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THE DIGNITY OF FAMILY LIFE

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



 @BpOlsonFW

Pope Saint John Paul II preached prophetically at the historic liturgy that he celebrated on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. on October 7, 1979: “Human life is precious because it is the gift of a God whose love is infinite; and when God gives life, it is forever. Life is also precious because it is the expression and the fruit of love. This is why life should spring up within the setting of marriage, and why marriage and the parents’ love for one another should be marked by generosity in self-giving. The great danger for family life, in the midst of any society whose idols are pleasure, comfort, and independence, lies in the fact that people close their hearts and become selfish. The fear of making permanent commitments can change the mutual love of husband and wife into two loves of self — two loves existing side by side, until they end in separation.”

This is important for us to remember during these days when the very real possibility exists that the U.S. Supreme Court could curtail, if not overturn, *Roe v. Wade* and unrestricted access to abortion. We must remember that we still have so much work to do for the protection and dignity of life, including that we first promote the integrity of natural marriage and the sacrament of Holy Matrimony between one man and one woman bound in a loving and respectful commitment to permanence, fidelity, and openness to conception of new human life.

Part and parcel to the first assault on human life is the attack on the nature and integrity of natural marriage and the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The protection of the child must begin with the protection of natural marriage between one man and one woman. Without natural marriage, marriage

is denigrated into an arrangement of mutual and temporary convenience between two individuals, irrespective of gender, that removes the human qualities of permanence, fidelity, and fertility from sacrificial love on the part of husband and wife. This is especially detrimental to the life of our nation and society because it selfishly and intentionally deprives a child from the necessary relationship with both a mother and a father.

The challenge for us today is that so many young men and women are afraid to make the sacrifice of a marital commitment because they have come to see and to fear that divorce is inevitable. So, they lack confidence, and they refuse to marry because they do not want to divorce. They refuse to commit to love and to sacrifice for each other, so they become afraid of having children or they choose to have children only out of their own desire for a legacy or to meet their own emotional needs. This, in part, leads to the current phenomenon of fathers and mothers treating their children as peers instead of fulfilling their responsibility to be their children’s fathers and mothers, teaching them the faith and guiding them gradually to mature independence.

The government cannot replace the essential role of husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, any more than it can replace the essential role of the Church in the formation and education of human beings. As Pope Saint John Paul II courageously preached in that same homily from 1979: “Much remains to be done to support those whose lives are wounded and to restore hope to those who are afraid of life. Courage is needed to resist pressures and false slogans, to proclaim the supreme dignity of all life, and to demand that society itself give it its protection.” 🇺🇸

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38 BUILDING BLOCKS
By teaching children faith and love, families build the next generation of the Church and society.



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Mission Not Impossible

I'm sure you've heard many heroic tales of families in the Bible and in the history of the Catholic Church: the Maccabees and their resolve to stay faithful to God's law even in the face of death; the Martins (the family which saw three of its members become saints, one of whom is St. Thérèse of Lisieux); and then there's the Holy Family itself, comprising Mary, St. Joseph, and, by extension, Sts. Anne and Joachim, who were tasked with raising Jesus Himself!

It's understandable if we feel lackluster by comparison. And it's understandable to feel overwhelmed by such holy examples, especially since we all live in imperfect, flawed families. Pope Francis himself understands this. Remember his 2015 address at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia? "Families have difficulties. In families, we quarrel. Sometimes plates can fly. Children bring headaches." And "I won't speak about mothers-in-law," he added, playfully.

But, one thing is for certain: whether you're a parent, sibling, child, or in-law, if you have a family, God is calling you to love courageously in that family. No excuses.

Those families mentioned above sure did that. But we can be tempted to think we'll never live up to that level of holiness.

But... breaking news alert! Even they were seen as imperfect from outsiders and they probably didn't feel holy all the time, either. You can bet Mary and Joseph faced struggles and questioned themselves as they obediently carried out the astonishing mission of raising the Son of God. Similarly, things weren't perfect for the Martins as shown in St. Thérèse's autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, which includes various instances of their continual process of conversion (and St. Thérèse's stubbornness). Such is also the case for other families in salvation history: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Hosea and Gomer, Zechariah and Elizabeth, and so on.

What they all have in common, though, is that they all clung to God and His graces and didn't exclude themselves from His love and mercy. Which means, *you* absolutely *can* live a holy family life. No excuses.

