diez dicasterios o departamentos de la Curia Romana, que administran aspectos particulares de la Iglesia, como el clero, la vida familiar y la educación católica.

Con antelación a las reuniones, los dicasterios recibieron secciones sobresalientes del informe quinquenal de la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Este documento, presentado el verano pasado, detalla el estado de la Diócesis en 23 secciones y se compila antes de cada visita *ad limina*.

El Obispo Olson dijo que la Diócesis de Fort Worth recibió elogios por la Conferencia del V Encuentro. El Vaticano mostró su “apoyo y aliento” del programa de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis y señaló los esfuerzos de los sacerdotes, los maestros, los diáconos y los laicos que trabajan para proteger a los jóvenes, y a las personas y adultos vulnerables.

El Obispo Olson concluyó sus reuniones con los dicasterios sintiéndose “clara y firmemente apoyado por la Santa Sede en mi ministerio y responsabilidad como obispo de Fort Worth”.

Se requiere que cada obispo del mundo haga una visita *ad limina* regularmente. Los obispos de los EE. UU. se dividen en 14 regiones, la primera de

las cuales hizo su visita a principios de noviembre del 2019 y la última región concluyó su visita a fines de febrero. La ronda anterior de visitas *ad limina* de los obispos de los EE. UU. fue hace ocho años.

Hay actualmente 3,017 diócesis, prelaturas y vicariatos en todo el mundo, según el Vaticano.

El “Directorio Para la Visita *Ad Limina*” compara las visitas *ad limina* de hoy a la reunión de Pablo y Pedro, que ayudó a ambos apóstoles en sus respectivos ministerios. El contacto directo entre los obispos y el Papa promueve y protege la unidad de la fe, al tiempo que proporciona al Papa “información autorizada sobre la situación real de las diversas Iglesias”.

Al acompañar al Obispo Olson durante la visita, el Padre Wallis observó el intercambio que ocurre entre los obispos y la Santa Sede. Él dijo: “Los obispos llevaron al Vaticano la vida cotidiana de los fieles de la diócesis, sus esperanzas, sus sueños y sus sufrimientos, y a su vez, los obispos nos devolvieron la bendición del Santo Padre”. 🇺🇸



Miembros del Ministerio Armado durante la capacitación de un día con el fin de ayudar a proporcionar mayor seguridad en las parroquias y las escuelas de la Diócesis. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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Los equipos de protección armados brindan un “anillo de seguridad”, dijo Becht, y operan de manera discreta y muchos feligreses ni siquiera notarán quién pertenece al equipo de seguridad.

Aunque la gran mayoría de las parroquias han comenzado a ejecutar el plan de seguridad, la presencia a tiempo completo de Michael Short permitirá que esto se realice más rápidamente. Guardian Response continuará trabajando con la Diócesis para brindar entrenamiento de armas de fuego a los equipos de seguridad armados.

“Se necesita realmente una comunidad de personas que estén observando y puedan responder rápidamente”, dijo Short.

Para obtener el mejor resultado en una situación de emergencia, los miembros del ministerio armado se someten a un día de entrenamiento intensivo sobre la seguridad y competencia del uso de armas de fuego.

Se fortalecen también destrezas útiles en posibles escenarios estresantes como sacar rápidamente el arma de una funda oculta y aprender a neutralizar a un intruso armado en el estacionamiento o en una iglesia llena de gente. Como parte de la capacitación se les enseña además la detección temprana y la contención de un intruso.

Otros miembros del equipo del ministerio armado incluyen personal médico capacitado en primeros auxilios y con conocimiento en técnicas para “Detener el Sangrado”. Otros miembros del equipo son acomodadores o ujieres de la parroquia que recibirán capacitación para identificar comportamientos sospechosos y el lenguaje corporal sospechoso.

Michael Short y Guardian Response han implementado varios pasos para asegurarse de que “los guardianes armados cumplan y colaboren con la policía y que puedan ser identificados fácilmente por la policía”.

Aun cuando muchas parroquias ya

han comenzado el proceso de formar y capacitar a sus equipos del ministerio armado, hay necesidad de más guardianes voluntarios. Por eso, Short invita y alienta a que los hombres o mujeres que estén interesados en el ministerio se acerquen a su párroco para conseguir más información.

ENFOQUE DE VANGUARDIA

Short dijo que el enfoque integral de seguridad es único y con visión de futuro. En lugar de ser algo que se hiciera poco a poco, todas las parroquias trabajarán bajo un marco común.

