

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



# NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



**Model of Virtue**  
**YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH**

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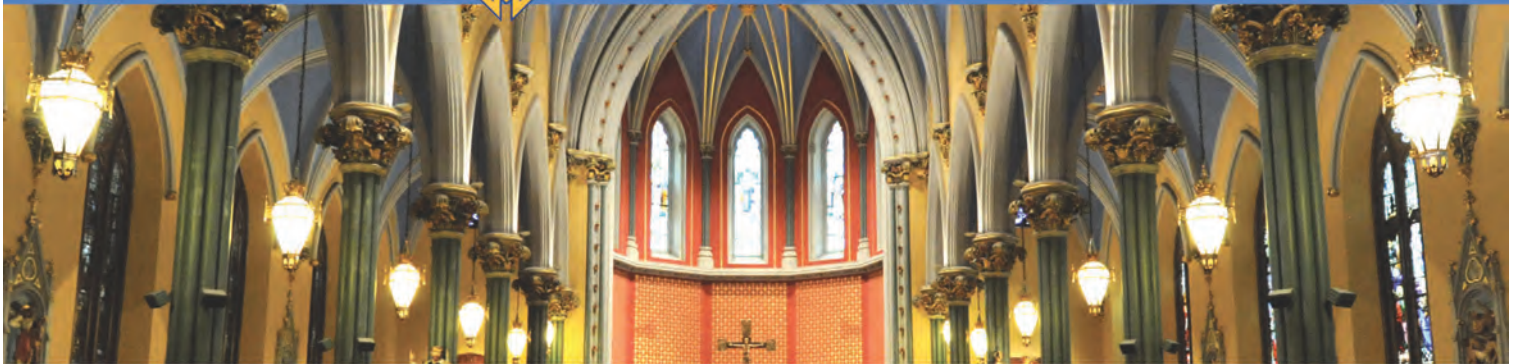


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# THE PURPOSE OF A FUNERAL

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



 @BpOlsonFW

When a person dies, a void is left in the lives of their families and friends. The Church responds to those grieving at the death of their loved one with the liturgical actions and words provided through the celebration of a vigil service, the funeral Mass, and the prayers of committal of the person's body at the graveside.

These three liturgical moments call to mind the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus and their saving effects upon the life of the deceased and upon all of us who remain. These ritual moments prescribe how Catholics go about grieving with hope in the Resurrection. Each of these moments have their own propriety and purpose. While death and the grief surrounding death are not unique to Catholics, the ritualized and liturgical transition from death to life is particular to Catholic theology and spirituality. Eulogies are one such difference.

The *General Introduction to the Order of Christian Funerals* is clear that at the funeral liturgy, a priest or deacon is to offer a homily, "but there is never to be a eulogy." A eulogy is understood to be a narrative of some length detailing the achievements and qualities of the deceased person and the emotional effects of their death upon their surviving friends and relatives.

If eulogies are to be given, the appropriate place for them is at the vigil service. Remarks made in the context of a eulogy should also be appropriate to the better qualities of the deceased person in accord with a Christian life and not glorify past misdeeds or sins — even if these are not viewed as such by the eulogist. Inappropriate jokes made by a eulogist do not truly console but only distract for a moment from the reality of death and the hope of the Resurrection. The vigil is the setting where we console a person's loved ones with memories of the person and recall events in his or her life lived and now ended in death.

This presents a pastoral challenge for priests, deacons, and pastoral ministers in responding to surviving loved ones, many of

whom may not be Catholic or may have moved away from the practice of their faith. The most advisable response to families suffering grief is to meet with them in preparing the vigil and funeral liturgy. It is necessary for homilists to listen to the story of the deceased person as recounted by their surviving loved ones.

Grief is a time for presence, and the preparation for the funeral liturgy and accompanying rites of the vigil and the graveside is an opportunity for such presence. In listening to such stories, a homilist can and should consider what he hears from the mourners and suggest readings from Sacred Scripture that are appropriate and manifest the mystery of salvation as that mystery manifested itself throughout the life and events of the deceased person. This is a very consoling way to speak about the person's life and achievements but with a focus on the action of Christ present to them. Without this pastoral presence of the homilist, the pastoral responsibility to console the mourners would be neglected.

The homily by the priest or deacon is too important an aspect of the healing ministry to the bereaved for it to be substituted or accompanied by a video or a eulogy offered by a mourner who is emotionally vulnerable, and especially one who has had scant opportunity of speaking appropriately in the setting of the liturgy at a most sensitive time of transition. The result too frequently is distraction from the mystery of hope in the Resurrection and prayers for the repose of the soul of the deceased person inherent in the funeral liturgy intended by the Church for the healing of those gathered for this purpose.

It is true that the time of grief at the death of a loved one may not be a teachable moment, but I observe that it is a moment of evangelization whereby the consoling presence of the Church accompanies the mourners into the mystery of salvation won for us by Christ who never forgets the promises He has made at the Baptism of the members of His flock. 🇺🇸



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## AN EXERCISE IN TRUST

We had just finished breakfast when our power went out. Four hours passed before my wife and daughters started getting cold and we realized this wasn't a rolling blackout. My parents, who have gas appliances and didn't lose power out in the country, took us in for five days while we waited for power, then water, then clean water to be restored at our home.

We had it easy. Winter Storm Uri jeopardized the basic needs — shelter, warmth, food, and water — of millions of people. I saw accounts of people going without electricity for five days and then returning to homes destroyed by water damage from burst pipes. Across the border from Brownsville, asylum seekers were brutalized by the icy temperatures. Children cried from the pain, according to eyewitness accounts.

Our natural response to this suffering was fear.

We also felt the loss of control over our lives. In a matter of hours, we were reduced to recognizing that we're "merely players" on the world's broad stage, as Shakespeare once put it. The storm was a bitter reminder that we aren't the directors. And that too can be scary.

Fear can help protect us from danger, but it can limit our response to God's love when it leads us to mistrust Him. That's why God is constantly encouraging us to depend on Him (*Matthew 6:25-34*) and tells us "do not fear" countless times in Scripture.

Thankfully, God doesn't turn His back on us — even those of us who don't trust. Despite my mistrust that week, God helped me see the flip side of not having control: that trustingly handing the wheel to God is actually a good thing!

Think about it. The people who acted with trust in our loving God knew that He had their backs and they were able to rise up and meet the challenges of that week with generosity and selflessness. Trust conquered their fear and enabled love. For example, when the Fort Worth Convention Center opened up as a warming center, more than a few homeless people stepped up as volunteers, handing out coffee, bottled water, and warm blankets to the families coming in. Neighbors with electricity or generators opened their doors to neighbors in dark, frigid houses. In Brownsville, people responded by delivering sleeping bags, blankets, gloves, and hot water bottles to the asylees.

How many times does God say in Scripture that He is with us, sees our suffering, and fights for us? Yet, when the going gets tough, do we really believe Him? If your answer is 'no,' take a breath, close your eyes, and meditate on all the little ways (and big ways) He blesses you. Take it from me, why live in fear when you can trust? And when you can trust, you can love.

*Juan Guajardo, Editor*



## Two women leave corporate world to serve the Church

**FORT WORTH** — Looking to use their passion and skills in serving God, two women left busy corporate careers that helped prepare them for new roles in the Advancement Foundation for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Renée Underwood has been promoted to Chief Development Officer. She came to the diocese in 2017 as associate director of the Advancement Foundation. She worked in a similar role for the Lubbock diocese.

Before going to work for the Church, she had a lengthy career in advertising and marketing, working her way up to vice president of marketing for two large companies.

Kristy Webb wasn't looking for a full-time job in the Diocese of Fort Worth after leaving a busy corporate career to stay home with her twin sons. The job came looking for her.

Webb spent 22 years traveling around the country to help childcare and early

learning facilities improve their operations and marketing. In March of 2018, she gave that up and was excited to have time to volunteer at Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine, where son Luke is now a sixth grader. Her son Philip has Down syndrome and attends Colleyville Middle School.

She started developing new school fundraising events and increasing their contributions on the North Texas Giving Day.

In the fall of 2020, Underwood and Advancement Foundation President Clint Weber asked Webb to take on a new position: Director of Catholic School Development for the diocese.

"There are a lot of great things happening in the diocese and in our schools," she said. "I want to help provide more avenues of funding, and also entice more families to participate in an outstanding Catholic education."

— Sandra Engelland

## Young men invited to Lenten discernment

**FORT WORTH** — High school and college-aged men are invited to a series of Lenten discernment nights which will begin with a Holy Hour at 6 p.m. followed by a free dinner and discussion on prayer, seminary life, and the priesthood.

One or more priests will attend, along with two seminarians, and will be available for questions and conversation.

The discernment evenings are from 6 - 8 p.m. at St. Patrick Cathedral on these Thursday evenings during Lent:

- March 4
- March 11
- March 18

Father Maurice Moon, chaplain of Nolan Catholic High School and a vocations liaison, said Lent is an appropriate time for discernment

because in this season of repentance and conversion we "put our focus on God more intently, so it's a great opportunity for men to come to these discernment nights and to pray together and to allow the Lord to speak to them in their hearts."

Fr. Moon, who was ordained to the priesthood in 2018, continued, "God will give us many graces during Lent — this is a great opportunity to receive any graces to help figure out what He wants of us in our lives."

Young men are welcome to attend as many evenings as they are able, as the discussion topics will vary. To RSVP, email [vocations@fwdioc.org](mailto:vocations@fwdioc.org) or call **817-945-9321**.

Older men may contact the vocations office for individual conversation.



Laura Pinachio and her sons at this year's Respect Life Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral. (NTC/Ben Torres)

## Respect Life Week uses new means to raise awareness

**KELLER** — Diocese of Fort Worth officials canceled last year's Respect Life Mass out of precaution due to the COVID-19 outbreak in North Texas. The Mass returned this year albeit with several differences from years previous.

Most notably, 2021 saw two Respect Life Masses — Jan. 16 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish and Jan. 23 at St. Patrick Cathedral, both celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson. The addition of a second Mass, Respect Life Coordinator Terri Schauf said, grew out of concerns of ongoing coronavirus-related social distancing requirements and a desire to increase attendance options for parishioners throughout the diocese.

“With Jan. 22 marking the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we also thought it would be a beautiful way to surround that date with two Masses with the specific purpose of praying for unborn babies lost, mothers and fathers, our nation, and

all who have been impacted by abortion,” Schauf said.

During his homilies, Bishop Olson quoted *Isaiah 49:1*, the first reading of the Respect Life Masses, “Before birth the Lord called me from my mother’s womb. He gave me my name,” and reflected upon the value of name.

“To have a name is to have identity and belonging to a family,” Bishop Olson said. “To have a name is to have belonging also in the communion of the Church.”

New this year during Respect Life Week were a daily Rosary and ministry spotlights on the Respect Life page of the diocesan website, [fwdioc.org](http://fwdioc.org).

“Each is about two minutes,” Schauf said. “Each focuses on one of several ministries in the diocese that are doing amazing things regarding respect life,” including pro-life pregnancy centers and abortion recovery ministry.

— Matthew Smith

## April Recognition of Child Abuse Prevention

**FORT WORTH** — The diocese is planning several events during National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April to lay the groundwork for a safer community and to help heal those affected by child abuse. The Safe Environment office is coordinating the efforts, which will include an awareness program, a prayer campaign, and a special Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson.

Beginning April 1, posters and other awareness information can be found in parishes and on the diocesan website and social media platforms. Information includes 10 ways to prevent child abuse and warning signs of human trafficking.

Sandra Schrader-Farry, director of Safe Environment said, “We

need to understand the problem, then we can help prevent the problem. It’s not an issue somewhere else, it can happen anywhere, and we can all take responsibility for preventing child abuse.”

The Mass will be offered and livestreamed from St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington at 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 22 for the intention of an end to child abuse.

The Safe Environment pages on the diocesan website ([fwdioc.org](http://fwdioc.org)) give details on the Mass, volunteer opportunities, and the prayer campaign, as well as educational materials.

“Without this knowledge, parents and adults may feel helpless and hopeless about preventing child abuse. But if we equip ourselves, we can be part of the solution.”

## Carmelite nuns elect servant leaders

**ARLINGTON** — On January 8, Bishop Michael Olson presided at the community elections at the Carmelite Monastery in Arlington.

Mother Teresa Agnes of Jesus Crucified was elected Prioress. Sister Joseph Marie was elected as SubPrioress/first Councillor; Mother Anne Teresa as the second Councillor; and Sister Francis Therese as the third Councillor.

Like other Carmelite communities, the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity in Arlington holds a council every three years to elect nuns to positions of servant leadership and to reflect on issues pertaining to the monastery.

“We ask your prayers for our Council and Community during this triennium,” said Mother Teresa Agnes of Jesus Crucified.

The Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity was established more than 60 years ago in a home on the bluffs of the Trinity River

in Fort Worth. In 1984, the community moved into the monastery on 56 acres in Arlington.

The cloistered nuns devote themselves to prayer, especially for priests, for missions, and for the poor, unemployed, sick, suffering, and hungry. They also pray for the many individuals who call or write with special needs and intentions.

Their offering of praise to the Lord and prayers of intercession include contemplative prayer, daily Mass, and the Liturgy of the Hours, which they chant seven times each day.

The Discalced Carmelite Nuns (O.C.D.) are part of a worldwide religious family dedicated to fulfilling a specialized mission of prayer. Discalced means “shoeless,” a symbol of their vow of poverty. The nuns also profess solemn vows of chastity and obedience.

Carmelites trace their origins to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and St. Teresa of Avila reformed the Order of Carmel in 1562.

Front from left:  
Mother Anne Teresa,  
Mother Teresa Agnes.  
Back from left: Sister  
Joseph Marie, Sister  
Francis Therese.  
(courtesy photo)

## Dive deep into Lent on diocesan website

**FORT WORTH** — If you are ready to grow in your spiritual life this Lent, you’ll find a robust selection of resources on the diocesan website, [fwdioc.org/lent-resources](http://fwdioc.org/lent-resources).

Choose a book from the list of 50 books every Catholic should read.

Watch videos to expand your prayer life with Rosaries, novenas, and litanies.

Read Bishop Michael Olson’s blog.

Listen and reflect with some of the top Catholic

podcasts from Father Mike Schmitz, Bishop Robert Barron, Father Larry Richards, and others.

Sign up for daily e-mails from Living Lent Daily for messages of hope and courage.

Explore the Mass with 10 lessons from Dr. Scott Hahn.

The diocesan website has easy links to these resources and more. As Lent concludes, you’ll also find a handy guide to Mass times for the Triduum and Easter.

## PRIEST ASSIGNMENTS BY MOST REV. MICHAEL F. OLSON

**REV. JOSE FELICIANO TORRES, OFM CAP**  
Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, has been recalled by his religious order, effective December 29, 2020.





## Meet the new kid in school (and some cute chicks, too)

Almost everyone has met the new kids at Nolan Catholic High School. Seven young goats have taken up residence on the Fort Worth campus and been welcomed by students, parents, faculty, and staff. The sixty chicks that arrived in late January were given a similar reception.

At first, the livestock may seem out of place at the college prep school. What's a new barn and chicken brooder doing among the recently built, state-of-the-art facilities for engineering, broadcast technology, and the arts?

Nolan is partnering with the other Catholic schools in Tarrant County to offer a new, hands-on opportunity to learn about agriculture, science, art, and health through a century-old organization: 4-H.

St. John the Apostle Catholic School in North Richland Hills is one of five


elementary/middle schools participating in 4-H to date. The learning-by-doing programs offered by 4-H dovetail nicely with the school, which already has a garden, worm farm, bird and bat houses, and two chickens.

The St. John the Apostle campus is routinely visited by a hawk, fox, and owl, plus opossums and raccoons. Principal Amy Felton plans to add two more chickens and hatch turkeys in the spring, and she would like to introduce goats to the campus. "It's amazing outdoor learning. We took what God gave us, and we're just adding to it and teaching the children," Felton explained.

Although 4-H may be best known for agricultural pursuits, it offers students the opportunity to learn life skills such as healthy nutrition and financial literacy, as well as pursue hobbies including jewelry making,

**THERE'S MORE TO SEE**

Meet the animals and their keepers. Go to [NorthTexasCatholic.org](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org); click on 'Video Gallery.'



sewing, and robotics.

Felton appreciates that students can select from various 4-H activities, participate in an online introduction to the subject, then complete the activity at home as a family. Currently 4-H offers 166 different home activities for families on its website.

"A long-term objective is that our families come together and enjoy doing activities as a family and teaching [their children] skills they will use for the rest of their lives, with God immersed in that," said Felton.

In its first year at Nolan Catholic High School, the 4-H club has accrued about 25 students. However, the entire student body, whether participating in 4-H or not, has learned about the ethics and responsibilities of raising animals on campus. The first

rule of goat keeping: don't feed them Cheetos.

In addition to proper nutrition, exercise is key to a healthy, show-worthy goat. Some student athletes pair with a goat to sprint up the stadium hill, improving conditioning in both the two-legged and four-legged competitors.

Leah Rios, president of Nolan, sees animal husbandry as an extension of a pro-life viewpoint. She said, "We're taking on the responsibility to raise an animal to feed people. We have to take the very best care of it and make sure the life that it has while we're raising it is a good life, with exercise and the best quality of feed."

It's a 110-pound commitment to tend to the goats twice daily, seven days a week regardless of weather, school schedules, or personal situations. 🇺🇸

Former All Saints pastor and advocate for Catholic education,  
the unborn, and the Hispanic community

# FR. STEPHEN JASSO

## mourned by thousands

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

**F**ather Stephen Jasso, TOR, retired pastor of All Saints Catholic Church and much-respected advocate for the region's growing Hispanic population, always taught by example. When debilitating illness robbed his speech and mobility, there were still lessons of faith to share.

"He always told me, 'This is my cross to bear. Pray for me and I'll continue to pray for you,'" said Arica Prado, longtime friend of the Franciscan friar and principal of a place he loved — All Saints Catholic School. "He was our shining light. It was hard to see him suffer."

Fr. Jasso, a tireless champion for immigrants, the unborn, and Catholic education, died February 12 after a three-year battle with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. He was 88.