Juan Guajardo
 EDITOR

Ready for worship



New St. Philip the Apostle Church prepares to open

FLOWER MOUND — After more than two years of construction, St. Philip the Apostle Parish is welcoming its parishioners to worship in its new Flower Mound church.

As this issue of the *NTC* goes to press, the parish celebrated its farewell Mass on February 20 in its Lewisville church. At the conclusion of the Mass, clergy led a procession out of the building with liturgical items, linens, candlesticks and sacred images.

On February 22, Bishop Michael Olson celebrated a dedication Mass of the new church with Father Ray McDaniel, pastor, and Monsignor Francis Boakye Tawiah, parochial vicar.

You don't have to wait for our next issue to learn about the new church. Visit NorthTexasCatholic.org to read the story and watch the video.



See the photos online at:
North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com



Road trip for a reason



Maddy Rodrigue and TCU students provide hurricane relief

FORT WORTH — When Hurricane Ida hit her Louisiana home on August 29, 2021, Houma resident and TCU student Maddy Rodrigue, 21, was safely at school in Fort Worth some 526 miles west of the city of more than 33,000 people that sits near the Gulf. Concerned for her family and friends, Rodrigue returned to Houma about a week later and found a scene of devastation.

“My family still didn't have power,” she said. “The

gas stations were pretty much cut off to public use and all the electric lines were down. It was just crazy.”

After seeing the toll inflicted on her hometown by the Category 4 storm, Rodrigue decided she needed to do more. So, on the final weekend of January, Rodrigue led a group of seven TCU volunteers to Houma where the local Catholic Charities had organized not only their stay, but the work the group would do.

Once there, Rodrigue's team hit the ground running, aiding two families who needed help gutting their homes' interiors and prepping for restoration.

Rodrigue said, “I think that there's plenty of opportunity, and it's really just reaching out and seeing what is needed at the moment.”

— Lance Murray

Maddy Rodrigue (*NTC*/Juan Guajardo) ▶





NTC/Ben Torres



Dr. Scott Sollom, theology professor at Franciscan University, gave the keynote address. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

“Catechists work miracles”



“Back-to-the-basics” of the faith emphasized at this year’s RCIA Formation Day

BEDFORD — It’s been a long two years, Diocese of Fort Worth Director of Evangelization and Catechesis Jason Whitehead said as the January 29 Annual RCIA Day opened at St. Michael Church in Bedford, the first in-person meeting since 2020.

“It was nice to see so many of you via Zoom last year,” Whitehead said. “But this is much better.”

The event gathers RCIA instructors and directors from various parishes.

“Because so much information goes into RCIA, it requires a lot of initial formation but also continuing formation,” Whitehead said. “This annual event is situated in the middle of the academic year, so we like to catch them midway, share information, and get them talking with others from other parishes.”

Previous years focused

on different periods of those going through the RCIA process. Presenters switched gears this year to focus on the aspects, mainly the catechetical aspect, something Whitehead described as a “back-to-the-basics” revisit of the contents of the faith.

Throughout the day, talks were held in English and Spanish. Dr. Scott Sollom, a Franciscan University theology professor, delivered the keynote: “Catechesis: Echoing What God Has Revealed.”

Catechists work miracles, said Father Balaji Boyalla, SAC, pastor of St. Michael.

“Sometimes you never realize the work you do, the contributions and difference you make to the people,” Fr. Boyalla said. “How your ministry and enthusiasm touch many lives and bring more people closer to Jesus.”

— Matthew Smith

Love comes in small sizes



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton opens supply depot for Gabriel Project

KELLER — Oh baby, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish is ready to help.

On February 7, volunteers from the Keller parish and young adult ministry stocked and organized a supply closet for Gabriel Project mothers who live in the northeast quadrant of Tarrant County. Shelves are filled with diapers, clothing, bottles, blankets, and more.



Emma Bouillion, coordinator of young adult outreach, and volunteers stocked the baby closet. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Who's a good dog?



Service dog enables parishioner to attend Mass, return to work

FORT WORTH — If you ask Shelsey Scavenger what helped her rebound from a brutal assault in 2011, the former Greyhound bus driver credits two lifelines — her Catholic faith and a black-and-white spotted English setter called Fynn.

“After the assault, I became a good Catholic,” Scavenger admitted, referring to her return to Mass after years of being away from the Church. “My reversion was a way of saying ‘thank you’ to God for letting me live.”