“Creo que hasta la fecha nuestra Diócesis es la única que está implementando un plan de seguridad a nivel diocesano”, dijo. “La Diócesis de Fort Worth está a la vanguardia de las normas actuales de seguridad de la iglesia”.

Becht está de acuerdo con la declaración de Short. “Todo esto va a beneficiar a las personas en todas nuestras parroquias”, dijo. 🇺🇸

FELIZMENTE sirviendo

Los votos religiosos son honrados y celebrados en el Día Mundial de la Vida Consagrada

Por Susan Moses

“**L**o volvería a hacer todo de nuevo”. Mientras hablaba con firme convicción y sus ojos radiantes de felicidad, la Hermana Teresa Rodríguez, HCG, reflexionó sobre sus votos en la orden religiosa de las Hermanas Catequistas Guadalupanas. Ella cumplió el 14 de febrero 50 años como hermana religiosa y lleva toda una vida enseñando a los niños y a sus padres.

“Me siento tan emocionada como el primer día que pronuncié mis votos. Estoy evaluando y mirando todos estos años, y he disfrutado cada momento de mi vida”, afirmó ella.

La Hermana Teresa está “emocionada y asombrada” de lo rápido que ha pasado el tiempo desde que hizo sus votos de pobreza, castidad y obediencia. Sin embargo, la urgencia de su misión no ha disminuido. Ella añadió: “Te apasiona, en particular cuando te entregas a las personas para que puedan saber quién es Dios y por qué ellos son la Iglesia y que conozcan la razón de ser católicos. El evangelizar es verdaderamente emocionante”.

La Hermana Teresa es una de las 53 mujeres religiosas que trabajan en la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Las hermanas, y los 58 sacerdotes que pertenecen a una orden religiosa en la Diócesis, fueron invitados a la Parroquia de San Bartolomé el 7 de febrero para celebrar el Día Mundial de la Vida Consagrada con el

El Padre Hembrom, TOR, sonríe durante el sorteo celebrado en la Parroquia de San Bartolomé el Día Mundial de la Vida Consagrada. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)



rezo de vísperas solemnes seguidas de una cena.

La celebración anual se lleva a cabo para honrar a los que viven una vida consagrada en una orden religiosa y para orar por ellos. En la Diócesis de Fort Worth sirven actualmente 13 órdenes religiosas de hermanas y 12 órdenes religiosas de sacerdotes.

La Hermana Diana Rodríguez, HCG, dijo que consagrarse con los

votos de pobreza, castidad y obediencia “es tanto una lucha como un desafío. Porque luchamos en la vida, como lo hace cualquier otra persona. Sin embargo, la lucha es una fortaleza porque avanzas con tus votos, sigues a Cristo y te hace mucho más fuerte. Las luchas diarias son algo que te hará más fuerte en la vida”.

Este evento fue establecido en el 1997 por el Papa San Juan Pablo II y se celebra todos los años cerca de la Fiesta de la

La Hermana Teresa Faustina Vu, OP, canta el rezo durante las Vísperas celebradas el Día Mundial de la Vida Consagrada en la Parroquia de San Bartolomé el 7 de febrero del 2020 (NTC/Jayme Donahue)



Presentación del Señor, cuando María y José llevaron a Jesús al Templo en Jerusalén. Allí, un hombre devoto llamado Simeón reconoció al niño Jesús como el Mesías.

El Papa Francisco, en su homilía del 1 de febrero para el Día Mundial de la Vida Consagrada, comparó a los hombres y mujeres religiosos con Simeón y dijo: “Ustedes también, queridos hermanos y hermanas consagrados, ustedes son hombres y mujeres

simples que vieron que este tesoro vale más que cualquier bien del mundo. Y entonces, dejaron cosas preciosas, como sus posesiones y como tener su propia familia para consagrarse a Cristo. ¿Por qué hicieron esto? Porque se enamoraron de Jesús, lo vieron todo en Él y, cautivados por su mirada, dejaron el resto atrás”.

Durante la noche del evento se destacan la oración y la celebración como comunidad de mujeres y hombres

consagrados. Luego de que el Padre Maurice Moon, un sacerdote diocesano, dirigiera las vísperas, el grupo de unas 60 personas pasó al salón parroquial, que pronto se llenó de alegría, risas y conversaciones animadas.