Fort Worth Bishop Michael Olson described Fr. Jasso as a faithful Franciscan who watched over the people of All Saints for 23 years with a shepherd's care. Respected and valued by those in public service and government, the late pastor's influence extended beyond the confines of his parish to men and women of all faiths in Fort Worth and throughout Texas.

"A final lesson to his flock was his witness to the human dignity and the fundamental right to life by his suffering and courageous perseverance with Lou Gehrig's disease," the bishop comment-

ed. "We thank God for the life and ministry of Fr. Stephen Jasso. Please join me in praying for the repose of his soul."

Raised by devoutly Catholic parents, the late Domingo Jasso Sr. and his wife, Leonor, Fr. Jasso credited time spent with Franciscans for his spiritual growth and vocation to the priesthood. The order staffed St. Francis Catholic Parish in Waco where he was baptized and made his first Communion and Confirmation. Before entering the Franciscans in 1957, he served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, earning the rank of sergeant first class.

After earning his undergraduate degree at St. Francis College in Pennsylvania, the army veteran began seminary studies in Majorca, Spain, and then the University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome where he was ordained to the priesthood in 1965.

"I spent eight years in Europe without coming home at all," Fr. Jasso recalled in a 2018 *North Texas Catholic* interview. "But my family always supported what I did."

When the newly ordained priest arrived in Peru for his first assignment, his parents and 14 siblings purchased a motorcycle for the missionary so he could navigate the country's narrow, mountain roadways.

Four years later, Fr. Jasso was sent to Mexico where he spent 24 years serving

parishes and the TOR community in leadership roles. In 1994, his order allowed him to come to Fort Worth where he worked at St. Thomas the Apostle for six months before assuming the role of All Saints pastor.

Under his leadership, the historic parish flourished. The soft-spoken pastor recruited religious sisters to work in parish ministries, spearheaded construction of a parish hall desperately needed for religious education classes, and raised the profile of Hispanics in Fort Worth by participating on civic boards and committees. In 2002, Fr. Jasso met with then President George W. Bush during the Hispanic Leadership Summit. Locally, he served on the board of United Way and the Task Force on Racism.

Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price honored the faith leader's "humble service and active community involvement" by proclaiming August 7, 2018 as Father Jasso Day in the city.

A lifelong member of All Saints Parish, Carlos Flores said the late pastor exemplified leadership through faith and works.

"Even in his last days, he was an inspiration for all of us," stated the Fort Worth City Councilman who represents District 2. "He bore his cross very well with dignity and faith."

When the third generation Texan considered running for public office, he



sought the counsel of his spiritual leader and longtime friend.

“I contacted and spoke with Fr. Jasso and we prayed together,” Flores recalled. “I wanted it to be an endeavor I was wholeheartedly sure of and getting his blessing was important.”

The humble priest’s ability to reach out and influence community leaders helped save All Saints School from closing in the early 2000s. Faced with a dwindling enrollment and a building in disrepair, Fr. Jasso met with local business owners and parishioners to determine the school’s fate.

His personal commitment to provide tuition assistance, along with pledges of support from alumni and benefactors, eased the parish school out of financial crisis. A remodeling project updated classrooms in 2010.

For his service to Catholic education, Fr. Jasso received the University of Notre Dame Sorin Award in 2013. Accepting the honor, the friar called Catholic schools “a gift to the country.”

“I’m privileged to serve Catholic education because I’m convinced that’s what the Church and the country needs,” he said emphatically. “We need solid Catholics with a living conviction of the truth they have discovered through the process of a Catholic education.”

Teresa Montes, a graduate of both All Saints and Nolan Catholic High School, praised Fr. Jasso’s stamina and devotion to duty. She grew up steps away from the parish, and her parents, John and Jeanette Hernandez, were close friends of the pastor.

“He never sat down,” she observed. “He worked tirelessly day and night. I’d see him in my parent’s home at 10 o’clock at night having coffee.”

His arrival at All Saints in 1994 generated record Mass attendance and a renewed sense of pride in the Hispanic community. Prior to becoming ill, the pastor would don his wide-brimmed sombrero and mariachi suit to lead the Cinco de Mayo or Mexican Independence Day parade on a horse.

“Fr. Jasso was very much a person everyone called upon to ask his opinion regardless of the subject matter,” Mon-



Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price proclaimed August 7, 2018 as Fr. Jasso Day. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Bishop Michael Olson applauds Fr. Jasso at a Mass celebrating his retirement as pastor on Dec. 15, 2017. (NTC/Ben Torres)

tes said. “He always promoted the North Side community and the people who live there.”

As Fr. Jasso’s health worsened, family, friends, and parishioners gathered at his home to offer prayers and shed tears as they spoke words of comfort to the ailing priest.

“They expected his death and came together with sadness and gratitude,” Father Manuel Holguin explained.

The current pastor of All Saints Parish described his predecessor’s dedication to the priesthood and ministry as a

beautiful blessing.

“You can’t describe his life in a few words,” he added. “He was a wonderful example of Christ for his people.”

In one of his last media interviews, Fr. Jasso explained how his unshakeable faith helped him cope with a devastating diagnosis.

“I’m carrying the cross because I feel — this illness — for some reason God has permitted,” he told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* in 2018. “I will carry it as the Lord carried His cross for me. Suffering is part of everyday living.” 🇺🇸





The bitter cold and lack of power knocked out the boiler and froze pipes at St. Bartholomew Church in Fort Worth. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



With prayer, wet/dry vacuums, and coffee,  
faithful Catholics reach out to help their neighbors

# weather

## THE

# storm

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

**Y**ears from now, when people think back on the frigid blast of winter that swept across Texas in 2021, many will remember the discomfort of sitting in a dark, chilly home waiting for the lights and heat to come on. Millions were left without electricity for days after historic, sub-freezing temperatures crippled the state's power grid.

"It got down to 40 degrees," said Janet Fick, whose Saginaw home went without power for 55 hours.

The St. George parishioner and her husband, Duane, were reluctant to burn wood in the fireplace because it hadn't been used in 30 years.

"We burned candles for a little heat," added Fick, who checked on neighbors with text messages. "And I'd sit in my truck to get warm while charging my phone." For many, frozen pipes, cracked wells, and offline treatment plants created other issues — a shortage of drinkable water and damage to homes and property caused by pipes bursting.

### **GOD WAS LOOKING OUT FOR ME**

Tim Mills was already stuck in a 15 to 20-car pile-up on Interstate 35W when he saw another tractor-trailer rounding an ice-slicked hill and headed his way. Bracing for another impact, the St. Rita parishioner only had time to utter one brief prayer, "Oh, God."

"He jackknifed and landed between the walls [of the road] about 30 yards behind us when it finally stopped," said Mills, who was part of the first section of vehicles involved in the chain reaction crash.

The truck's position served as a blockade, "and probably saved all of their lives," added his wife, Diane.

Sitting in his four-door pickup, Mills could hear the collisions behind him.

"Wham, wham, wham, they just kept hitting that semi."

Six people lost their lives and dozens more were injured in the February 11 accident that involved 133 vehicles along a mile of the North Tarrant Express Lanes near 28<sup>th</sup> Street in Fort Worth. Freezing rain coating the pavement played a part in the massive pile-up. Mills, who survived

a 1988 head-on car crash that kept him hospitalized two months, suffered only soft tissue injuries.

As first responders began helping victims, a police officer cut off the air bag restricting Mills and the veteran truck driver called his wife.

"He told me he was in a wreck and to turn on the TV," Diane said, recalling the scene of twisted sedans, pickups, and 18-wheelers. "There was no getting to him."

Diane, a long-time volunteer who once directed the youth choir at St. Ann Parish in Burleson and served on the school boards of Our Lady of Victory, Cassata, and Nolan Catholic, immediately called family and friends to ask for prayer. Those people contacted other prayer chains.

"We were immediately surrounded by prayer and you could feel it," Diane continued. "God saved Tim because He knew how much he's needed. I'm the one who goes out and does things, but he's quietly in the background taking care of people."

The grandfather of two checks in on


**Continued on Page 14**




## SAINT FRANCIS VILLAGE

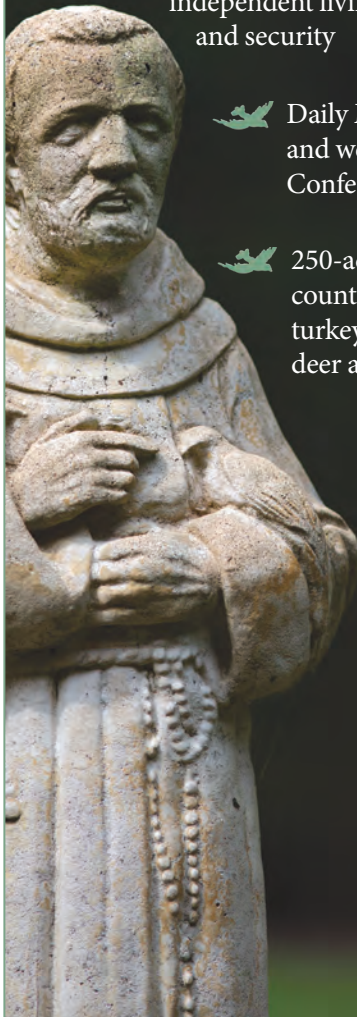
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### From Page 13

his 86-year-old wheelchair-bound mother twice a day and helps his disabled brother. Neighbors also rely on him.

Mills admits he doesn't know why he's lived through two major car accidents.

"I can't explain it except to say the good Lord was looking after me," he said thoughtfully. "I know my faith is stronger now than when I went over that icy hill."

### VOLUNTEERS ANSWER THE CALL

When staff members at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville saw water flooding the parish hall, meeting rooms, and a few offices in the administration building on Feb. 16, they issued an SOS requesting volunteers. More than a hundred people showed up the next morning with wet/dry vacuums.

"And we got a lot of the water cleaned up in an hour and a half," explained business manager Michael Vinez. "There are still a lot of unknowns. We know at least one pipe needs to be fixed."

To protect against undetected leaks, employees did not turn on the church boilers so that weekend Masses could be held.

Vinez wasn't surprised so many people offered to help when they may have their own weather issues at home.

"I've been at the church a long time and our parishioners are just amazing," she said. "We ask and they give us whatever we need."

### TEXANS HELPING TEXANS

When Cassie and Rafael Zelaya found out their next-door neighbors had no electric power or water because of frozen pipes, they welcomed the couple and their two puppies into their home without hesitation.

"Our generator is hardwired into the house so anytime we lose 30 percent of power, it kicks in," Cassie

explained. "It runs off natural gas, maintains itself, and has saved us so many times." The Holy Redeemer parishioners also opened their home to other friends needing a shower or clean clothes during the weather crisis. Home-cooked meals, prepared by their neighbor, added to the camaraderie.

"We are extremely blessed. My husband works in the oil and gas industry and as long as it stays good, we try to bless as many people as we can," she continued.

The freezing temperatures blanketing the state were "a crazy disaster no one expected" but it showcased the kindness and generosity of people living in the Lone Star State.

"It's Texans helping other Texans," Cassie said. "You open your door to the needs of others. Everyone I've talked to who doesn't have something is staying with someone who does."

### IDEA SPARKS MORE OUTREACH

As temperatures reached a record-breaking negative 2 degrees Feb. 16, Father Manuel Holguin looked for a way All Saints Parish could help local residents survive the cold.

Many homeless congregate in Marine Park across from the church in the North Side of Fort Worth. Many neighbors were affected by the power outage.

"The pastor opened a warming station in the parish hall for people who needed to get out of the cold," Deacon Ricardo DeLeon explained. "We called for volunteers and it quickly came together."

Eager to offer water, coffee, snacks, and blankets to anyone coming through the door, the deacon waited in the room for three hours. No one came.

"A police officer stopped in just to see how things were going and he mentioned an effort to pick up the homeless in the area and take them to the Convention Center," DeLeon



From a chilly house without electricity, two girls look at the winterscape in west Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



reported. “That may be why we didn’t get anyone.”

Letting the community know about the warming station on short notice is another reason for the lack of response. Organizers used social networking for publicity but internet service was unavailable for many during the blackout.

“We did get a call late Tuesday to see if we could open as an all-night shelter, but we didn’t have the mattresses, cots, and manpower to do that,” the deacon admitted.

Opening a warming station during the weather crisis was a good idea, and DeLeon said the parish hopes to build on that initiative. Summer heat waves may require cooling stations.

“We want to anticipate events like this so we can better serve the community,” he added. “Fr. Manuel wants to start more outreach services like a St. Vincent de Paul Society so we can address people’s needs.” 🍷



At Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Fort Worth, frozen flowers remain before a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

# lifting students UP

Cassata Catholic High School offers an individualized alternative for students from various backgrounds

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

**M**elody Derrig wishes a place like Cassata Catholic High School existed when she was a student. As a teenager, undiagnosed learning issues kept her from mastering college preparatory courses in foreign language and advanced science. Choosing easier classes as a path to graduation, the Fort Worth native still remembers the dire prediction made by her high school counselor.

“She told me I would never amount to anything because I struggled so badly in

school,” Derrig said.

Now the mother of 18-year-old Ben and 16-year-old Madeline, the former bookkeeper/receptionist is grateful her children are enjoying a very different high school experience. Both are enrolled at Cassata.

“Everyone in that building lifts you up,” she observed. “The teachers, staff, and counselors are always asking the kids how they’re doing. No matter what’s going on, they walk with them.”

Opened in 1975 by Sister Mary

Fullbright, SSMN, and the late Sister Mary Bonaventure Mangan, SHSp, the Cassata Learning Center was designed originally to help dropouts and other at-risk students earn a high school diploma. The religious sisters believed providing an education to young people who couldn’t thrive in a traditional classroom prevented a lifetime of lost opportunities, unemployment, and poverty.

Heralded as one of Fort Worth’s first alternative secondary schools, Cassata Learning Center offered individualized

Cserdis Anderson, executive assistant to the president, answers a question from student Melanie Cortis during social studies class. (NTC/Ben Torres)







attention, a self-paced curriculum, and independent study. The innovative approach attracted students from all socioeconomic backgrounds and a groundswell of community support.

### EXPANDED STUDENT BODY

Forty-five years later, the school boasts an impressive list of graduates and a broader range of students who want a more flexible academic environment.

“We used to accept students 16 and older because there was a sense that you

needed a certain level of maturity to self-pace and self-motivate,” explained Dr. Maggie Harrison, who currently serves as Cassata’s president and principal.

Four years ago, the school decided to welcome its first group of freshmen.

“Most came from elementary schools in the diocese,” the administrator added. “Some students are not well-suited to big traditional high schools and Cassata is happy to serve them.”

In a conventional high school, classes are bigger, the days are longer, and there’s

more anonymity. Young people with emotional needs or suffering from depression often find a smaller school reduces the pressure to conform and perform.

“Here we know our students and know their families,” Harrison pointed out. “With our resources, we’re able to meet them where they are and provide a safe, supportive environment.”

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified that commitment. Last March, in the early

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Social studies teacher Julianna McConegely works with student Fiona Schoonover on an assignment. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Students are photographed using a slow camera shutter as they change classes. (NTC/Ben Torres)

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days of the health crisis, Cassata began online instruction. Over the summer, the school developed a safety guideline plan and, like other Catholic schools in the diocese, opened its doors once again to students.

A hybrid schedule allows both online and in-person learning with about 40 percent of students receiving strictly online instruction.

“The pandemic forced us to be more resourceful, creative, and forward thinking,” said Harrison, noting that some classes are designed for “after hours” learning. Pupils can study material in the evening and contact teachers via email or by scheduled appointment.

After the pandemic is over, online learning will continue.

“Because we see a need for that,” stressed the foreign language specialist. “We want to be as versatile and flexible as possible.”

A patient, loving teaching staff is another key element in Cassata’s winning formula.

“They never give up and find ways to work with students,” Harrison said approvingly.

Commencement at the end of each semester is always a bittersweet moment.

“We’re happy they are graduating but also sad because we become attached and invested in their progress and future plans,” Harrison continued.

## GRADUATES FIND SUCCESS

While attending different private schools, Chandler Wewers was always uncomfortable passing the administration office. For no reason, seeing authority figures in the hallway always made her nervous.

That wasn’t the case the first time she met Cassata High School’s president as a sophomore.

“I instantly felt at home,” recalled the 19-year-old who grew up in Colleyville. “Talking to Dr. Harrison was like meeting a best friend.”

Wewers transferred to Cassata because she didn’t like the “vibe” at her previous school and wanted to graduate

THERE'S  
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More photos from our Cassata visit. Go to [NorthTexasCatholic.org](https://NorthTexasCatholic.org) and click on the 'Photo Gallery' tab.





early. Now a journalism major at the University of Kansas, the undergraduate credits her Cassata teachers for an easy transition from high school to college.

“I have amazing professors but none of them are like my teachers at Cassata, who cared and wanted me to succeed,” admitted Wewers, who learned life skills, as well as academics, at the Hemphill Street campus. “I know how to speak to adults and write an effective email. I’m a lot more prepared than my classmates here.”

After graduating from St. George Catholic School in Fort Worth, Angela Quintero enrolled in Cassata for a different reason. Caring teachers helped her cope with crippling anxiety and “find my voice,” she said.

“I didn’t think a big school could help me manage what I was going through at the time,” the 20-year-old added. “When I visited Cassata, it felt like a safe place.”

Individualized attention and a format that allowed her to self-pace provided a comfortable learning environment. A flexible classroom schedule also gave Quintero the chance to watch her mother, a social worker, help homeless people and veterans find housing. The experience encouraged her to explore a career in social work.

“I’d go with her on days when clients were moving into their first apartment and saw the difference that made,” said the Cassata graduate, who now attends Texas Woman’s University. “That was the type of opportunity I could have because I was at Cassata.”

## FUNDING THE FUTURE

Success stories like Quintero’s are the focus of Noche de Gracias — a virtual fundraiser set for April



Cassata Catholic High School on Hemphill Ave. (NTC/Ben Torres)

27. The “Night of Thanks” will remember the legacy of Cassata’s founders as well as the students, families, staff, and foundations who worked over the years to ensure the school’s existence.

Melody Derrig, co-chair of the event, remains an ardent supporter of the school because of what she’s witnessed firsthand.

“They make sure the kids are number one,” the St. Patrick parishioner said.

If a teacher is in the middle of a conversation with a parent, and a child comes in with a question, the conversation stops, and the student is taken care of first.