As part of her rehabilitation, she volunteered with an animal rescue group in 2012. The experience introduced her to Fynn, an energetic setter pup whose family didn’t want him anymore.

Scavenger, now a parishioner at All Saints in Fort Worth, had Fynn trained as a service animal to help her deal with post-traumatic stress



disorder and spells of anxiety. Together, they have attended Mass in 42 states, and he has been blessed by three bishops and countless priests.


▲ Shelsey Scavenger pets her service dog, Fynn, who has been diagnosed with bone cancer. (NTC/Ben Torres)

—Joan Kurkowski-Gillen



Tola Lutz (left), and her father, Solomon Alade, parishioners of St. Rita in Fort Worth, make the sign of the cross during the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Mass honors MLK legacy

 Bishop says to face evil of racism with “courageous love and sacrificial non-violence”

ARLINGTON — With racial tension, political discord, and differing views on criminal justice dividing society, what would Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. think of today’s America?

It’s a question often raised as the country celebrates a national holiday in honor of the slain civil rights activist.

North Texas parishioners gathered January 22 inside St. Vincent de Paul Church for the 36th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Diocesan Memorial Mass concelebrated by Bishop Michael Olson and Father Philip Brembah, pastor of the Arlington parish.

Gospel hymns, sung by

members of Our Mother of Mercy, Nolan Catholic High School, and the St. Joseph choirs enhanced the liturgy.

In his homily, Bishop Olson reminded worshippers, “Without God, we cannot have the courage to change and break the cycle of sin, injustice, and dehumanizing racism.”

A Baptist minister, Dr. King knew that and called men and women to a conversion centered in Christ.

“He called us and showed us how to face the evils of injustice and racism with courageous love and sacrificial non-violence,” Bishop Olson pointed out.

— Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

CLERGY ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

REV. PETER WIAFE AKENTENG

New to the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, effective December 20.

REV. JOSE IGNACIO OLVERA ALVAREZ

New to the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Fort Worth, effective January 21.

REV. WOON PIL JEONG BENEDICT

From Pastor of Korean Martyrs Parish in Hurst, has been **recalled** by his religious order community, effective December 31.

REV. PETER BYRNE, FSSP

From Parochial Vicar of St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth, has been **recalled** by his religious order community, effective November 8.

REV. ALEJANDRO LOPEZ CHAVEZ, CORC

From Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Fort Worth, has been **recalled** by his religious order community, effective December 31.

REV. BINOY KURIAN, TOR

New to the diocese, has been appointed **Chaplain** of hospital ministry, effective November 10.

REV. CHANG JUN LEE

New to the diocese, has been appointed **Pastor** of Korean Martyrs Parish in Hurst, effective January 10.

REV. RAUL MARTINEZ

From Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Wichita Falls, has requested a **leave of absence**, effective December 26.

DEACON HECTOR SALVA

Retired from St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, effective December 31.

DEACON LARRY SANDOVAL

From Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, effective December 13.

DEACON JESUS HUMBERTO SERRANO

From Our Lady of Guadalupe in Fort Worth, to St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, effective December 13.

REV. OUSEPH THEKKUMTHALA

Leaving the Diocese of Fort Worth, effective February 1.

REV. GEORGE THENNATTIL, TOR

From Chaplain of hospital ministry, has been **recalled** by his religious order community, effective December 20.

When God gives life



Prayer is at the heart of Respect Life Mass

ARGYLE — Prayer for lives lost to abortion and focusing on the breakdown of moral, social, and civil structures supporting human life was at the heart of the diocesan annual Respect Life Mass held Jan. 24 at St. Mark Church in Argyle.

“Human life is precious because it is the gift of a God whose love is infinite,” Bishop Michael Olson told about 400 attendees, referring to the preaching of Pope Saint John Paul II at the Mass celebrated on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 7, 1979. “And when God gives life, it is forever.”

Bishop Olson spoke of the significance of a child, which is made clear in *Matthew 18*, the Gospel for



Parishioner Brad Horn holds his one-year-old son during the Respect Life Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

the Mass.

“The child in the ancient world was the primary symbol of radical dependence, vulnerability, and hope for the future of a family and for a nation.”

This year, Catholics are attentive to a possibility that the U.S. Supreme Court could curtail, or possibly overturn, *Roe v. Wade*.

During a reception after the Mass, Theresa

Schauf, Diocesan Respect Life Coordinator, said, “Changing the law is a great step, but it’s really the heart that needs to change.”