El Padre Albert Kanjirathumkal, HGN, condujo dos horas desde la Parroquia de St. Mary en Henrietta para asistir al evento. Señaló que otros sacerdotes habían viajado desde aún más lejos, y que la celebración de esa noche valía la pena. “Puedo ver a todos mis hermanos sacerdotes y rezar con ellos. Es una gran experiencia”, dijo.

Ésta fue la primera celebración diocesana de la vida consagrada para el Padre Mariya Manickam, SAC, el vicario parroquial de San Miguel de Bedford. La oración comunitaria de la noche con los Salmos y las Escrituras le recordó sus años en el seminario. Padre Mariya dijo: “Es agradable encontrarnos con nuestros amigos, conocer a las hermanas y rezar juntos como comunidad”. 🇺🇸

AMBIENTE SEGURO

Para Reportar Mala Conducta Sexual:

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

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

Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha de Abuso:

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

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

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





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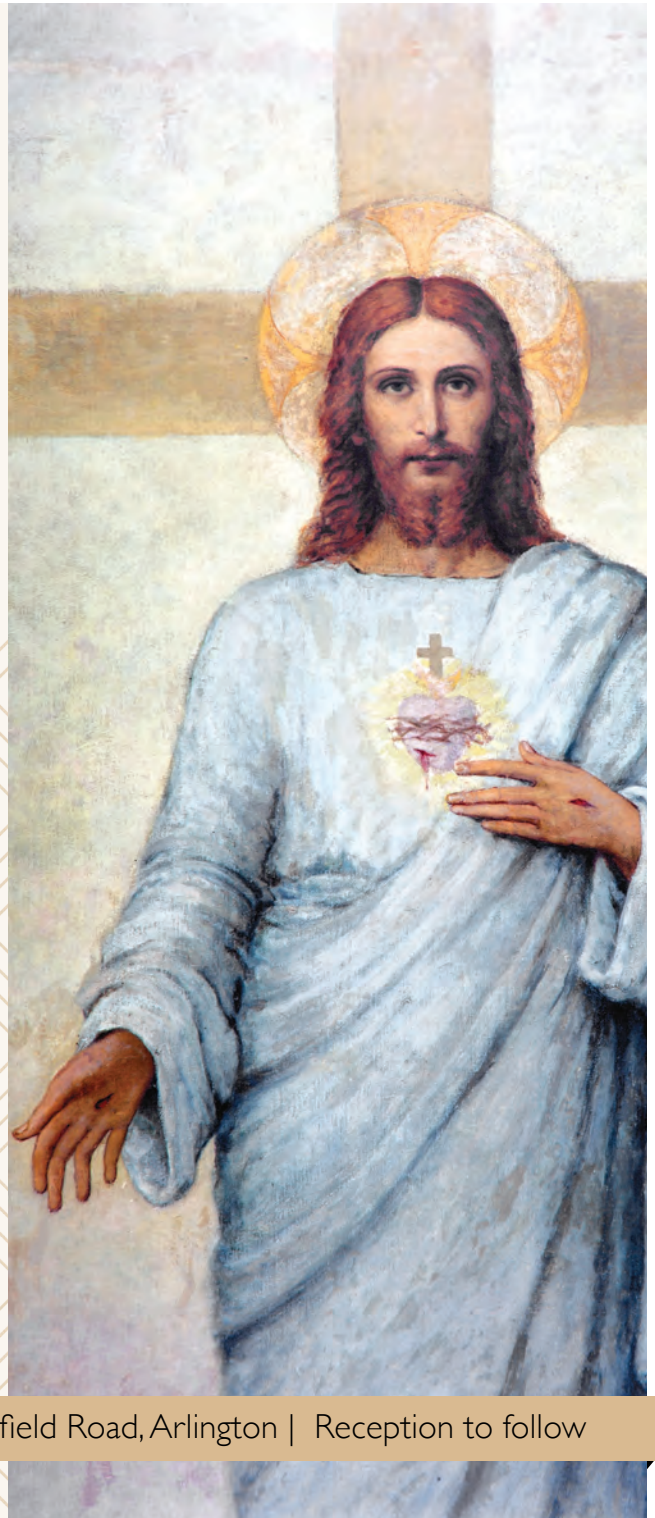
Brett Metzler



Joseph Moreno



Linh Nguyen



March 19 at 6 p.m. | Vietnamese Martyrs Parish, 801 E. Mayfield Road, Arlington | Reception to follow