“I love that,” Derrig said appreciatively. “Cassata provides a nurturing environment and so many kids need that today.”

The mother of a Cassata sophomore and senior feels passionately about the school because of its mission.

“I want to keep it going not just for my kids, but for the future of other children who need one-on-one attention,” she said. “It’s not just a school for dropouts and troubled kids anymore.” 🇺🇸



Cassata Catholic High School President Maggie Harrison (NTC/Ben Torres)





Four-month-old Christopher Cockrell holds his father's hand after coming home from hospitalization for a heart surgery in January 2021. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



# unexpected BLESSINGS

Parents appreciate the love and blessings their  
Down syndrome children bring

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

“**E**ach year the voice of people with Down syndrome, and those who live and work with them, grows louder.”

Those words, publicizing World Down Syndrome Day (WSDS), resonate with Pamela McGehee.

“Every day is Down syndrome awareness for us. It’s so much a part of our lives and our thought process,” said the mother of 24-year-old Brigid. “It’s good to raise public awareness for the rest of the world.”

Declining prenatal testing, the pro-life Catholic convert didn’t know her second daughter had Down syndrome until she was born. McGehee considers the chromosomal disorder, found in 6,000 U.S. births each year, a gift that helped her find love, faith, and lasting friendships.

“The blessings that Brigid brought to our family are innumerable,” stated the property investor, explaining how the diagnosis led to meeting her husband, Frank, and later joining the Catholic Church. In 2015, McGehee founded Our Mother of Perpetual Help Educational Program to provide a Catholic-based learning environment for children and adolescents with special needs. Finding effective schooling for Brigid inspired the venture.

“It breaks my heart every time I hear someone is terminating a pregnancy because of Down syndrome,” admitted the St. Benedict parishioner. “I can literally see all the blessings God would give to them being flushed away.”

## FOSTERING INCLUSIVENESS, SUPPORT

Officially observed by the United Nations since 2012, WSDS is always celebrated on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the third month of the year (March 21) to draw attention to the trisomy of the 21<sup>st</sup> chromosome that causes Down syndrome. Activities, proclamations, and fundraisers are designed to create global awareness and foster a spirit of inclusiveness and support

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Jeanette Gray and her 15-year-old son, Andrew, are shown in front of their house January 27, 2021. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

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for people with the condition, also known as Trisomy 21.

The most common chromosomal abnormality diagnosed in the U.S., the disorder occurs in people of all races and economic levels and affects how a baby's body and brain develop. Although both mental and physical challenges are present, the future of people with Down syndrome has improved dramatically over several decades with many living independent, productive lives well into adulthood.

### INVOLVED AND ACCEPTED

Helping her son become a contributing member of society is a goal shared by Jeanette Gray and her husband, Scott. Born in 2005 with Down syndrome, 15-year-old Andrew is now a freshman in public high school.

"We want him to have a job he loves," asserted Gray, a third-grade teacher at Immaculate Conception Catholic School in Denton. "Andrew is a real people

person. He enjoys movies and watching his sister play volleyball. I just want him to always be involved and accepted in the community."

Just "sailing along" after the birth of her first child, Megan, the Pittsburgh native was surprised when early tests indicated something atypical with her second pregnancy. Finding out the baby had Down syndrome was distressing but didn't compare to what happened next. More than one person recommended abortion.

"To me it really was a totally shocking thing," Gray recalled. "Educated people were willing to say it was no problem if I wanted to terminate the pregnancy."

Abortion was never an option for the cradle Catholic who was "shocked and saddened by doctors telling me it was okay."

When Andrew was born, he was just like any other newborn — beautiful.

"And I enjoyed those moments," Gray remembered. "Sure, there have been trying times but the joy of being a mother far outweighs any of the other issues that we come across as he grows up."

"Andrew brings joy and humor to our life," his mom said. "He doesn't have down days."

### LOOKING BEYOND THE DIAGNOSIS

Amy Matasso hoped to find a Catholic school that would look beyond her son's Down syndrome and welcome what she sees — a little boy who loves to learn. The Holy Redeemer parishioner found the answer to her prayers at Holy Family Catholic School in Fort Worth.

"Nothing is more nerve wracking than having people shutting doors before they get to know Andrew and what he's capable of," Matasso said matter-of-factly. "So many focus on what children with Down syndrome can't do and not what they can do."

At Holy Family, the teachers and principal saw only possibilities — not problems — when Andrew enrolled in the school's kindergarten program in 2019. The eight-year-old is now in first grade and part of a school community that includes older brother, Josh, a third grader, and sister,





Andrew Matasso attends his first grade class at Holy Family Catholic School on January 29, 2021. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Lorelei, a preschooler:

“The way he was accepted was just beautiful,” beamed the mother who worried how someone needing extra help would be received in the classroom. “Andrew has speech challenges, and his classmates get so excited when he uses words they can understand. He’s made special friendships.”

The pleasure of watching her son achieve milestones contrasts sharply with the emotional fog that descended on Matasso and her husband, Anthony, after hospital nurses noticed their newborn had physical features consistent with Down syndrome. Research and meetings with specialists filled their days for the next two years.

Facts gleaned from the internet can seem grim, but advances in education and therapies are changing the outlook for children like Andrew, Matasso pointed out. More awareness could impact their future even more. According to some sources, 75 to 90 percent of children with a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome are aborted.

“Parents are scared and don’t know what to do,” she sympathized. “If people met more children like Andrew, they would see the happy, independent lives they can lead. There’s so much that can be done

from a developmental perspective. It’s incredible.”

Andrew deepened her family’s faith and made them more grateful for the little things in life. It also fostered compassion for the hidden struggles of other families.

“You don’t realize how many parents have a child with special needs until you’re given one,” Matasso said.

### MEETING A MIRACLE

Caring for a child with Down syndrome is a new reality for Erin and Jameson Cockerell. Born in September, their son Christopher has undergone two surgeries to repair a common heart defect found in children with Down syndrome.

The couple’s Catholic faith helps them deal with the child’s health crisis.

“There’s been a lot of prayer and discernment on how we could be the best parents,” Erin explained. “As soon as we got the diagnosis, we wanted to give the baby a name so we could start praying for him.”

She typed “patron saint of strong men” into her computer search engine and the name Christopher popped up.

“The name means ‘Christ bearer’ so it’s perfect for him and what he’s done for our family,” added the mother of two

older boys, four-year-old J.T. and two-year-old Jackson. “This whole event has just brought me to my knees. It’s been difficult, but I can see Christ working in the prayers and support we’ve received.”

Jameson Cockerell admitted experiencing a range of emotions prior to Christopher’s birth. A small faith group the couple belongs to offered support and encouragement.

“Our plans are not what God’s plans are and that was certainly true for us,” the software specialist explained.

There’s an inherent tension that exists when hearing the words, Down syndrome.

“But the primacy of meeting the person overrides that,” he continued. “Meeting Christopher changed the whole picture because you’re face to face with a miracle.”

The St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioners agree life with their special needs child will be different but not diminished.

“It’s the life God wants us to have,” Erin suggested. “We’re both hopeful Christopher will help us become saints. That’s the whole point of living. He’s existed a year [from conception] and we’ve already changed so much as a family, as people, as Christians.” 🇺🇸

# IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. FAUSTINA

Vietnamese Catholics embrace Christ's  
Divine Mercy message of love and trust

By Jerry Circelli

What started as one local Catholic woman's personal encounter with Jesus Christ has grown to become a spiritually enriching devotion involving about 200 faithful among the Vietnamese Catholic community at four parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Known as the Divine Mercy devotion, the movement among local Catholics is rapidly gaining momentum at the following parishes: Our Lady of Fatima and Christ the King in Fort Worth; Vietnamese Martyrs in Arlington; and Immaculate Conception of Mary in Wichita Falls.

The faithful at these parishes are uniting to spread Christ's Divine Mercy message that was relayed to St. Maria Faustina Kowalska in the 1930s when she was a young nun with the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, serving in Lithuania and Poland. Christ revealed extraordinary messages to St. Faustina, which she recorded in a

collection known as *The Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul*. Contained in the work is God's loving message of Divine Mercy.

That message focuses on the fact that God loves all of humanity. He wants people to recognize that His mercy is greater than their sins, and asks the faithful to call upon His trust, receive His mercy, and let it flow through them and on to others.

The formation of the devotional group of local Vietnamese Catholics began with Christina MyKhanh Hoang, a parishioner at Our Lady of Fatima in Fort Worth.

Hoang cannot explain why, but she said that one October morning in 2012, at around 3 a.m., she awoke with a burning desire to enter the designated prayer room in her home.

"Something happened there that night as I prayed," Hoang said. "I consecrated myself to Divine Mercy."

"I have always loved the Divine Mercy message so much," Hoang said, "and I discovered that night

that God wanted me to become involved in a concrete way.

"I prayed the Divine Mercy Chaplet and remember so clearly that I was crying hard. I was thinking about souls in purgatory. I promised God that I would trust in His mercy and I would pray for those souls."

Hoang further explained that she made other promises to God in those early morning hours. "I prayed and said I would dedicate myself to the Divine Mercy Chaplet every day, attend Mass every day to receive Christ, and I would start doing all these things right now," she said.

For the next several months, Hoang said she did not reveal her intense devotion to Divine Mercy to anyone, not even her husband, Deacon Michael Hoang of Our Lady of Fatima Parish. She began attending daily Mass, received daily Communion, attended weekly Stations of the Cross, confessed her sins weekly, prayed the Divine Mercy Chaplet regularly, and





Christina Hoang has the Divine Mercy image prominently placed in her prayer room. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

sought God’s guidance on how to proceed.

Once she completed this period that she called a time of discernment and sanctification, Hoang began to approach her fellow parishioners at Our Lady of Fatima Church. She asked if they would like to join in her Divine Mercy devotion. Nine friends at the parish were immediately receptive to her invitation to pray and learn more about Christ’s message of Divine Mercy.

Hoang next discussed the idea of forming a devotional group in the parish with Father Jim Khoi, CRM, who was then pastor of Our Lady of Fatima. The Congregation of the Mother of the Redeemer religious order priest immediately embraced Hoang’s suggestion.

Fr. Khoi had long been devoted to Divine Mercy and was moved spiritually by the words of Pope John Paul II at the turn of the new millennium. The pope, who is now one of our most beloved saints, canonized St. Faustina on April 30, 2000. The date was the second Sunday of Easter that year and was established as Divine Mercy Sunday. The pope said at the time of the canonization and feast day announcement, “This is the happiest day of my life.”

Five years later, Pope John Paul II died on the vigil of the feast day of Divine Mercy Sunday. During the Mass for the repose of St. John Paul II’s soul the next day, on Divine Mercy Sunday 2005, the Vatican delivered a message previously written by the

pope. In it, the pontiff reiterated his devotion to the Divine Mercy message.

“It is a love that converts hearts and gives peace. How much the world needs to understand and accept Divine Mercy!” the pope’s prophetic message read.

The words resonated with Fr. Khoi.

“For me, personally, I am very devoted to Divine Mercy because Christ’s love is redeeming and His mercy is helping all the world,” Fr. Khoi said. “We are sinners, but Jesus loves us, and He has pity on us. Through our devotion, we show our love to Him.”

Fr. Khoi said he and 170 CRM priests and brothers experienced

**Continued on Page 26**

# The Image of the Divine Mercy

## SACRED HEART

The two rays represent the blood and water which rushed forth when His Sacred Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross.

## RED RAY

The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls.

## PALE RAY

The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous.

JESUS I TRUST IN YOU

### From Page 25

Christ's love and mercy firsthand when they escaped from South Vietnam during the communist takeover in 1975.

The priest previously shared that experience with the *North Texas Catholic* this way: "We sailed out into the ocean ... but we did not know where we were going. We did not even have a destination. We all asked each other where we were headed, and no one had an answer. We just entrusted everything to God and set out into the ocean."

The priest said recently, "Our whole community was touched by Christ's divine

mercy over us. He took care of us and we are very thankful."

The priests and brothers endured harrowing experiences at sea and now minister to Vietnamese Catholic communities throughout the United States.

Fr. Khoi's involvement has been another

gift from God, Hoang said, citing his passion for the Divine Mercy devotion. He consented to become the group's spiritual advisor and chaplain.

In 2016, Fr. Khoi and Hoang took about 40 Catholics, including several members of the Divine Mercy devotional group, on a memorable and spiritually enriching pilgrimage to Poland. There they visited the Shrine of Divine Mercy and many other sites with historic significance to our Church. At the Shrine of Divine Mercy, in Faustina's Chapel, Fr. Khoi celebrated Mass for the group.

Fr. Khoi, now pastor of Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in Wichita Falls, and Hoang advanced the Divine Mercy group a step further in 2019 when they received permission from Bishop Michael Olson to expand the movement to include members of other parishes. For now, that has included all four Vietnamese Catholic community parishes and possibly other churches in the coming years.

Although activities have been interrupted by restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the group members plan to return to regularly practicing their devotion to Divine Mercy at their individual parishes and together with members from all four parishes. Fr. Khoi explained this includes the sacrament of Reconciliation, Mass, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, reciting the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, exploring readings from the diary of St. Faustina, Stations of the Cross, spiritual sharing, and praying the Holy Rosary.

Going forward, Hoang defined the group's mission this way:

"God asked St. Faustina to spread His divine message to the whole world. It is up to us now to continue her mission. It is very important that everybody knows about God's mercy and love for the world." 🇺🇸



FIND OUT MORE!

To learn more about the Divine Mercy devotion and St. Faustina, visit [TheDivineMercy.org](http://TheDivineMercy.org). The website is operated by the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception and features many resources about the devotion.



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# DON'T GIVE UP ON lent

This year may seem like a constant Lent,  
but we can use these 40 days to grow in holiness  
and prepare for the joy of the Resurrection

By Susan Moses

A large crucifix welcomes visitors to  
Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House.  
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)





**B**y the time you read this, we are at least two weeks into Lent. But perhaps you feel like we are closing in on a year of Lent.

Lent is a time in which we symbolically join Jesus in the desert for 40 days. This liturgical season emphasizes prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. After the (roughly) 40 days of Lent, we hope to be walking more closely with Jesus so we can more fully enter into the joy of His Resurrection.

During Lent, traditionally we sacrifice something that separates us from Him, whether we choose to swap 15 minutes of sleep for extra time in prayer, or we fast from social media or Netflix. Giving up chocolate may seem frivolous to some, but one year I abstained from chocolate and donated 50 cents to my parish's food pantry each time I wanted chocolate. My contribution fed a family for a week or more.

In previous years, we have chosen our own deprivation during Lent. We selected the sacrifice; we knew the duration. Control was in our hands.

However, we have been living for 11 months in a pandemic, with sacrifices beyond our control. Gatherings of families and friends have been curtailed, vacations canceled, and celebrations deferred. Those most at risk have been isolated at home, even forgoing worshipping in person with their parish community at Mass.

And those are the lucky ones. Many have lost jobs, suffered debilitating effects from the illness or are grieving the loss of family members and friends to COVID-19.

Plus, this year Lent began during an epic winter storm that knocked out power to almost four million Texans.

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These circumstances, which altered our normal way of life in so many aspects, might cause you to rethink the usual manner you approach Lent. But we can still get our hearts and minds ready for the passion of the Lord, even if the usual retreats are virtual and the fish fries are drive-thru.

### PRAYER

Deacon Andy Thomas, director of religious education at St. Martin de Porres Parish in Prosper, remembered a quote attributed to Pope St. John Paul II, among others: “Don’t waste your suffering!”

“We all are struggling through this pandemic, regardless of what our beliefs may be regarding the news and the restrictions placed in front of us,” he stated. “Use this suffering that is deep and often painful and unite it to the cross as a powerful prayer for you, your family, or someone else.”

We offer up our struggles, frustrations, and losses to the Lord. We can also recall friends, neighbors, and fellow parishioners whose problems are much greater than ours, and we can lift them up in prayer.

In this year, when the pandemic, social unrest, and a presidential election highlighted the injustices and divisions of society, Dcn. Thomas explained, “Reparation prayer is necessary now more than ever. Consider doubling your time in prayer but focusing on prayers of reparation.”

Prayers of reparation help repair the spiritual damage done by our sins and the sins of humanity. They include the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Divine Mercy chaplet, the Holy Rosary, and the chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. A quick Google search can get you started.

Deacon Lynn Sowers of St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth has a simple but powerful recommendation for Lenten prayer: to gaze at a crucifix. Spending time contemplating the crucified Jesus allows us to “recognize what Jesus did for us. Jesus hung on the cross for us – for our sins, for everybody’s sins,” he stated.

Another prayer suggestion from Dcn. Sowers originates from Jesus’ prayer the night before His crucifixion. Jesus prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours

be done” (*Luke 22:42*).

Meditating on that verse in prayer, especially during the pandemic, helps us recognize the enormity of Jesus’ sacrifice and place our own desires behind the will of the Father.

The Stations of the Cross are another traditional Lenten prayer that focuses our attention on our Savior’s suffering. If praying the Stations of the Cross each Friday is part of your Lenten habits, take it outside. And bring your family.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington, and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Mineral Wells are among the churches in the diocese with outdoor Stations of the Cross.

A fellow Catholic whose health conditions preclude him from attending Mass in person is planning to take a chair outside to pray during Lent to break the routine of the past year. “When I pray outside, I can admire the natural beauty and remember God created all of this for us. He’s mighty. He’s powerful. He’s merciful,” he said.

Prayer draws us closer to the Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to be with you as you read the Bible with a prayerful heart. Read and reflect on the daily Mass readings or select a Gospel and read a chapter each day.

### FASTING

Both the Old and New Testaments address the spiritual practice of fasting, which serves to purify us, remove the spiritual clutter in our lives that separates us from God, and increase our reliance on Him.

Due to precautions of spreading the disease, many of us have reduced the activities that normally fill our calendars, which can feel like an involuntary fast from the social engagements we enjoy.

Dcn. Thomas suggested fasting from technology — reducing or eliminating time spent on smart phones, television, internet, news, and social media. Abstaining from the online world is “an avenue to focus on trust and not fear,” he said, and opens extra time “to read Sacred Scripture and the lives of the saints and have quiet dialogue with the Lord.”