– Susan McFarland

Life guard training

Flourishing Tree Family Pregnancy Resource Center holds training on new ultrasound machine

ALEDO — The wait is over. Last spring, the Knights of Columbus raised funds to purchase an ultrasound machine for Flourishing Tree Family Pregnancy Resource Center in Aledo.

The machine has been installed, and the center conducted training recently.

Roxanna Young, the executive director of Flourishing Tree, said it takes a team effort to eliminate abortion.

According to Young, images of the baby at any stage are the most impactful way to encourage a woman contemplating an abortion to carry her baby to term.

She said, “We can show families, ‘Look at what you have.’”

Flourishing Tree then assists families with material needs, and professionals on staff provide educational, emotional, and spiritual support to the parents.

A volunteer is trained to use Flourishing Tree’s new ultrasound machine. (NTC/Juan Guajardo) ▶





Peter enjoys snack time with other two-year-olds at St. Catherine of Siena Preschool in Carrollton. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

A little faith



Diocesan preschools help young children grow in faith and a love of learning

ARLINGTON — Across the diocese, parishes offer preschool programs to serve their communities by helping their youngest parishioners grow in faith and in a love of learning.

Isabel White, director of St. Vincent’s Academy at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington, said, “It allows families an opportunity to have their child in a safe place with a great faculty and be loved and cared for by people who also love God.”

“We work hard to build them up in developmentally appropriate ways to help them get ready for kindergarten,” White said. “We want students to understand that learning is fun.”

St. Catherine of Siena’s parish preschool in Carrollton currently serves about 45 students. Preschool director Susan Sasso said, “We want it to be a happy environment where kids want to come to school and want to learn, where they feel good about themselves.”

Like St. Vincent de Paul and St. Catherine of Siena, St. Michael Parish in Bedford has offered preschool for more than 25 years. Director Alyssa Roper said, “We have many people who come back and say they went to preschool here, and now they’re bringing their children.”

— Sandra Engelland





love your
NEIGHBOR

(L-R) Abraham Salas, technology associate; Father Michael Higgins, pastor; Chris Stiles, Safe Environment Assistant; Terry Wisdom, Guardian Ministry member; Teresa Isakson, bookkeeper; and Father Zachary Burns, parochial vicar, helped hostages' families, media, and law enforcement at Good Shepherd during the Jan. 15 hostage incident at nearby Beth Israel Synagogue. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Good Shepherd parishioners didn't hesitate to help when their Jewish neighbors faced a hostage crisis

By Matthew Smith

As the tense hours of a January 15 hostage standoff situation unfolded at Congregation Beth Israel, so too did an unbelievable manifestation of faith and community at nearby Good Shepherd Parish, Father Zachary Burns, TOR, said.

“Just seeing not only the Good Shepherd community but people from other faiths and the community in general coming together to help one another was so unbelievable,” the parochial vicar said.

An armed British citizen identified as Malik Faisal Akram entered Congregation Beth Israel that morning during the synagogue's Sabbath morning service and took four hostages, including Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, and engaged in an 11-hour standoff with law enforcement officials. All four were eventually released unharmed though Akram was killed in the incident.

Officials from numerous law enforcement agencies and media outlets made use of Good Shepherd's parking lot and facilities during the standoff.

“Police blocked the road and, soon after that, we received a request to provide a place of safety for the family of the rabbi and [family members] of the other hostages,” said Father Michael Higgins, TOR, pastor of Good Shepherd. “So, we opened our doors to them, got them settled, and made sure they had what they needed — phone chargers, coffee, food, and so on.”

Family members, for a time at least, were able to follow the developing situation via a Facebook livestream of the service at the synagogue and even talk or text with the hostages.

“I don't know if that continued throughout the day,” Fr. Higgins said. “But it was comforting for the family members on one hand to be able to know their loved ones were okay but discomforting too because the hostages were definitely in harm's way and at any moment anything could happen. So, it was a very tense situation throughout the day.”

Diocese of Fort Worth Director of Security Mike Short oversaw the diocesan Guardian Ministers' efforts to assist law enforcement officials and keep the hostages' family members separated from media.

“We had a great response from [Guardian Ministers] from throughout the diocese who provided security and help throughout the day,” Short said. “It was amazing — the support from staff, parishioners, other faith leaders and members, and the community just pulling together to do everything they could to help.”

Both priests praised the Guardian Ministers.

Continued on Page 17

RS

Truth. Beauty. Goodness.