The Catholic Church declares Ash Wednesday and Good Friday as days of

fasting, and Dcn. Thomas recommended increasing fasting during Lent. “Not necessarily eating less food but abstain from favorite foods and restaurants. For some, not drinking a soda every day may be incredibly painful. Start small — but be consistent and committed,” he said.

Is it possible to fast from gossip, bigotry, or negativity? Or abstain from distractions and time wasters? Ask the Lord what He’d like you to eliminate to give Him more access to your heart.

### ALMSGIVING

With about 22 million jobs lost during the pandemic, and 10 million still unemployed, almsgiving is more important than ever for those who are able.

Parish food pantries, often run by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and community food banks have seen increased need for services. Contributions to them transfer quickly to neighbors needing food and assistance with other essentials.

Another organization to consider for almsgiving is Catholic Charities Fort Worth. In 2020, the nonprofit received a surge of phone calls to its Community Care Center, serving 6,320 individuals and families in crisis with assistance with rent, utilities, other financial aid, and resource referrals.

Katelin Cortney, strategic communications director of CCFW, specifically recommends Gabriel Project as a program where donations of time and money can have a significant impact.

Gabriel Project provides practical help to mothers in crisis pregnancies. Cortney said, “Last year, we helped 311 moms through their pregnancies and beyond, distributing \$72,000 in baby items and \$31,000 in financial assistance.

“We support the mother’s choice of life through prayer, friendship and encouragement, providing emotional and spiritual support, immediate and practical help, pregnancy information, community resources, clothing, and baby items,” she continued.

She suggested that individuals could help by donating money or baby items, coordinating a drive for diapers, or volunteering to walk with a woman through her pregnancy.



Two worshippers pray in front of the tabernacle at Holy Cross Parish in The Colony. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Almsgiving is a way we give back to the Lord some of the blessings He has bestowed on us. While giving alms certainly includes financial contributions, we have other resources to offer others, such as our time, our wisdom, and our love.

Call a neighbor or relative. Send notes of thanks or encouragement. Help a senior register for the coronavirus vaccine or drive them to receive it. Encourage your children to make cards for the elderly and shut ins. Take the time to bless someone else.

Dcn. Thomas said, “If you are struggling economically, give less or not at all. It is okay to be honest with your situation. It’s an act of humility that God too will reward.”

Through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we can turn away from sin and turn towards God during Lent.

Dcn. Sowers of St. Andrew Parish describes Lent as an opportunity to “join Jesus on a journey” in response to His invitation to “come and see.” On the journey, we can look for ways to show Jesus’ love to others.

The journey is different this year. But Jesus is with us, in the desert, in the suffering, and on the cross. And He will be with us as we celebrate the joy of His Resurrection during the Easter season, which begins April 4 this year and lasts longer than Lent. 🇺🇸



Anna Melfi packs food into boxes for a food drive at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield. (NTC/Ben Torres)

# FACT CHECK

Debunking misconceptions and answering questions surrounding the COVID-19 vaccines

By Juan Guajardo

**T**hat we've all been affected in some way or another by misinformation or lies is an ever-present reality.

Consider Logically, the world's largest dedicated fact-checking, fake-news debunking company. In 2019, its team of data scientists, pro fact-checkers, journalists, investigators, developers – and yes, artificial intelligence — discovered that a troubling 12 to 14 percent of articles about the U.K. and Indian elections were unreliable and contained misinformation. Enter 2020. A global pandemic, homegrown extremists, an American election, and of course, loads of new misinformation. Logically just entered the U.S. market in summer 2020, but I can imagine their misinformation stats will far outpace the ones from 2019.

Similarly, there has been copious misinformation regarding the COVID vaccines — specifically, concerns regarding morality and Catholic teaching. To address these head on, the *NTC* spoke with experts in the field of morality and ethics, and drew from information published firsthand by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and its committees on ethics and pro-life.

## The Sources



Bishop Michael Olson studied at the Center for Health Care Ethics in the Catholic Tradition for five years and holds a doctorate in moral theology from the Accademia Alfonsiana in Rome. He also served as community representative on the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects at the University of Texas Medical Center in Houston.



Father Tad Pacholczyk, Ph.D., holds a doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and serves as Director of Education at the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. He writes a monthly column called "Making Sense of Bioethics," which is regularly published on [NorthTexasCatholic.org](https://www.northtexascatholic.org).



The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops released multiple statements in the past two months regarding the COVID-19 vaccines. The Committee on Doctrine and the Committee on Pro-life Activities were some of the major contributors to these documents, including those titled "Moral Considerations Regarding the New COVID-19 Vaccines" and "Answers to Key Ethical Questions about COVID-19 Vaccines" (both of which were referenced verbatim here).



# Comparing ethical profiles of vaccine candidates

## Is it true that some of the vaccines combatting COVID-19 have a connection to abortion?

**U.S. BISHOPS:** Yes. Several decades ago, tissue harvested from the bodies of aborted babies was used to create certain cell lines for research purposes. The cells in these lines are, in effect, the descendants of those cells that were originally harvested. They have been made to replicate themselves, and some cell lines can be reproduced indefinitely. These abortion-derived cell lines are used as a “factory” to manufacture certain vaccines (e.g., rubella, chickenpox, some of the COVID-19 vaccines, etc.). The cells themselves, however, are not present in the vaccines that patients receive.

## Do the COVID-19 vaccines use abortion-derived cell lines?

**U.S. BISHOPS:** As of the date of this writing, hundreds of vaccines for COVID-19 are in development worldwide, and more than a dozen are in the final stages of testing. Some don’t use abortion-derived cell lines at all, some have used such cell lines to test the vaccine’s efficacy, and some are using such cell lines in the development and/or the production phases. There are currently two vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) being distributed for use in the United States, and there are others that are likely to be made available in the coming months (e.g., AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, etc.). Neither Pfizer nor Moderna used an abortion-derived cell line in the development or production of the vaccine. However, such a cell line was used to test the efficacy of both vaccines. Thus, while neither vaccine is completely free from any use of abortion-derived cell lines, in these two cases the use is very remote from the initial evil of the abortion. The AstraZeneca and Johnson vaccines raise additional moral concerns because an abortion-derived cell line is used not only for testing, but also in development and production.

Company or Sponsor	Abortion-Derived Cell Line Used in Vaccine Development?	Abortion-Derived Cell Line Used in Vaccine Lab Testing?	Ethical Profile
<b>Altimune</b>	Yes	Yes	<b>Very Poor</b>
<b>Arcturas Therapeutics</b>	No	Yes	<b>Good</b>
<b>AstraZeneca Univ. of Oxford</b>	Yes	Yes	<b>Very Poor</b>
<b>ImmunityBio &amp; NantKwest</b>	Yes	Yes	<b>Very Poor</b>
<b>Inovio Pharmaceuticals</b>	No	Yes	<b>Good</b>
<b>Janssen Res/Johnson &amp; Johnson</b>	Yes	Yes	<b>Very Poor</b>
<b>Merck &amp; IAVI</b>	No	?	<b>Good</b>
<b>Moderna</b>	No	Yes	<b>Good</b>
<b>Novavax</b>	No	Yes	<b>Good</b>
<b>Pfizer &amp; BioNTech</b>	No	Yes	<b>Good</b>
<b>Sanofi &amp; GSK Protein Sciences</b>	No	Yes	<b>Good</b>
<b>Sanofi Pasteur Translate Bio</b>	No	Yes	<b>Good</b>
<b>Sorrento “T-viva-19”</b>	No	No	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>University of Pittsburgh</b>	Yes	Yes	<b>Very Poor</b>
<b>Vaxart</b>	Yes	Yes	<b>Very Poor</b>

\*Information compiled by Charlotte Lozier Institute and National Catholic Bioethics Center. Last updated February 24, 2021. An expanded list is available at [FatherTad.com](http://FatherTad.com).

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# SAFE ENVIRONMENT

## To Report Misconduct:

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

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

## To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

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

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

For more information about our abuse prevention policies and programs, visit [fwdioc.org/safe-environment](http://fwdioc.org/safe-environment)



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### As Catholic Christians, is it OK if we are inoculated with these vaccines?

**U.S. BISHOPS:** Given that the COVID-19 virus can involve serious health risks, it can be morally acceptable to receive a vaccine that uses abortion-derived cell lines if there are no other available vaccines comparable in safety and efficacy with no connection to abortion. If it is possible to choose among a number of equally safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, the vaccine with the least connection to abortion-derived cell lines should be chosen. If a vaccine with no connection to abortion-derived cell lines is not readily available, vaccines that use such cell lines only for testing would be preferable to those that use such cell lines for ongoing production. Such choices may not be possible, however, especially in the early stages of vaccine distribution. In that case, one may receive any of the clinically recommended vaccines in good conscience with the assurance that reception of such vaccines does not involve immoral cooperation in abortion.

### What has the Vatican said regarding the permissibility of receiving these vaccines?

**FR. TAD:** Some Catholics try to imply that the true mind of the Church is actually opposed to the reception of abortion-associated vaccines (despite both Pope Francis and Pope Benedict having been vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine). They suggest that the real teaching of the Church is somehow being re-appropriated in the wake

of the new phenomenon of COVID-19.

In the face of such claims, it can be helpful to remind people, “This is actually nothing new” — ever since 2005, following careful and extensive examination of the issue, and on multiple occasions, the Church has concluded and taught not only that it is permissible to receive vaccines produced using these problematic cell lines when there is a proportionate reason such as a threat to one’s health, but also that we have a duty to push for alternatives and to apply pressure so that the use of such cells does not continue.

This was stated first in 2005 in a document from the Pontifical Academy for Life. It was stated again in 2008, in a document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It was stated again in 2017 in a document from the Pontifical Academy for Life. Finally and most recently in December of 2020 another document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith articulated the same conclusions.

### Could vaccines relying on injecting patients with mRNA change our genetic makeup and fundamentally alter who we are as humans, moving us into a project of Transhumanism?

**FR. TAD:** Any incorporation of new genes into our chromosomes from a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine would be an exceedingly rare occurrence, if it were to occur at all. It is actually very difficult to get the genetic information of mRNA to integrate into our chromosomes, partly because this



would mean a reverse directional flow of the so-called Central Dogma of Molecular Biology: our DNA or chromosomes are read (“transcribed”) to produce mRNA, which is then read (“translated”) to make proteins. Even if the accidental and unintentional incorporation of an mRNA message into our chromosomes were somehow to occur following vaccination, this would not mean that we were creating “Human 2.0,” since those genetic changes would not be expected to affect our sex cells, and therefore would not be transmitted to the next generation. Vaccinating people with an mRNA vaccine for COVID-19, therefore, does not imply that we are “remaking man” or heading down the path of Transhumanism.

**?** **What can we Catholics and others who uphold the sanctity of life do to protest against the use of abortion-derived cell lines?**

**BISHOP OLSON:** I think the first step is, of course, awareness of this. Secondly, all these corporations are publicly traded. And so I think that for those of us who invest, we have a responsibility to help change the culture by, in a sense, putting pressure on corporate leadership. And I think those are some things that we can do. Most importantly, we must pray, but also to take the steps necessary to bring change about.

**FR. TAD:** We still face a real duty to push back and make known our disagreement with the continued use of these cells by researchers in the pharmaceutical industry and academia. We can do this in several ways. We can write a letter to the editor to heighten public awareness, or contact the pharmaceutical companies that make vaccines,

urging them to discontinue their use of abortion-derived cell lines. If they do so, we should also thank them.

We can similarly initiate discussions with friends or relatives who work in research labs about whether their company or university uses cells derived from abortions.

**?** **Does the use of hydrogel nanotechnology to deliver these mRNA vaccines mean there will be microchips implanted in my body?**

**FR. TAD:** No microchips are present in vaccines. Hydrogel nanotechnology refers to the “lipid nanoparticles” which encase the mRNA. This is a glorified way of saying “very small oil droplet.” Lipids are what our cell membranes are composed of, so when the mRNA vaccine is injected, the lipid of the vaccine particle merges with the lipid of the cell (like two oil droplets merging) and the piece of mRNA is delivered to the inside of the cell (“transfection”).

These “lipid nanoparticles” could theoretically be misused to deliver other controversial substances into the body like microchips, but this does not mean they should not be used for valid purposes, like delivering life-saving mRNA vaccines during a pandemic.

**?** **How else can we care for our neighbors’ health during this time of pandemic?**

**BISHOP OLSON:** No vaccine is going to be 100 percent effective, nor has it ever been, but it helps mitigate the spread of a disease. But let’s not forget other good practices that we have in public health. The washing of hands, the covering of one’s mouth when they sneeze. If you’re ill, don’t go to church, don’t

go to school, don’t go to work. I think this has also enabled us to develop further outreach, like for homebound faithful who were here before COVID.

[Livestreamed Mass] is something more that we’ve been able to offer them. It’s not meant to be a replacement for participation in Mass. It never is. But the obligation to attend Mass, while essential to our faith, is not to supersede an obligation to love my neighbor by preventing the spread of illness, especially for people who are in a more vulnerable population.

I know many people are inconvenienced by the wearing of masks, and among some, there’s a demand that we do away with them. But I think our current protocols have been effective in preventing a super spread. They have been effective in helping people to be able to participate in the liturgy — if they’re willing to do so. These protocols have especially helped reduce spread to those who are more vulnerable to contagion, like the elderly.

So, I still think that for the near future masks are going to be required. And I think we have to do that for the sake of the common good, and for love of our neighbor.

**?** **Should we have any concern about these vaccines potentially being the “mark of the beast” cited in the *Book of Revelation*?**

**BISHOP OLSON:** That notion is incompatible with our mainstream Catholic theology of *Revelation* in Scripture and tradition. I think that’s a fundamentalist — a narrow fundamentalist — interpretation of this. And I don’t think authentic Scripture scholarship bears that out. 🇺🇸





A view of the St. Joseph statue at Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster. Parishioners consider him as protector of their church.  
*(NTC/Juan Guajardo)*

**Joseph, protector of the Church**



# ST. JOSEPH, model father

During the Year of St. Joseph, local Catholics recognize the importance and virtues of the “Silent Saint”

By Tony Gutierrez

**T**he end of April 1994 holds the record for the largest one-day tornado outbreak in North Texas. Linda Sepanski from Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster remembers when she went to pick up her second-grader Kate from the parochial school that day.

Her other two daughters were home, but Kate was at school practicing for her first Holy Communion, Sepanski recalls. When she arrived, a fellow parishioner motioned for her to come into the church basement, as the skies started to darken. In the basement, a religious sister led the students in praying a Rosary.

Tornadoes that day struck Alvord, Bowie, St. Jo, and Windthorst, with an EF2 causing severe damage in Gainesville — just minutes away. But Muenster was spared damage. In fact, Muenster has been spared damage since 1893, when the mostly Catholic residents of the town dedicated themselves to St. Joseph for his protection.

“Mommy, I wish Muenster could be everywhere,” Sepanski recalled her 4-year-old daughter Lauren saying at the time. “I said, ‘Honey, Muenster can’t be everywhere, but people everywhere can ask St. Joseph to pray for them.’”

In promulgating this year as the Holy Year of St. Joseph from Dec. 8, 2020 to Dec. 8, 2021, Pope Francis hopes to build

that devotion to the foster-father of Jesus everywhere.

## THE HOLY YEAR

“Each of us can discover in Joseph — the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence — an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble” writes Pope Francis in his introduction to *Patris Corde*, his apostolic letter proclaiming the holy year. “St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all.”

Father Daniel Kelley, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, agrees. “St. Joseph is an important part of our Church and who we are as a people of faith,” he said.

“It’s important for us to recognize the importance of St. Joseph and have that image of father in our families,” Fr. Kelley added. “I know there are many families that struggle with that idea because of our modern society, some families don’t have fathers living in their homes.”

For the holy year, Greg Brown, a district deputy for the Knights of Columbus, is encouraging all of the councils in his jurisdiction to pray a novena to St. Joseph as a group once during the year and to share

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This St. Joseph statue outside St. Joseph Parish in Arlington was a gift from the church to its parishioners. Miniatures were also created and made available for families to take home. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

## Joseph, exemplar of silence

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spiritual literature from the Knights with their respective parishes.

“As brother Knights, we look to St. Joseph to be devoted to God, to be diligent in our witness and in our practice of our faith and to come to the defense of this faith that we share in common,” Brown said. “That is the root of who we are.”

Despite an already existing devotion to St. Joseph, lifelong Muensterite and newly ordained Deacon Gary Endres said his devotion has increased since his discernment and formation process.

“My middle name is Joseph, so St. Joseph has always been my feast day,” said Dcn. Endres. “I pray to St. Joseph and St. Mary to protect us by the power of God. Without even realizing it, my devotion to St. Joseph has increased. I asked him a lot of times to help me be a good father and serve as a good deacon.”

### CHASTE GUARDIAN OF THE VIRGIN

In his decree launching the special year dedicated to St. Joseph, Pope Francis writes “Chastity is freedom from possessiveness in

every sphere of one’s life. Only when love is chaste, is it truly love. The logic of love is always the logic of freedom, and Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom.

“He never made himself the center of things,” the pope continued. “He did not think of himself but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus.”

Although married, Joseph and Mary lived and raised a family together without a sexual relationship. As her “most chaste spouse” — as recited in the Divine Praises — Joseph maintained a reverential respect for her perpetual virginity and not only protected her but remained faithful.

Alex Lopez, president of the Fort Worth chapter of Young Catholic Professionals, said that — like St. Joseph — he hopes to be patient, caring, and understanding, while still maintaining a strong masculinity, to prepare him for his future family.

Lopez is a parishioner of St. Joseph in Arlington, where he sings in the choir. He said, “It’s really encouraging knowing he was able to be such a strong foundation for his family. Me being a young adult and a

man, I want to provide for my future family and to be a foundation for the people around me.”

### DILIGENT PROTECTOR OF CHRIST

St. Joseph was warned in a dream to leave at once for Egypt to save his adopted Child’s life (*Mt 2:13-15*). In this moment, and in many others throughout the life of Christ, Joseph protected and reared Him, helping form the human nature of Jesus.

“Fathers are not born but made,” writes Pope Francis. “A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way he becomes a father.”

Fr. Kelley said the holy year promulgated by Pope Francis is a call to contemplate St. Joseph’s role as a faithful spouse and faithful father of Jesus.

As a priest, who is addressed as “Father,” Fr. Kelley said St. Joseph can serve as a role model for him and his brother priests.

“People remind me, especially on Father’s Day, that my children go home



# A Special Indulgence



every day after being here,” he said. “I think a priest should see himself as an important role model and father figure for the parish community and for families in the parish.”

Sepanski noted that St. Joseph was a part of everything she did growing up, including signing notes with “JMJ” — “Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.” It’s fitting that this year has been dedicated to Joseph, she said, because just as he protected Jesus, he is also a powerful intercessor for the unborn.

“Dear St. Joseph, so strong and powerful, yet so humble. He was the protector of the Christ Child, who was innocent,” she said. “We’re living in a time when restrictions protecting the innocent unborn are being lifted, so what a time to pray to St. Joseph.”

## EXEMPLAR OF SILENCE

“Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift. In him, we never see frustration but only trust,” writes Pope Francis. “His patient silence was the prelude to concrete expressions of trust. Our world today needs fathers. ... Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice.”

Dcn. Endres shared that when teaching religion class at the parish, he’ll ask attendees, “What were the last words St. Joseph ever said?” The question stumps the students, because there are no recorded words of St. Joseph in Scripture. The spiritual leadership of the Holy Family entrusted to Joseph was done with few words, he explained.

“Sometimes Daddy — or any kind of leader, really — doesn’t have to do a lot of talking. The man should lead by his actions. If the kids see you going to church and praying, they’re going to pay more attention,” he said. “That’s how the dad leads — he leads by example and speaks when he needs to.”

The Scriptures record that in the years between finding Jesus in the Temple and His Baptism, Jesus “advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.” Also known as the silent years of Jesus, this would

According to a December 8, 2020 decree by Pope Francis, faithful Catholics the world over can obtain a plenary indulgence during the Year of St. Joseph provided they meet the three usual conditions of going to Confession, receiving the Eucharist, and praying for the pope’s intention. The indulgence is granted under the following conditions:



To those who contemplate the Lord’s Prayer for 30 minutes or participate in a spiritual retreat of at least one day which involves a meditation on St. Joseph.



To those who perform a corporal or spiritual work of mercy.



To spouses and families who recite the Holy Rosary together.



To those who entrust their daily work to St. Joseph and ask him to intercede for those who are in search of employment and dignified labor.



To those who recite litanies to St. Joseph (Latin Rite), or Akathistos to St. Joseph (Byzantine Rite), or any other prayer to St. Joseph for the relief of Christian persecution, both inside and outside the Church.



To the faithful who recite any prayer “legitimately approved” or perform an act of piety in honor of St. Joseph, especially on the March 19 and May 1 Feasts of St. Joseph; the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; the Byzantine celebration of St. Joseph’s Sunday; and on the 19<sup>th</sup> of every month and every Wednesday.



To the elderly, sick, dying, and those unable to leave their house who recite a prayer to St. Joseph under his title of “Comfort of the Sick and Patron of a Happy Death,” faithfully offering God their suffering and hardships of their life. They should meet the three customary conditions as soon as possible.

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be the timeframe in which St. Joseph guided and raised his Son. Joseph would have taught Him not only carpentry, but Scripture and life skills such as interacting with the world and respecting others, reflected Brown.

“St. Joseph is this strong silent type,” he said. “I think we can learn a lot from the silence of St. Joseph in his calmness and his prayerfulness and his diligence to his family.”

Fr. Kelley noted that while the

Scriptures don’t record any words by St. Joseph, they do describe his actions, which can have a bigger impact.

“We just see him by his actions. It’s important to see what he’s done by taking Mary into his home and raising Jesus as his own child,” the pastor said. “He also cares for his Son and takes Him away from the danger by taking Mary and the baby Jesus into Egypt. When Jesus is 12 years old, both Mary and Joseph are in search of Jesus, and He was in the temple. We have words by Mary, but it’s His parents actions — a father — caring for his child.”

**MOST OBEDIENT, MOST FAITHFUL**

“At the end of every account in which Joseph plays a role, the Gospel tells us that he gets up, takes the Child and His mother, and does what God commanded him,” writes Pope Francis. “Indeed, Jesus and Mary His Mother are the most precious treasure of our faith.”

Of the three members of the Holy Family — Jesus, Mary, and Joseph — Joseph is the only one who was born with original sin. This extraordinary ordinariness gives hope to the rest of humanity that sanctity can be attained.





This statue of St. Joseph with the Child Jesus at Holy Redeemer Parish in Aledo was designed by Monsignor Publius Xuereb, pastor, and was carved by Ferdinand Stuflesser. The statue, along with a matching one of Our Lady, took more than two years to complete. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

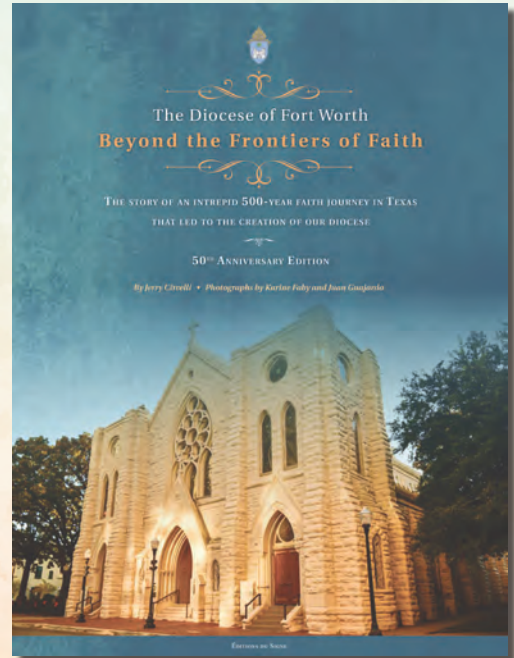
Joseph, patron of workers

“We think we have to be extraordinary to be a saint,” said Lopez. “All he did was say, ‘Yes’ to God. He was a righteous man devoted to Scripture, and we can do that in our lives — it’s just a matter of committing to it and following through the way that he did.”

Brown said that while St. Joseph hadn’t intended to raise the Son of God when he courted Mary, he “joyfully and willingly picked that up and raised Jesus as his own” — a task he didn’t have to do.

Continued on Page 42

# FAITH IS A GIFT. PASS IT ON!



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## From Page 41

“He could have so easily walked away, and we see so many families in our time that are torn apart because it’s just too hard, and not fulfilling what we’re given,” Brown said. “It’s more about obedience to one’s state in life. Obedience brings about humility. St. Joseph — through his obedience — grows in humility, grows closer to that moment to spend eternity in God.”

### MODEL OF ARTISANS AND PATRON OF WORKERS

Because of his role as patron of workers, St. Joseph is the adopted patron for Young Catholic Professionals. It’s easy for professionals to compartmentalize their faith when they’re working, said Lopez, the YCP president. That’s why apostolate has the saint as a touchstone.

All YCP meetings and events close with the St. Joseph the Worker Prayer, he said.

“For us having him as our patron saint, it’s a good way to focus ourselves back to St. Joseph and make him a prominent figure in what we’re doing with our lives.”

St. Joseph serves as a model for encountering Christ through work, as he must have done in teaching Jesus the carpentry trade, said Brown.

“The Holy Fathers right around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, stressed the importance of just work, safe work, the idea of work as more than just a means to a paycheck,” he said. “You can take your prayer into the work you do.”

Brown, who as a former youth minister also led teens for 15 years in constructing baby cribs at Camp Fort Worth to donate to Gabriel Project, said that beyond the paycheck, work has meaning beyond the action.

“That’s something we instilled in the kids at Camp Fort Worth. We’d begin the day with teaching them about why we were building the cribs in the context of being pro-life, doing what we can to end abortion, and giving these mothers a chance,” he said. “It’s not just the work we were doing, but we should be praying



A parishioner leaves flowers for St. Joseph at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Joseph, chaste guardian

for the mothers who will be making use of these cribs, for the child who will be laying down his head in these cribs, so that the work that we’re doing is meaningful. Our work becomes something greater inherently than just building something or creating something. It has a greater purpose with those prayers that are attached to it. When you’re building cribs for single mothers in need, there’s a lot you can impart through prayer as you’re

measuring, cutting, and assembling.”

### HOPE OF THE DYING

“Every poor, needy, suffering or dying person, every stranger, every prisoner, every infirm person is ‘the child’ whom Joseph continues to protect,” writes Pope Francis. “For this reason, St. Joseph is invoked as protector of the unfortunate, the needy, exiles, the afflicted, the poor, and the dying.”



Tradition holds that St. Joseph experienced a “happy death” because he died in the arms of his Saviour, whom he raised, and the Blessed Mother, whom he protected. At the moment of his death, he went from their physical arms to the eternal arms of God the Father, whose role he was asked to fulfill in caring for the Son as his own.

Most parochial cemeteries share a name with their attached parishes, which is providential for lifelong Rhinelander Valera Hartel, who has multiple family members buried at St. Joseph Cemetery.

“I believe that he helps us at our death,” said Hartel.

Hartel said she is comforted knowing that her husband, parents, grandparents, in-laws, and other family members are buried at the cemetery bearing his name.

“St. Joseph is the patron of the dying and happy death. He was a worker and a role model for all dads and for family life,” she said, reflecting on the Year of St. Joseph. “It’s wonderful that the pope is doing this, and I hope there’s a lot of novenas and true devotions to St. Joseph.”

## PROTECTOR OF THE HOLY CHURCH

“We should always consider whether we ourselves are protecting Jesus and Mary, for they are also mysteriously entrusted to our own responsibility, care, and safekeeping,” writes Pope Francis.

“God trusted Joseph, as did Mary, who found in him someone who would not only save her life but would always provide for her and her child,” the pope adds. “In this sense, St. Joseph could not be other than the Guardian of the Church, for the Church is the continuation of the Body of Christ in history, even as Mary’s motherhood is reflected in the motherhood of the Church. In his continued protection of the Church, Joseph continues to protect the child and His mother, and we too, by our love for the Church, continue to love the child and His mother.”

The people of Muenster turned to St. Joseph as the protector of their local



Joseph, hope of the dying

A view of a statue of St. Joseph at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

church early on. In late 1891, parishioners began work on a \$6,000 wood frame church, but before it could be completed, a December storm destroyed the building, according to “A Vow to Honor: Muensterites Look to St. Joseph as Patron and Protector,” by Nicholas Taylor published in the March 16, 2012 edition of the *Muenster Enterprise*. Using much of the material from the previous building, parishioners completed a new church in spring 1892 that was dedicated by then-Bishop Thomas F. Brennan of Dallas. That church, too, would be destroyed by a tornado on July 31, 1893.

“I always heard from my forefathers that they promised St. Joseph that they would keep that day holy if he would protect them from the tornadoes,” said 88-year-old lifelong Muensterite Regina Pels. “As far as I can tell, we still honor that day. We honor St. Joseph’s Day here.”

After that second storm, parishioners used money from the insurance policy and materials from the wrecked church to build a multi-purpose building that would serve as a church, school, and convent. They completed a Gothic style brick church in 1898, writes Taylor. After parishioners outgrew that building, a fourth building was completed in 1954 and stands today.

Founding pastor Father Bonaventure Binzegger, OSB, had a devotion to St. Joseph — a long tradition among Benedictines — and had wanted to name the parish in his honor. Although parishioners chose Sacred Heart, Fr. Bonaventure proposed that St. Joseph’s feast day be recognized as a local holy day.

“The townspeople vowed to celebrate the feast day of St. Joseph as a solemnity to obtain protection from powerful storms,” writes Taylor. “A 1935 newspaper article noting Muenster’s celebration of the saint’s feast day wrote, ‘No matter how threatening the sky may look, they have confidence in St. Joseph.’ To this day, the Catholic residents of Muenster regard St. Joseph’s feast as a local holy day and look to the saint for protection.”

Pels has always kept the feast day and made sure to pass that devotion along to her children.

“We think he’s protecting us from getting our church torn down from tornadoes, and he protects our town. That’s the way we all feel here,” she said. “I put it in my children that that’s the day you honor St. Joseph for protection. I pray to him every day, and I think my children do, too. When that day comes along, they see that they go to church.” 🇺🇸



# AN ENVIRONMENT OF grace

A desire to follow God takes Omar Montemayor to some unexpected places, including Notre Dame Catholic School

By Susan Moses

Omar Montemayor has made some turns in his life's journey. Along the way, God has signaled some changes in direction. And once God even used a red light.

After four years of retirement, 19 years as principal or vice principal of Wichita Falls public schools, plus 13 more years teaching elementary and middle school students, Montemayor's path has taken him to Notre Dame Catholic School in Wichita Falls.

"Retirement seems like a distant memory," Montemayor laughed. "But I do believe I'm supposed to be here until the Lord tells me otherwise."

During Montemayor's retirement, he increased his involvement with North Texas Brothers for Christ and at his parish, Our Lady Queen of Peace, where he's helped with men's ministry, along with music and youth. He even volunteered to head the chess club at Notre Dame.

However, in his fourth year of retirement, God indicated a new plan. In prayer, Montemayor sensed God was

telling him, "If Notre Dame asks you to become the principal, be open to it."

Two weeks later, he got the request.

Daniel Escobedo, president of the school, which dates to 1904, said, "God sent Omar at the right time." His administrative experience "brings a seasoned perspective to the policies and procedures" that are essential when guiding a school through a pandemic.

But more importantly, according to Escobedo, is that Montemayor arrived talking about pursuing academic excellence on his first day.

"He asked, 'How can a school be excellent?' and helped us understand it's a pursuit, a drive that affects how we behave every day," Escobedo said.

Montemayor witnessed improvements in teaching methods during his 32 years in public education that he now implements in Notre Dame classrooms.

"Teaching is one of the most difficult jobs in the world. It's time consuming, it's strenuous, and a teacher wears so many different hats," Montemayor explained with the voice of experience. In fact, he teaches religion to seventh-grade students each day.

But education at Notre Dame goes beyond the quality of the classroom. Montemayor encapsulates his educational philosophy with the phrase "academic excellence in an environment of grace."

He said, "It's hard for us as teachers to just slow down and realize that we're doing this in an environment of grace. God is present with us. And God can do so many great things with us and with the students He's given us."

Justin Blackwell, Ph.D., a Notre Dame parent and calculus teacher, can testify to the influence that an educator can have. Years ago, Montemayor was Blackwell's social studies teacher (and chess instructor) in fifth and sixth grades, and Blackwell said the teacher's enthusiasm made all the students eager to learn.

In fact, being Montemayor's student encouraged Blackwell to consider a profession in teaching.

Blackwell considers it "an honor" to be teaching with him at Notre Dame and credits the administrator with nurturing the environment of grace. For example, the principal schedules time during teacher training sessions for prayer and reflection, emphasizing that highly capable





Omar Montemayor in the halls of Notre Dame Catholic School in Wichita Falls.  
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

teaching and strong faith will thrive together.

Montemayor has a bachelor's degree in history, a master's in school administration, and has completed the coursework for a master's degree in theology and most of a doctorate in education. It's no surprise that he spent much of his retirement reading books.

Some of those books concerned him. In delving into the current state of the Catholic Church, he studied the tendency of children who are raised Catholic to drift away from the faith as adults. Bucking that trend, his reading indicated, are students educated in Catholic schools.

He said, "Catholic education is extremely important for the survival of the Church. I think my purpose is to help foster that."

Montemayor wants his students, their parents, and all faithful to understand the richness of the Catholic faith. He said, "The promise of the Blessed Trinity and

all the graces that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have given us — the conduit for that is the Church. I'm almost speechless because it is so profound that God has given to the Church all these graces — the sacraments, Mary, all the saints, all the tradition — I'm profoundly grateful. If we just accept that from the Church, this world would be a better place." The thought of being an ambassador for Catholic education would have been unbelievable to Montemayor in his youth.

The son of a Methodist minister, he rebelled in his early teens until God touched him in an intense way at the age of 16. In a dream, he heard the voice of God say, "Blessed are the children, for to them belongs the Kingdom of Heaven."

"It just saved my life," he recalled. "From darkness to the light of Christ."

His ambition changed from being an architect to becoming a Methodist minister. But he felt the tug of Catholicism through a Catholic charismatic prayer

group he attended and in his studies of the Reformation.

In his senior year of college, he planned to attend a long weekend for prospective students at a Methodist seminary. Yet his heart whispered notions of becoming Catholic. He asked God to give him a sign.

En route to the seminary, his brakes failed, causing moments of terror as he ran one red light, then another. He never arrived at seminary, which he considered God's intervention. Afterwards, he began the steps to join the Catholic Church.

After college, a quick stint as a school custodian turned into an opportunity to teach. Montemayor discovered his vocation in education, and he realized the meaning of God's message: "Blessed are the children, for to them belongs the Kingdom of Heaven."

Now, as principal of Notre Dame, he cooperates with the grace of God to help students understand that message, too. 🇺🇸





## Catholic All the Way

### A FIRM FOUNDATION:

Helmuth and Christy attended Catholic schools through high school and are giving their children the same opportunity. Christy said, “We all were able to practice and learn about our faith on a daily basis. A strong focus on academics and service to others has shaped the type of followers of Christ we are today.”

### FINISH STRONG:

Helmuth said, “We make it a point to say our night prayer together each night as a family. This gives us time to come together to give thanks to God for all the gifts He has given us and ask for His guidance, help, and mercy in the challenges in our lives. I believe this provides not only a guaranteed time for us to be together with each other, but with God as well, and has helped our kids develop a strong prayer life.”

### GROWING STRONGER:

Married 20 years, Helmuth and Christy believe strong faith helps build a strong marriage. They credit Catholic education and the examples and guidance of their parents with helping their faith grow stronger. Serving the parish and community together helps unite the family.

Helmuth said, “Sharing our faith with each other and with our children as they grow and mature in their spiritual lives brings us closer.” 🇹🇽

**THEY ARE:** Helmuth and Christy Koelzer and their children (from left) Zachary, Nicholas, Amanda, and Scott, parishioners at St. John the Apostle Church in North Richland Hills. (NTC/Ben Torres)





First-generation college student Ricky Espinoza at Vernon College. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

# Navigating Around Educational Hurdles

By Mary Lou Seewoester

In 2020, the Catholic Charities Fort Worth Rural Vocation Program helped 382 low-income community college students in rural areas face the obstacles of a global pandemic. Of those students, 116 graduated or transferred to a four-year college.