In seeking truth, beauty, and goodness, students develop a love of learning and discover God's purpose

By Sandra Engelland

Nolan Catholic High School senior Brett Tipler can trace the threads of truth, beauty, and goodness throughout his time in primary and secondary Catholic schools.

"From our earliest days, we're learning to become more responsible citizens and understand our role," Brett said. "My relationships have become more fruitful, and I understand my role in the world."

He said that his Catholic education emphasizes "exploring the world around us," and helps him realize his vocation comes from God, and he has an important mission to "witness to the needs of my community."

For Saint Maria Goretti third graders Caroline Peterson and Damian Smeragliuolo, the aim is to identify God's handprints in their everyday lives. Their teacher, Claïressa Cruz, asks them often to think about where they see God at work, inside and outside the classroom.

Whether it's a science experiment, a math lesson, a story about Jesus, or a class project to study the saints, the "scholars" in Cruz's class are encouraged to learn helpful habits and develop their thinking skills.

"One of the things we do with all our lessons is that I tell them what habit we're working on and why God wants us to learn it," Cruz said.

Damian said that he is learning a lot by

studying the saints, such as following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi by "treating every living thing with kindness."

Caroline also is learning important lessons from the saints. A recent story about Saint John Neumann reminded her to "trust in God even though others, at times, might not be nice to me."