Rita Gauthier, CCFW Northwest Campus director of client services, said the program also maintained its high persistence rate despite pandemic challenges, with 94 percent of students returning to school between summer and fall semesters.

In comparison, Gauthier observed that most rural colleges in Texas have an 18-22 percent completion rate. “We don’t lose students like schools that don’t have this intervention,” she said.

The secret to that success is holistic case management, Gauthier noted. In fact, with holistic case management, strategic financial assistance, and personal and financial coaching, many students were well prepared for the changes forced on them by the pandemic. They switched

from in-person to online classes, helped their own children get through online classes, and continued their full or part-time jobs.

“Within a week our students transformed themselves,” Gauthier said. “They didn’t miss a beat. They just embraced those changes.”

She said case managers (called client navigators) helped students with their most immediate needs, such as access to computers, internet connectivity, or financial assistance due to job loss.

“We had students going to the parking lot of their schools to do homework and take tests because that’s where they could get internet access,” Gauthier said.

She said navigators contacted local internet providers for reduced-cost internet or hot spots for students. They also worked with CCFW to access grant funds and contact philanthropic partners for laptops.

The Rural Vocation Program serves 25 active students on each of eight community college campuses and at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Gauthier explained. Ten full-time navigators meet

at least twice monthly with each of their students.

When the pandemic forced schools into online learning, Ricky Espinoza had never owned his own computer or participated in a virtual class. So, when he started classes at Vernon College this past fall, his navigator helped him acquire a laptop from the Stand Together Foundation, a CCFW partner.

Espinoza discovered the Rural Vocation Program last year when he was a high school senior. The youth minister at Holy Family Parish in Vernon invited a navigator to visit the youth group.

“I’m a first-generation college student,” Espinoza said. “So when it was time to register for college, I couldn’t turn to my family.”

He said his navigator guided him through the registration process, helped him schedule the Texas Success Initiative Assessment needed for admittance, and even helped gather textbooks.

“Having someone to guide me throughout college — to answer any questions ... made it a lot easier and less stressful,” Espinoza said. 🇺🇸





# Time for God and Others

**HE IS:** Father Vijaya Raju Mareedu, SAC, pastor of St. Rita Parish in Ranger, Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco, St. Francis Xavier Parish in Eastland, and St. John Parish in Strawn.

**GROWING UP:** The youngest of three, he grew up in Andhra Pradesh, India. His father, a “simple, God-fearing man,” worked as an electrician at a Montfort school, which allowed his children to have a Catholic education. His father told him, “I will not give you gold, I will not give you land, but education is the most important thing.”

**THE CALL:** Fr. VJ, as he’s fondly called, admitted to being more interested in playing basketball and cricket than in his studies. As a tenth-grade student, he saw crowds of people crying after the local bishop’s death and it made a big impression. He thought, “People are crying because he has done something good; there is something good in doing for the other.”

**HIGHER EDUCATION:** Fr. VJ entered the Pallottine seminary. “I had been weak in studies, but once I realized I need to be something for somebody, it never stopped me.”

**HOLY HABITS:** During his novitiate, he began spending 30 minutes a day in front of the Blessed

Sacrament, a habit he continues. “You may not speak, but He will speak to you.”

**ORDINATION:** April 22, 2015. The young priest served in a school and as an associate pastor.

**HOWDY, NEIGHBOR:** When Fr. VJ came to the diocese in 2018, he contacted every family registered in his four parishes and met with them, which took about a year. “Giving time is the best thing I can give.”

**LESSONS FROM A PALLOTTINE:** “Wherever you can, respond to the need of the time with the help of God. Do the best we can in the place where we are, in the time we are in.”

**MERCY OF GOD:** “Whenever people come for confession, I give the presence of Christ, with great attention, with great love, which springs from the Word of God.” 🇺🇸





# The Campaign of Lent

**T**he Collect for the Liturgy of Ash Wednesday, the day which marks the beginning of our 40 days of preparation for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery, calls Lent a “campaign.”

Admittedly, when I hear this word, my mind drifts and I often associate “campaign” with running for a political office or kicking off a project like a capital campaign. Therefore, in a certain sense, I’ve had to pray to unlearn its meaning and to seek out what it truly is.

“Campaign,” like so many words in English, is derived from the Latin word, campus. Campus means an open or flat space; a plain. It also can mean an opportunity. In light of the various definitions, how might they be applied to Lent? Furthermore, how might those meanings apply to a young man who is thinking of the priesthood of Jesus?

The season of Lent aims at preparing us for Easter. By our attention to the three disciplines of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer, we open ourselves like an open plain — we open a space in our hearts in order that we might be more attuned to the manifold ways God has worked and is working inside each one of us, as well as to what opportunities God wants us to pursue and consider further in order to more closely ally ourselves with His holy will.



Fr. Matthew Tatyrek

A young man considering whether or not he may be called to follow Jesus as a priest must be open and attuned to the various ways God has and is working in his life. Moreover, the space that is laid open before the Lord in the heart of a young man must also see that the work God is doing in his life is both an opportunity and invitation to allow Him to work further and to lead us where He wants us to go.

Maybe during these next Lenten days, rather than solely focusing our attention on what we are giving up or sacrificing, we could focus on the possibility — the opportunity — of adding something (i.e., a discipline or practice) to our Lenten journey. Each Lent provides us with an opportunity to cultivate and deepen our relationship, our friendship with Christ, which opens us more to receive His love and grace.

If a young man reading this article is having difficulty determining what to do for Lent, perhaps he can start with a few, if not all of these recommendations:

- Get out of bed immediately upon hearing your alarm and strive to make a good morning offering.
- Ask God each day for the grace to seek His will above your own.
- Meditate upon the daily Mass

readings.

- In the free time between moving from one thing to the next (e.g., between classes, waiting for an appointment, etc.), instead of immediately reaching for your cellphone, take a few moments to simply acknowledge the presence of God.
- Give Our Lord your daily challenges and sufferings, whatever they may be.
- At the conclusion of the day, take the time to do an examen (i.e., prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God’s presence and discern His direction for us).
- Thank God for the blessings of the day and resolve to correct faults.

By opening himself more and by availing himself of the many opportunities to receive the grace that our Lord offers to him, a young man thinking and praying about the priesthood can have a successful “campaign” of Lent. Maybe adding some of these practical suggestions, instead of solely giving up things, is a good way to start. 🇺🇸

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Ordated to the priesthood in 2016, Father Matthew Tatyrek serves as pastor of St. Peter Parish in Lindsay and as Vocations Liaison with the Vocations Office.



San José con el Niño Jesús.  
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



José, más obediente



# SAN JOSÉ, padre modelo

Católicos locales relatan las lecciones aprendidas del "Santo Silencioso" durante el Año Santo de San José

Por Tony Gutiérrez

**E**l último día de abril del 1994 tiene el récord de la mayor cantidad de tornados ocurridos en un mismo día en el Norte de Texas. Linda Sepanski de la Parroquia del Sagrado Corazón de Muenster recuerda todavía cuando ella fue ese día a buscar a su hija Kate de segundo grado a la escuela parroquial.

Sus otras dos hijas estaban en casa, pero Kate estaba en la escuela ensayando para su Primera Comunión, recuerda Sepanski. Cuando llegó a la escuela uno de los feligreses de la parroquia le indicó que fuera al sótano de la iglesia, ya que el cielo comenzaba a oscurecerse. Vio que una religiosa estaba rezando el Rosario con los estudiantes en el sótano.

Los tornados azotaron ese día a Alvord, Bowie, St. Jo y Windthorst. Uno de ellos de categoría EF2 causó graves daños en la ciudad de Gainesville, que queda a poca distancia. Por la gracia de Dios, Muenster no sufrió daños. De hecho, Muenster se ha librado de daños desde el 1893, cuando sus ciudadanos, que en su mayoría eran católicos, dedicaron sus vidas a San José invocando su protección.

"Mami, desearía que Muenster pudiera estar en todas partes", recuerda Sepanski que su hija de 4 años, Lauren, le dijo en ese momento. Le dije a mi hija: "Cariño, Muenster no puede estar en todas partes, pero la gente desde cualquier lugar puede pedirle a San José que ore por ellos".

Al promulgar este año como el Año Santo de

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 52

## DE LA PÁGINA 51

San José del 8 de diciembre del 2020 al 8 de diciembre del 2021, el Papa Francisco espera promover una especial devoción al padre adoptivo de Jesús en todo el mundo.

### El Año Santo

“San José es un elemento importante de nuestra Iglesia y de lo que somos como personas de fe”, dijo el Padre Dan Kelley, el párroco de la Parroquia de San José de Arlington.

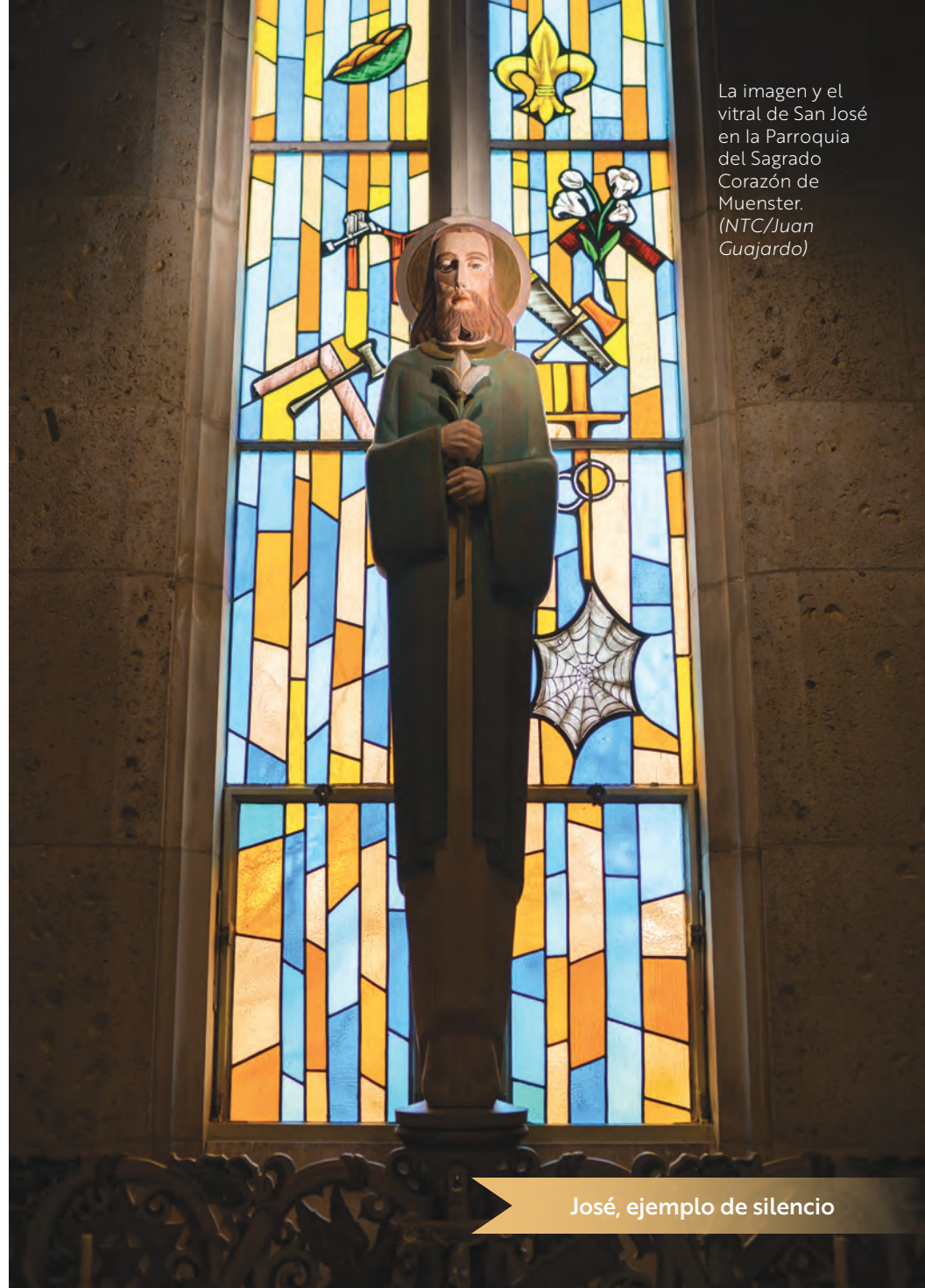
“Es muy importante que nosotros reconozcamos el valor y el mérito de San José, y tener esa imagen de padre en nuestras familias”, el Padre Kelley agregó. “Sé que hay muchas familias que luchan con esta idea debido a que en nuestra sociedad actual algunas familias no tienen al padre viviendo en sus hogares”.

Greg Brown, Diputado de Distrito de los Caballeros de Colón, está animando a todos los consejos de su jurisdicción a rezar durante el Año Santo una novena a San José como grupo una vez este año y a compartir la literatura espiritual de los Caballeros de Colón del programa de “Servicios de información católica” con sus respectivas parroquias.

“Como hermanos Caballeros, admiramos y deseamos imitar a San José para ser devotos de Dios, ser diligentes en nuestro testimonio como cristianos, y practicar y defender la fe que compartimos en común”, dijo Brown. “Ésa es la raíz y fundamento de lo que somos”, prosiguió diciendo.

A pesar de la devoción que ya le tenía a San José, el Diácono Gary Endres, recién ordenado, que nació y ha vivido toda la vida en Muenster, dijo que su devoción ha aumentado desde que pasó por su proceso de discernimiento y formación al diaconado.

“Mi segundo nombre es José, por lo que San José siempre ha sido mi santo patrón”, dijo el Diácono Endres. “Rezo a San José y a Santa María para que nos protejan con el poder de Dios. Sin darme cuenta, mi devoción a San José ha aumentado. Le pedí muchas veces que me ayudara a ser un buen padre y servir



La imagen y el vitral de San José en la Parroquia del Sagrado Corazón de Muenster. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

José, ejemplo de silencio

como un buen diácono”.

### Casto guardián de la Virgen

En su decreto al anunciar el comienzo del año especial dedicado a San José, el Papa Francisco escribió: “La castidad es la libertad de la posesividad en todas las esferas de la vida. Sólo cuando el amor es casto, es amor de verdad. La lógica del amor es siempre la lógica de la libertad, y José supo amar con extraordinaria libertad”.

“Él nunca se convirtió en el centro de

las cosas”, continuó el Papa. “No pensó en sí mismo, sino que se centró en la vida de María y Jesús”.

Aunque casados, José y María vivieron y formaron una familia juntos sin tener una relación sexual. Como su “esposa más casta”, como se recita en las Alabanzas Divinas, José mantuvo un respeto reverencial por su virginidad perpetua y no sólo la protegió, sino que permaneció siempre fiel a ella.

Alex López, presidente del Capítulo de Jóvenes Católicos Profesionales de Fort



# Un Indulgencia Especial



Worth, dijo que, al igual que San José, espera ser paciente, afectuoso y comprensivo, sin dejar de mantener una fuerte masculinidad, para prepararse para su futura familia.

López es un feligrés de la Parroquia de San José de Arlington, donde canta en el coro. Dijo: “Es realmente alentador saber que San José pudo ser una base tan sólida para su familia. Como un adulto joven y hombre, quiero mantener a mi futura familia y servir de cimiento para las personas que me rodean”.

## Ejemplo de silencio

“José encontró la felicidad no en el mero sacrificio de sí mismo, sino en el don de sí mismo. En él, nunca vemos frustración, sólo confianza”, escribe el Papa Francisco. “Su paciente silencio fue el preludio de expresiones concretas de confianza. Nuestro mundo de hoy necesita padres... Toda verdadera vocación nace del don de uno mismo, que es fruto de un sacrificio maduro”.

El Diácono Endres comentó que cuando enseña la clase de religión en la parroquia, pregunta a los asistentes: “¿Cuáles fueron las últimas palabras que dijo San José?” La pregunta desconcierta a los estudiantes porque en las Escrituras no aparece escrita ninguna palabra de San José. El liderazgo espiritual de la Sagrada Familia confiado a José se hizo con pocas palabras, explicó.

“A veces el papá, o cualquier tipo de líder, en realidad, no tiene que hablar mucho. El hombre debe liderar mediante sus acciones. Si los niños te ven que vas a la iglesia y que oras, van a prestar más atención”, señaló. “Así es como el papá lidera: predica con el ejemplo y habla cuando lo necesita”.

Las Escrituras nos dicen que durante los años que pasaron después de encontrar a Jesús en el templo hasta Su bautismo, Jesús “creció en sabiduría, edad y favor ante Dios y los hombres”. Estos mismos años son también conocidos como los años silenciosos de Jesús. Éste sería el período de tiempo durante el cual San José guió y educó a su hijo. José le habría enseñado no sólo el oficio de la carpintería, sino además el estudio de las Escrituras y las destrezas esenciales para la vida, como, por ejemplo, la interacción con su mundo y el respeto a los demás, reflexionó Brown.

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Según el decreto de Papa Francisco emitido el 8 de diciembre del 2020, todos los fieles católicos del mundo pueden obtener el don de indulgencias plenarias durante el Año de San José, siempre y cuando se cumpla con las condiciones habituales de acudir a la Confesión, recibir la Eucaristía y orar por las intenciones del Papa. La indulgencia plenaria se concede bajo las siguientes condiciones a:



Aquéllos que contemplan la Oración del Señor (el Padre Nuestro) durante 30 minutos o participan de un retiro espiritual de por lo menos un día, en el que se incluya una meditación sobre San José.



Aquéllos que realicen obras corporales o espirituales de misericordia.



Los esposos y familias que rezan juntos el Santo Rosario.



Los que confían su trabajo diario a San José y le piden que interceda por quienes están en busca de empleo y un trabajo digno.




Aquéllos que rezan las letanías (Rito Latino) o Akathistos (Rito Bizantino) de San José o cualquier otra oración a San José para que se termine la persecución cristiana, tanto dentro como fuera de la Iglesia.



Los fieles que rezan cualquier oración “aprobada legítimamente” o que realizan un acto de piedad en honor a San José, especialmente el 19 de marzo y el 1 de mayo, Fiestas de San José; en la Fiesta de la Sagrada Familia de Jesús, María y José; en la celebración bizantina del Domingo de San José; y el 19 de cada mes y cada miércoles.



A los ancianos, enfermos, moribundos y los que no pueden salir de su casa que rezan una oración a San José bajo su título de “Consuelo de los enfermos y patrón de una muerte feliz”, y que ofrecen fielmente a Dios los sufrimientos y dificultades de su vida. Ellos deben cumplir las tres condiciones habituales lo antes posible.



La estatua de San José en los jardines de la Parroquia de San José de Arlington. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

José, esperanza de los moribundos

#### DE LA PÁGINA 53

“San José es del tipo de padre fuerte y silencioso”, continuó diciendo. “Creo que podemos aprender mucho del silencio de San José a través de su calma, su profunda oración y la diligencia al cuidar de su familia”.

El Padre Kelley señaló que, si bien las Escrituras no incluyen ninguna palabra de San José, sí describen sus acciones, que pueden tener un impacto mayor:

“Simplemente conocemos a San José a través del lente de sus acciones. Es importante ver lo que hace al llevar a María a su casa y criar a Jesús como su propio hijo”, dijo el párroco. “Él también se preocupa por su Hijo y lo aleja del peligro llevando a María y al niño Jesús a Egipto. Cuando Jesús tiene 12 años, tanto María como José salen en busca de Jesús y lo hallan en el templo. Tenemos solamente las palabras de María, pero son ambos padres, tanto la madre como el padre, que cuidan de su hijo”.

#### Más obediente, más fiel

“Al final de cada relato en el que José juega un papel, el Evangelio nos dice que

él se levanta, toma al Niño y a su madre y hace lo que Dios le ordena”, escribe el Papa Francisco. “De hecho, Jesús y María, su Madre, son el tesoro más preciado de nuestra fe”.

De los tres miembros de la Sagrada Familia, Jesús, María y José, José es el único que nació con el pecado original. Esta cotidianidad extraordinaria da esperanza al resto de la humanidad de que se puede alcanzar la santidad.

“Creemos que tenemos que ser extraordinarios para ser santos”, dijo López. “Todo lo que hizo fue decir ‘Sí’ a Dios. San José fue un hombre justo y devoto de las Escrituras, y podemos hacer lo mismo en nuestras vidas, es sólo una cuestión de comprometernos a hacerlo y realizarlo de la manera que él lo hizo”.

Brown dijo que si bien San José no tenía la intención de criar al Hijo de Dios cuando cortejó a María, él “con alegría y por su propia voluntad aceptó esa misión y crió a Jesús como su propio hijo”, una tarea que no tenía que hacer.

“Pudo haberse marchado fácilmente, y vemos tantas familias en nuestro



tiempo que están destrozadas porque es demasiado difícil y no están cumpliendo con lo que se les ha dado”, dijo Brown. “Se trata más de la obediencia al estado de la vida de uno. La obediencia trae humildad. San José, a través de su obediencia, crece en humildad, se acerca a ese momento en que pasará la eternidad con Dios”.

### Modelo de los artesanos y patrón de los trabajadores

Debido a su papel como patrón de los trabajadores, San José es el patrón adoptado por los Jóvenes Profesionales Católicos (YCP, por siglas en inglés). “Resulta fácil para los profesionales separar en compartimentos su fe cuando están trabajando”, dijo López.

“Tener a San José como nuestro santo patrón es una buena manera de enfocarnos de nuevo en San José y convertirlo en una figura prominente en lo que estamos haciendo en nuestras vidas”.

Todas las reuniones y eventos de los Jóvenes Profesionales Católicos acaban con la Oración de San José el Trabajador, dijo.

San José sirve como modelo para encontrar a Cristo a través del trabajo, como debe haberlo hecho al enseñarle a Jesús el oficio de carpintería, dijo Brown.

“Los Santos Padres escribieron sobre eso, enfatizaron la importancia del trabajo justo, el trabajo seguro, la idea del trabajo como algo más que un medio para ganarse simplemente un sueldo”, dijo. “Puedes llevar tu oración al trabajo que haces”. Brown trabajó en el ministerio de jóvenes y dirigió a los adolescentes durante 15 años para construir cunas de bebés en Camp Fort Worth y donarlas al Proyecto Gabriel. Él agregó que más allá de recibir el cheque de pago, el trabajo tiene un significado que trasciende la acción.

“Eso es algo que inculcamos a los niños que participan en Camp Fort Worth. Comenzábamos el día enseñándoles por qué estábamos

construyendo las cunas en el contexto de ser pro-vida, haciendo lo que podamos para eliminar con el aborto y darles una oportunidad a estas madres”, dijo. “No sólo se trata del trabajo que estamos haciendo, sino también del deber de orar por las madres que usarán estas cunas, de rezar por los bebés que recostarán sus cabecitas en estas cunas, y de esta manera el trabajo que estamos haciendo

será significativo. Nuestro trabajo se convierte inherentemente en algo más grande que simplemente construir algo o crear algo. Adquiere un propósito mayor con las oraciones que se le atribuyen. Cuando se construyen cunas para madres solteras necesitadas, es mucho lo que se puede impartir y enseñar a través de la oración mientras se mide, se corta y se ensambla”. 🇺🇸



La estatua de San José en la Parroquia de Santa María de la Asunción de Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

José, guardián casto

# COMPROBACIÓN DE HECHOS

Aclaración de conceptos erróneos y respuestas a algunas preguntas sobre las vacunas contra el COVID-19

Por Juan Guajardo

**H**ay que señalar como un hecho que durante la pandemia todos hemos sido afectados de una forma u otra por la desinformación o las mentiras emitidas. Por ejemplo, considere Logically, la empresa más grande del mundo dedicada a la comprobación de datos y a desenmascarar noticias falsas. Su equipo de científicos de datos, verificadores de datos profesionales, periodistas, investigadores, desarrolladores, que incorporaron la inteligencia artificial, descubrieron en el 2019 que un preocupante 12 a 14 por ciento de los artículos sobre las elecciones del Reino Unido e India no eran confiables y que contenían información errónea. Transpórtese al año 2020. Una pandemia mundial, extremistas que surgen de nuestro propio suelo, una elección estadounidense y, por supuesto, una cantidad enorme de información nueva errónea. Logically, acaba de llegar a la situación estadounidense durante el verano del 2020, en el que me puedo imaginar que las estadísticas de desinformación superarán con creces las estadísticas mencionadas anteriormente del 2019.

De manera similar, ha habido mucha información errónea con respecto a las vacunas contra el COVID, específicamente, existen varias preocupaciones sobre la moralidad y la enseñanza católica. Para abordar estos temas *North Texas Catholic* decidió hablar con varios expertos en el campo de la moralidad y la ética, y extrajo directamente la información publicada por la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los EE. UU. y sus comités de ética y pro-vida.

## Los Expertos



El Reverendísimo Obispo Michael Olson estudió en el Centro de Ética del Cuidado de la Salud en la Tradición Católica durante cinco años y tiene un doctorado en Teología Mora de la Academia Alfonsiana de Roma. También se desempeñó como representante de la comunidad en el Comité de Ética para la Investigación con Sujetos Humanos en el Centro Médico de la Universidad de Texas de Houston.

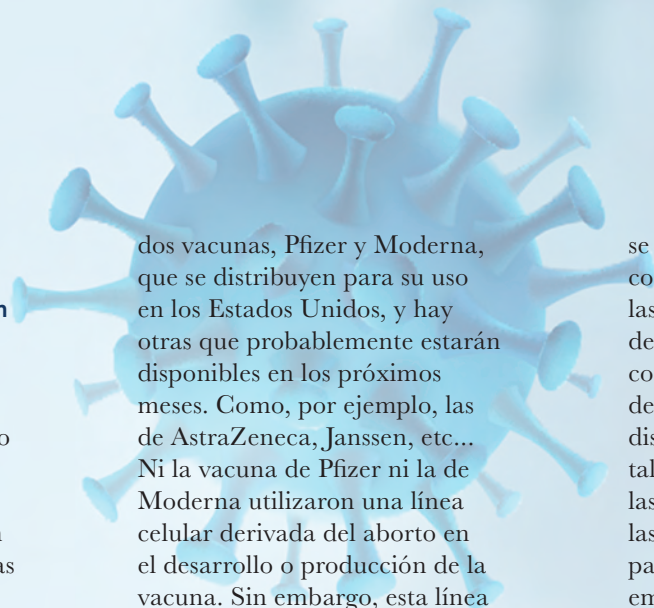


El Padre Tad Pacholczyk, Ph.D., tiene un doctorado en Neurociencia de Yale y se desempeña como Director de Educación en el Centro Nacional Católico de Bioética de Filadelfia. El Padre Tad escribe una columna mensual llamada "Making Sense of Bioethics" (*Haciendo sentido de la Bioética*), que se publica regularmente en [NorthTexasCatholic.org](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org).



La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los EE. UU. emitió múltiples declaraciones en los últimos dos meses con respecto a las vacunas contra el COVID-19. El Comité de la Doctrina y el Comité de Actividades Pro-vida fueron algunos de los principales contribuyentes a estos documentos, entre ellos: "Consideraciones morales sobre las nuevas vacunas contra el COVID-19" y "Respuestas a preguntas éticas clave sobre las vacunas contra el COVID-19" (se hace referencia aquí a ambos documentos).





**¿Es cierto que algunas de las vacunas que combaten el COVID-19 tienen una conexión con el aborto?**

**LOS OBISPOS DE LOS EE. UU.:**

Sí. Hace varias décadas, el tejido extraído de los cuerpos de los bebés abortados se utilizó para crear ciertas líneas celulares con fines de investigación. Las células de estas líneas son, de hecho, descendientes de aquellas células que se recogieron originalmente. Se han hecho de tal manera que pueden replicarse a sí mismas y algunas líneas celulares pueden reproducirse indefinidamente. Estas líneas celulares derivadas del aborto se utilizan como una “fábrica” para crear ciertas vacunas (por ejemplo, rubéola, varicela, algunas de las vacunas contra el COVID-19, etc.) Las células en sí mismas, sin embargo, no están presentes en las vacunas que reciben los pacientes.

**¿Utilizan las vacunas contra el COVID-19 líneas celulares derivadas del aborto?**

**LOS OBISPOS DE LOS EE. UU.:**

A la fecha de este escrito, cientos de vacunas contra el COVID-19 se están desarrollando en todo el mundo y más de una docena se encuentran en las etapas finales de prueba. Algunas no usan líneas celulares derivadas del aborto en absoluto, otras han usado tales líneas celulares para probar la eficacia de la vacuna y varias están usando dichas líneas celulares en las fases de su desarrollo y/o producción. Actualmente hay

dos vacunas, Pfizer y Moderna, que se distribuyen para su uso en los Estados Unidos, y hay otras que probablemente estarán disponibles en los próximos meses. Como, por ejemplo, las de AstraZeneca, Janssen, etc... Ni la vacuna de Pfizer ni la de Moderna utilizaron una línea celular derivada del aborto en el desarrollo o producción de la vacuna. Sin embargo, esta línea celular se utilizó para probar la eficacia de ambas vacunas. Por lo tanto, aunque ninguna de las vacunas está completamente libre de cualquier uso de líneas celulares derivadas del aborto, en estos dos casos el uso está muy apartado del mal inicial del aborto. Las vacunas de AstraZeneca y Janssen plantean preocupaciones morales adicionales porque una línea celular derivada del aborto se usa no sólo para hacer pruebas, sino también en el desarrollo y la producción de las vacunas.

**Como cristianos católicos, ¿está bien si nos ponemos estas vacunas?**

**LOS OBISPOS DE LOS EE. UU.:**

Dado que el virus COVID-19 puede implicar graves riesgos para la salud, puede ser moralmente aceptable recibir una vacuna que use líneas celulares derivadas del aborto, si no hay otras vacunas disponibles comparables con respecto a su seguridad y eficacia que no tengan conexión con el aborto. Si es posible elegir entre varias vacunas contra el COVID-19 igualmente seguras y efectivas,

se debe elegir entonces la vacuna con la menor conexión con las líneas celulares derivadas del aborto. Si una vacuna sin conexión con las líneas celulares derivadas del aborto no está disponible, las vacunas que usan tales líneas celulares sólo para las pruebas serían preferibles a las que usan tales líneas celulares para la producción en curso. Sin embargo, es probable que tales alternativas no sean posibles, especialmente en las primeras etapas de la distribución de la vacuna. En ese caso, uno puede recibir cualquiera de las vacunas recomendadas clínicamente en buena conciencia con la seguridad de que recibir cualquiera de tales vacunas no implica la cooperación inmoral con el aborto.

**¿Qué ha dicho el Vaticano sobre la permisibilidad moral de recibir estas vacunas?**

**PADRE TAD:** Algunos católicos intentan dar a entender que el verdadero sentir de la Iglesia es en realidad opuesto a recibir vacunas asociadas con el aborto (a pesar de que tanto el Papa Francisco como el Papa Benedicto XVI han sido vacunados con la vacuna de Pfizer). Sugieren que la verdadera doctrina de la Iglesia se está reasignando de cierto modo a raíz del nuevo fenómeno del COVID-19. Ante tales afirmaciones, es necesario recordarle a la gente, “Esto en realidad no es nada nuevo” — desde el 2005, luego

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de un examen cuidadoso y amplio del tema, y en múltiples ocasiones, la Iglesia ha concluido y enseñado no sólo que está permitido recibir vacunas producidas que utilizan estas líneas celulares problemáticas cuando existe una razón proporcional, como una amenaza para la salud, pero que también tenemos el deber de impulsar alternativas y presionar para que el uso de tales células no continúe.

Esto se afirmó por primera vez en el 2005 en un documento de la Pontificia Academia para la Vida. Se afirmó nuevamente en el 2008 en un documento de la Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe. Se volvió a afirmar en el 2017 en un documento de la Pontificia Academia para la Vida. Por último, y más recientemente, en diciembre del 2020 otro documento de la Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe expresó las mismas conclusiones.

**¿Qué podemos hacer los católicos y otras personas que defienden la santidad de la vida para protestar contra el uso de las líneas celulares derivadas del aborto?**

**EL OBISPO OLSON:** Creo que el primer paso es, por supuesto, tomar conciencia de esto. En segundo lugar, todas estas empresas son corporaciones públicas que cotizan en la bolsa. Por eso creo que, para aquéllos de nosotros que invertimos y, si tenemos una responsabilidad

como inversionistas, podemos ayudar a cambiar la cultura, en cierto sentido, presionando a nuestros accionistas, de modo que no sólo seamos partes interesadas, sino accionistas. Y creo que éstas son algunas de las cosas que podemos hacer. Lo más importante es que debemos orar, pero también tomar las medidas necesarias para lograr un verdadero cambio.

**¿Implica el uso de la nanotecnología de hidrogel para administrar estas vacunas ARNm (ARN mensajero) que se implantarán microchips en mi cuerpo?**

**PADRE TAD:** Las vacunas no tienen microchips. La nanotecnología de hidrogel se refiere a las “nanopartículas lipídicas” que encierran el ARNm. Ésta es una forma glorificada de decir “gotita de aceite muy pequeña”. Nuestras membranas celulares están compuestas de lípidos, por lo que cuando se inyecta la vacuna de ARNm, el lípido de la partícula de la vacuna se fusiona con el lípido de la célula (como dos gotitas de aceite que se fusionan) y la pieza de ARNm se deposita en el interior de la célula (“transfección”). Estas “nanopartículas lipídicas” podrían teóricamente utilizarse indebidamente para administrar otras sustancias controvertidas al cuerpo como los microchips, pero esto no significa que no deban usarse para fines válidos, como lo es administrar vacunas de ARNm que pueden salvar vidas durante una pandemia y su desarrollo. 🇺🇸

# AMBIENTE SEGURO

## Para Reportar Mala Conducta Sexual:

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

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

## Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha de Abuso:

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

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

Para más información sobre nuestros programas de prevención de abuso, visite [fwdioc.org/safe-environment](http://fwdioc.org/safe-environment)





# UN ETERNO INTERCESOR

La comunidad de St. Matthew en Arlington lamenta el fallecimiento de su párroco

Por Violeta Rocha

Con profunda tristeza, pero con la certeza de continuar su profundo legado de fe, la comunidad parroquial de St. Matthew en Arlington está de luto ante el triste y repentino fallecimiento del Padre Alejandro Hernández García, confiados de la llegada a la “casa del Padre” de su “párroco, jefe y amigo”.

Tras ser hospitalizado durante los últimos días de enero debido al COVID-19, el Padre Alejandro Hernández García, CORC, falleció el 3 de febrero a los 48 años.

El Obispo Michael Olson celebró la Misa fúnebre para el Padre Alejandro el viernes 12 en la Parroquia de St. Matthew.

Era originario de Córdoba, Veracruz, en México, y fue ordenado sacerdote en el 1999 por la sociedad religiosa, la Confraternidad de Operarios del Reino de Cristo, tras responder a su llamado vocacional a los 17 años, cuando ingresó al seminario para hacerse sacerdote.

Su primera asignación como párroco fue en la Parroquia de St. Matthew en el 2016, uniéndose a otros sacerdotes de la Confraternidad de Operarios del Reino de Cristo que ya laboraban para la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

“Es muy triste entrar a la oficina y no verlo”, relata María Soto, contadora y directora de negocios



Padre Alejandro Hernández García

de St. Matthew, “Deja un gran legado en nuestra parroquia. Sabíamos que podíamos contar con su apoyo. Ayudó con muchas remodelaciones de la parroquia, siempre pedía la opinión de las personas, y lo que él decidía sabíamos que era por el bien de St. Matthew”, asegura Soto.

Su gran devoción a la Virgen de Guadalupe era palpable. No sólo durante las memorables Fiestas Guadalupanas del 12 de diciembre cada año, sino también en cada celebración litúrgica y en cada bendición que

daba. Comenzó el rezo del Rosario junto al Grupo Guadalupano hace 5 años.

“Los Rosarios son un legado que nos deja y los seguiremos haciendo. Pedimos por toda la comunidad parroquial, por nuestros sacerdotes y por nuestro Obispo”, dijo Marina González, coordinadora del Grupo Guadalupano, sobre los Rosarios de cada primer sábado del mes.

Ella aseguró que, aunque la tristeza por su partida física está presente, “mediante la fe, sabemos que él esta con Dios”.

González es también lectora y formó parte de varios retiros espirituales que constantemente organizaba el Padre Alejandro para cada uno de los ministerios parroquiales. “Siempre fomentó el amor a

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# UN MARAVILLOSO ejemplo de cristo

Antiguo Párroco de la Iglesia de Todos Los Santos, Padre Stephen Jasso, TOR, fallece a los 88 años

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

El Padre Stephen Jasso, TOR, párroco jubilado de la Parroquia de Todos los Santos de Fort Worth y un defensor ferviente muy respetado de la creciente población hispana de la región, siempre enseñó a través de sus obras.

Cuando una enfermedad debilitante le dejó sin habla y sin movilidad, todavía daba ejemplares lecciones de fe. “Él siempre me dijo, ‘ésta es la cruz que me toca llevar. Siga orando por mí y yo seguiré orando por usted’”, dijo Arica Prado, amiga del fraile franciscano desde hace mucho tiempo y la directora del lugar que tanto amaba el Padre Jasso, la Escuela Católica de Todos los Santos. “Él era nuestra luz brillante. Fue difícil verlo sufrir”.

El Padre Jasso, un incansable defensor de los inmigrantes, de los bebés por nacer y de la educación católica, falleció el 12 de febrero a los 88 años, luego de una batalla de tres años contra la enfermedad de Lou Gehrig, también conocida como ELA (esclerosis lateral amiotrófica).

La misa fúnebre del Padre Jasso fue el martes febrero 23 de febrero en la Parroquia de Todos los Santos con el Obispo Michael Olson como el celebrante.

El Obispo Olson describe al

Padre Jasso como un franciscano fiel que como pastor cuidó por 23 años a su rebaño de Todos los Santos con gran entrega y dedicación. Respetado y admirado por funcionarios del gobierno y del servicio público, la influencia del finado párroco se extiende más allá de los confines de su parroquia a los hombres y mujeres de diferentes creencias religiosas de Fort Worth y todo Texas.

“Una lección que nos dio en sus últimos años fue su testimonio de la dignidad humana y el derecho fundamental a la vida a través de su sufrimiento y perseverancia valiente ante la enfermedad de ELA”, comentó el Obispo Olson. “Estamos muy agradecidos a Dios por la vida y el servicio del Padre Stephen Jasso. Les pido que se unan a mis oraciones por el eterno descanso de su alma”.

El Padre Jasso fue criado por sus padres, Domingo Jasso Sr. y Leonor, quienes eran católicos muy devotos. El Padre Jasso le atribuyó su crecimiento espiritual y vocación sacerdotal a haber conocido a los Franciscanos desde joven. La Orden de los Franciscanos administraba la Parroquia de San Francisco de Waco, en donde él fue bautizado, hizo la Primera Comunión y la Confirmación. Antes de ingresar a los Franciscanos en el 1957, el Padre

Jasso sirvió en las Fuerzas Armadas de los Estados Unidos durante la Guerra de Corea, donde obtuvo el rango de sargento de primera clase.

Después de obtener su título universitario en St. Francis College en Pensilvania, el veterano del ejército comenzó sus estudios de seminario en Mallorca, España, y luego en la Universidad de Santo Tomás de Aquino (Angelicum) en Roma, donde fue ordenado al sacerdocio en el 1965.

“Pasé ocho años corridos en Europa sin poder volver a casa”, el Padre Jasso relató durante una entrevista con *North Texas Catholic* en el 2018. “Pero mi familia apoyó siempre lo que hice”.

Cuando el sacerdote recién ordenado llegó a Perú para su primera asignación, sus padres y sus 14 hermanos le compraron una motocicleta para que el misionero pudiera moverse por las estrechas carreteras montañosas del país.

El Padre Jasso fue enviado a México cuatro años más tarde, en donde pasó 24 años sirviendo a las parroquias y la comunidad franciscana en diferentes roles de liderazgo. En el 1994 su orden le permitió venir a Fort Worth para trabajar en la Parroquia de Santo Tomás Apóstol por seis meses, luego de lo cual fue asignado





El Padre Stephen Jasso se dirige a los asistentes luego de recibir la proclamación de la alcaldesa de Fort Worth, Betsy Price, en la que declaró el 7 de agosto del 2018 como el Día de Padre Jasso en la ciudad de Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)

como párroco a la Parroquia de Todos los Santos.

Bajo su liderazgo, la parroquia histórica floreció. El párroco de voz amable y suave reclutó hermanas religiosas para trabajar en los ministerios parroquiales, encabezó la construcción de un salón parroquial “que se necesitaba desesperadamente” para las clases de educación religiosa y elevó el perfil de los hispanos en Fort Worth al participar en juntas y comités cívicos. En el 2002 el Padre Jasso se reunió con el entonces Presidente George W. Bush durante la Asamblea Cumbre de Liderazgo Hispano. A nivel local, sirvió en la junta de United Way (Fondos Unidos) y el Grupo de Trabajo sobre el Racismo.

La alcaldesa de Fort Worth, Betsy Price, honró “el humilde servicio y la participación activa en su comunidad” del líder religioso al proclamar el 7 de agosto del 2018 como el Día del Padre Jasso en la ciudad.

Carlos Flores, miembro de toda la vida de la Parroquia de Todos los Santos, dijo que el difunto párroco demostró su ejemplar

liderazgo a través de la fe y las obras.

“Incluso en los últimos días de su vida fue una inspiración para todos nosotros”, declaró el concejal de la ciudad de Fort Worth que representa al Distrito 2. “Él supo llevar muy bien su cruz con dignidad y fe”.

Cuando el tejano de tercera generación consideró postularse para un cargo público, buscó el consejo de Padre Jasso, a quien consideraba como su líder espiritual y amigo de toda la vida.

“Lo llamé, hablamos y oramos juntos”, recordó Flores. “Yo quería estar completamente seguro de que yo deseaba aspirar a ese cargo y era importante recibir su bendición”.

La capacidad del humilde sacerdote para acercarse a la gente y ejercer influencia en los líderes comunitarios ayudó a evitar que la Escuela Católica de Todos los Santos cerrara a principios de la década del 2000. Ante la aguda merma de la matrícula de los estudiantes y unas instalaciones en mal estado, el Padre Jasso se reunió con varios propietarios de negocios y feligreses locales para determinar el destino de la escuela.

Su compromiso personal de proporcionar asistencia a las familias para la matrícula de sus hijos, junto a las promesas del apoyo de exalumnos y benefactores, contribuyó a que la escuela parroquial pudiera salir de la crisis financiera. Se logró realizar un proyecto de remodelación que actualizó las aulas en el 2010.

“Tengo el privilegio de servir a la educación católica porque estoy convencido de que eso es lo que la Iglesia y el país necesitan”, dijo enfáticamente en el 2013. “Necesitamos católicos firmes con una convicción viva de la verdad que han descubierto a través del proceso de la educación católica”.

Teresa Montes, graduada de la Escuela Católica de Todos los Santos y de Nolan Catholic High School, elogió al Padre Jasso por su devoción y su entusiasmo para realizar su misión. Montes creció a unos pasos de la parroquia y sus padres, John y Jeanette Hernández, eran amigos cercanos del párroco.

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## PADRE JASSO, DE LA PÁGINA 61

“Él nunca estuvo quieto”, comentó. “Trabajó incansablemente día y noche. Me acuerdo ver a menudo al Padre Jasso en casa de mis padres a las diez de la noche tomando café”.

Su llegada en el 1994 a la Parroquia de Todos los Santos generó un récord de asistencia a las Misas y un renovado sentido de orgullo en la comunidad hispana. Antes de enfermarse, el párroco se ponía su sombrero de ala ancha y su traje de mariachi para encabezar a caballo el desfile del Cinco de Mayo o el Día de la Independencia de México.

“El Padre Jasso fue una persona a la

que todos llamaban para pedir su opinión sin importar de qué tema se tratara”, dijo Montes. “Siempre realzó la comunidad del sector norte (North Side) de la ciudad y las personas que viven allí”.

Según la salud del Padre Jasso empeoró, sus familiares y muchos amigos y feligreses se reunieron en varias ocasiones en su casa para ofrecer sus oraciones y derramar lágrimas mientras le decían palabras de consuelo al sacerdote enfermo.

“Ya sentían que su muerte se acercaba y se reunían con tristeza y gratitud”, explicó el Padre Manuel Holguin.

El párroco actual de la Parroquia de Todos los Santos describió la dedicación

de su predecesor al sacerdocio y al ministerio como una hermosa bendición.

“No se puede describir su vida en pocas palabras”, agregó. “Fue un maravilloso ejemplo de Cristo para su pueblo”.

En una de sus últimas entrevistas con los medios, el Padre Jasso explicó cómo su fe inquebrantable lo ayudó a sobrellevar un diagnóstico devastador.

“Estoy cargando la cruz porque siento que, por alguna razón, Dios ha permitido esta enfermedad”, le dijo a un reportero del *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* en el 2018.

“La cargaré como el Señor llevó su cruz por mí. El sufrimiento es parte de nuestro diario vivir”. 🍀

## PADRE ALEJANDRO, DE LA PÁGINA 59

la Virgen de Guadalupe y su gran amor a la Eucaristía.”

“Estuvo siempre preocupado por sus ovejas”, afirmó González, y aseveró que el Padre Alejandro fue un gran ejemplo del Buen Pastor. “Ya tenemos [en el cielo] un eterno sacerdote que estará intercediendo por nosotros”, dijo y está muy agradecida “a Dios por habernos enviado al Padre Alejandro a nuestra parroquia, a la Diócesis de Fort Worth por haber traído a su congregación, y a su congregación por haber formado un sacerdote ejemplar”.

Testigo de esa buena formación, pero también de su gran amor a Dios, fue el Padre Ariel Muñoz, administrador pastoral de St. Matthew, y también sacerdote de la Confraternidad de Operarios del Reino de Cristo, quien convivió con el Padre Alejandro durante sus primeros años en el seminario. Fueron también compañeros durante sus estudios de teología en España.

El Padre Ariel fue ordenado sacerdote dos años antes que el Padre Alejandro, y en el 2007 ambos fueron formados en el Seminario Mayor de Cristo Rey en Querétaro, hasta que en el 2016 se volvieron a encontrar en la Parroquia de St. Matthew.

El Padre Alejandro tenía una calidad tremenda, sobre todo en sus homilías, afirmó el Padre Ariel, y aseguró que “él supo llegar al corazón de las personas

llevando la Palabra de Dios. Siempre enseñaba a la gente con el Misal Romano, como debe ser,” dijo y añadió que lo recordará por su gran compromiso con su ministerio, “siempre con mucho entusiasmo y mucha entrega”.

“El Padre Alejandro ya está en la presencia de Dios”, dijo el Padre Ariel, aseverando que el legado del Padre Alejandro se mantendrá vivo en la comunidad de St. Matthew.

Juana Rodríguez, Coordinadora de Ambiente Seguro de la parroquia, resaltó la gran labor de servicio que el Padre Alejandro realizó para la comunidad de St. Matthew, impulsando la remodelación de los salones de catecismo, de los baños en la iglesia, y de la oficina parroquial. Agregó que estaba en sus planes construir una nueva cafetería con cocina.

“Dejó un legado de amor a Dios, amor a la Iglesia y amor a nuestra religión católica. Nos enseñó a seguir adelante siempre, a no darnos por vencidos. ‘Hay que echarle ganas. Dios va a proveer, la Virgen María nos va a guiar’, solía decir el Padre Alejandro. Y vamos a seguir así, con ese legado que nos dejó de servicio y de seguir adelante”, afirmó Rodríguez.

“Ojalá que nosotros como congregación de hermanos y hermanas, a nombre de él, trabajemos duro para completar eso que él dejó ya empezado”, comentó sobre el proyecto de la cafetería.

El Padre Alejandro era de carácter

discreto, alejado de la presunción y dejaba que el centro de atención fuera siempre Dios. Él buscó siempre estar presente para sus feligreses usando sus talentos, entre ellos tocar la guitarra y practicar el ciclismo.

Según Yeni Montoya, originaria de Hidalgo, México, y voluntaria de la recaudación de fondos en St. Matthew, ese deseo por parte del Padre Alejandro de mantenerse cerca de sus feligreses fue más evidente durante esta pandemia, cuando por ordenanza de la ciudad, la celebración de la Misa tuvo que realizarse a puerta cerrada.

“Nos grabó dos audios, en uno de ellos tocando la guitarra y cantando... en ese momento podías sentir que quería estar cerca de nosotros”, dijo sobre las reflexiones de Semana Santa y del Día de la Divina Misericordia del año pasado.

Jaime González, Ministro Extraordinario de la Eucaristía, compartió con el Padre Alejandro el gusto por el ciclismo durante los últimos cuatro años.


“Los miércoles, que era su día libre, nos íbamos con frecuencia por la mañana a correr rutas forestales en bicicleta, de una a dos horas”, relató. Poco a poco, más feligreses se fueron integrando, y formamos un grupo de siete feligreses que compartimos con nuestro párroco en contacto con la naturaleza, “íbamos contentos porque él siempre iba de líder y para nosotros él era como el pastor y nosotros, las ovejas”, dijo. 🍀





## UNA CELEBRACIÓN DE SALVACIÓN Y MISERICORDIA

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

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**C**uando una persona muere, queda un vacío en la vida de sus familiares y amigos. La Iglesia responde a los afligidos por la muerte de su ser querido con las acciones litúrgicas y las palabras que se brindan a través de la celebración de un servicio de vigilia, la Misa del funeral y las oraciones de entrega del cuerpo de la persona junto a la tumba. Estos tres momentos litúrgicos nos recuerdan el sufrimiento, la muerte y la resurrección de Jesús, y sus efectos salvadores sobre la vida del difunto y sobre todos los seres queridos sobrevivientes. Estos actos rituales nos dictan cómo los católicos su duelo con la esperanza de la Resurrección. Cada uno de estos momentos tiene su propio carácter y propósito. Si bien la muerte y el dolor que rodea a la muerte no son exclusivos de los católicos, la transición ritualizada y litúrgica de la muerte a la vida es particular de la teología y la espiritualidad católicas. Los elogios o panegíricos son una de esas diferencias.

*La Introducción General al Orden de los Funerales Cristianos* declara claramente que en la liturgia del funeral o exequias un sacerdote o diácono debe ofrecer una homilía, “pero nunca debe haber un panegírico”. Se entiende que un elogio es una narración que en cierta medida detalla los logros y las cualidades de la persona fallecida, y los efectos emocionales de su fallecimiento en sus amigos y familiares sobrevivientes. Si se va a pronunciar un elogio, el lugar apropiado para el mismo

es el Servicio de Vigilia o velatorio. Los comentarios hechos en el contexto de los elogios también deben ser apropiados con respecto a las mejores cualidades de la persona fallecida de acuerdo con una vida cristiana y no glorificar ninguna fechoría o pecado pasado, incluso si la persona que pronuncia el elogio no los ve como tal. Los chistes inapropiados hechos por un panegirista no sirven de consuelo, sino que sólo distraen por un momento de la realidad de la muerte y la esperanza de la Resurrección. La Vigilia es el entorno en el que consolamos a los seres queridos de una persona fallecida recordando al difunto y recordando los eventos vividos durante su vida y que llegaron a su fin con la muerte.

Esto presenta un desafío pastoral para los sacerdotes, diáconos y ministros pastorales al responder a los seres queridos sobrevivientes, muchos de los cuales tal vez no sean católicos o se hayan alejado de la práctica de su fe. Para responder a las familias que sufren por la muerte de su ser querido lo recomendable es reunirse con ellos para preparar la vigilia y la liturgia del funeral. Es necesario que el que vaya a ofrecer la homilía escuche a los seres queridos contar la historia de la vida de la persona fallecida. El duelo es un momento de presencia y la preparación para la liturgia del funeral y los ritos que acompañan a la vigilia, y el reunirse alrededor de la tumba es una oportunidad para tal presencia. Al escuchar tales historias, el homilista puede y debe considerar lo que escucha de los dolientes, y puede sugerir lecturas de la

Sagrada Escritura que sean apropiadas y que manifiesten el misterio de la salvación, tal como ese misterio se manifestó a lo largo de la vida y los acontecimientos de la persona fallecida. Ésta es una forma muy consoladora de hablar sobre la vida y los logros de la persona, pero con un enfoque en la acción de Cristo presente en ellos. Sin la presencia pastoral del homilista, se descuidaría la responsabilidad pastoral de consolar a los dolientes.

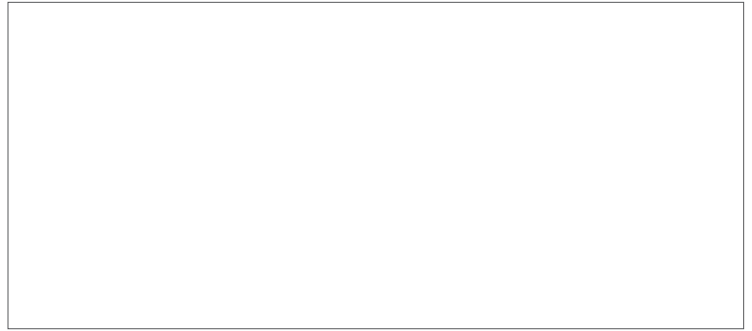
La homilía es un aspecto demasiado importante en el ejercicio del ministerio de curación a los deudos y afligidos por parte del sacerdote o el diácono, que no debe ser sustituido o acompañado por un video o un elogio que sea ofrecido por un doliente que está emocionalmente vulnerable y, en particular, uno que haya tenido poca oportunidad de hablar apropiadamente dentro del contexto de la liturgia en un momento de transición muy crucial. El resultado con demasiada frecuencia es la distracción del misterio de la esperanza en la Resurrección y de las oraciones por el reposo del alma del difunto inherente a la liturgia del funeral destinada por la Iglesia a la sanación de los reunidos para este fin.

Es cierto que el tiempo de dolor por la muerte de un ser querido tal vez no sea un momento de enseñanza, pero observo que es un momento de evangelización en el que la presencia consoladora de la Iglesia acompaña a los dolientes en el misterio de la salvación ganado para nosotros por Cristo, que nunca olvida las promesas que hizo en el Bautismo de los miembros de Su rebaño. 🇺🇸



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# STAND UP FOR CHILDREN

**APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH**

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