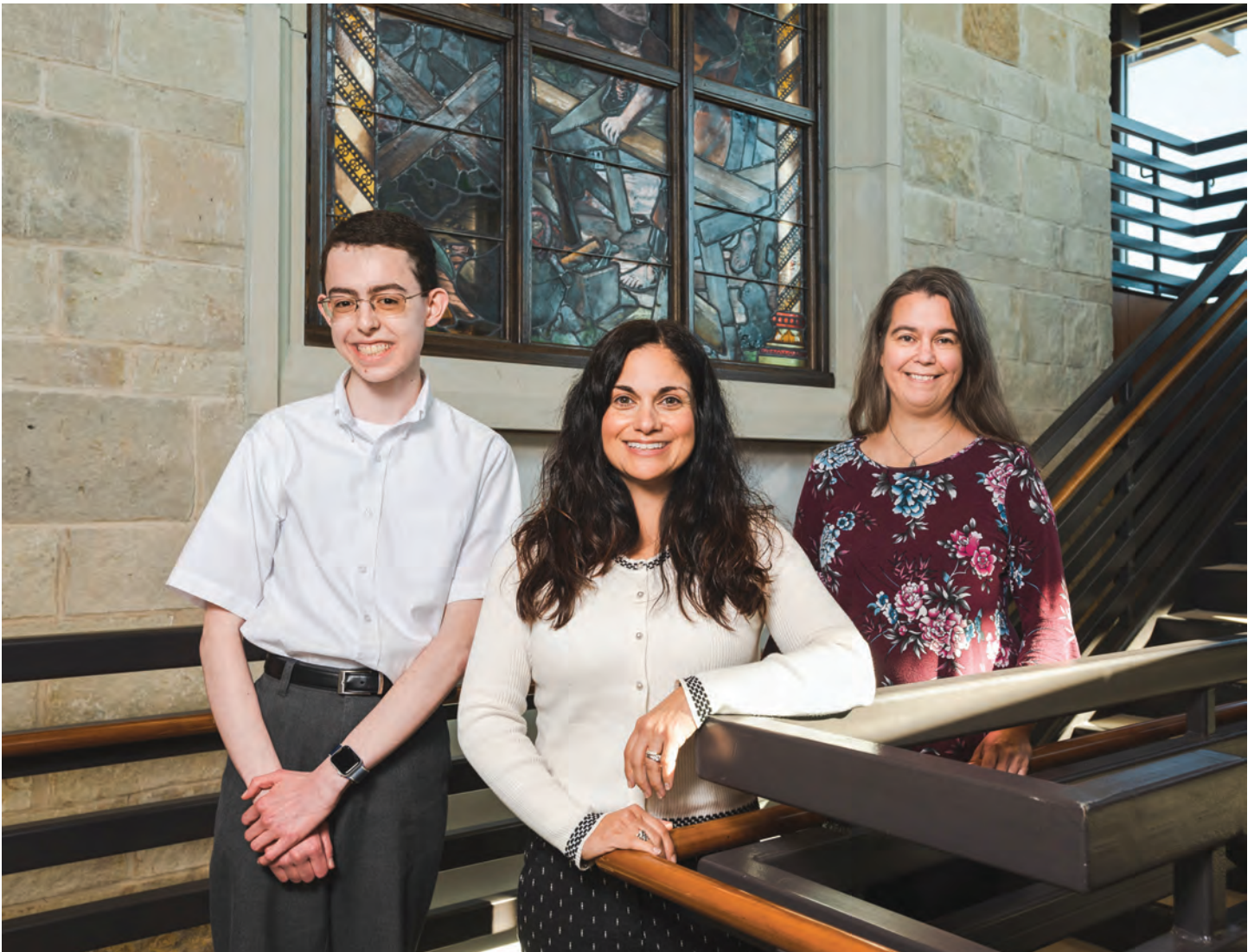
FINDING GOD'S PURPOSE

The movement toward classical education concepts of truth, beauty, and goodness with the methods of logic, rhetoric, and grammar in Fort Worth diocesan schools began in earnest a little more than four years ago. In an August 2017 address to diocesan teachers and administrators, Bishop Michael Olson highlighted the need to impart the "transcendental goods of truth, beauty, and goodness" so students better understand why and what God wants them to learn and to develop their characters for eternity.

Saint Maria Goretti Principal Amy Utendorf echoed that idea, saying "we're here to get them to heaven."

Helping students think critically rather than feeding them answers is well worth the effort.

"The challenge to do something hard helps them find God's purpose for their lives," Utendorf said.



Senior Brett Tipler, Principal Leah Rios (center), and Outdoor Learning Specialist Emily Breclaw are shown inside the IDEA Building at Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth, on Jan. 10, 2022. (NTC/Ben Torres)

When they focus on transcendent concepts in lessons, they develop curiosity and an outward focus.

“In a time of social media and a lot of influences trying to get their attention, they can take a break, step back, and ask ‘What is the truth, beauty, and goodness in this situation, and what can I do?’” Utendorf said.

Cruz said they use the Socratic method often in her classroom. She offers a starting question, and her students – she calls them “scholars” – take over from there, offering their own thoughts and coming up with new questions.

“In the Socratic seminars, they’re learning proper communication skills like listening carefully and looking people in the eye,” Cruz said.

She also helped students come up with

their own class motto: “the believers of love.”

Caroline said it’s something they talk about often and are urged to pursue inside and outside of school.

“Ms. Cruz asks us sometimes, ‘Are you being believers of love or are you not being believers of love?’ It really makes us think,” Caroline said.

IGNITING LOVE OF LEARNING, HEART FOR SERVICE

Nolan Principal Leah Rios said that feedback from colleges helped them make the shift some years ago. Students could be prompt, courteous, and often accurate, but sometimes had trouble thinking critically and solving problems.

Continued on Page 16



Third-graders Damian Smeragliuolo and Caroline Peterson are shown with teacher Claïressa Cruz (left) and Principal Amy Utendorf at St. Maria Goretti Catholic School in Arlington, on Jan. 11, 2022. (NTC/Ben Torres)

From Page 15

“You can’t get those things out of a textbook,” Rios said. “It’s not a textbook that creates a love of learning or ignites that love.”

Truth, beauty, and goodness are rooted in everything they do at Nolan, so students learn to grow and develop strong character, she said.

Outdoor learning specialist Emily Breclaw works with teachers at Nolan to incorporate nature in their lessons by taking students outside.

“It helps them develop a sense of wonder,” Breclaw said, something you can’t get from using Google to find an answer. “Every time you walk out into creation is a love letter from God who is trying to get your attention.”

As students learn how the transcendent concepts of truth, beauty, and goodness are reflected in everything from math and music to sports and

**TRUTH,
BEAUTY,
GOODNESS**

Read Bishop Michael F. Olson’s convocation address on truth, beauty, and goodness and their role in Catholic education at:

[CatholicSchoolsFWdioc.org/
our-mission-vision.](https://CatholicSchoolsFWdioc.org/our-mission-vision)



science, they see God’s hand in all of it; to find “the reason why you’re studying,” Breclaw said.

Rios said that they want students to develop an understanding that “our hands are the tools of God, and they have to be used for good, whether they’re creating a robot, raising an animal, or building a set.”

They also encourage them to develop a practice of serving others inside and outside the school. Rios said that students have developed their

own service programs, such as autism awareness week, and helping a school that experienced a tragedy.

“Our goal is that they know, love, and serve God, and they choose a workplace where they can best serve God,” she said.

Brett said that Nolan emphasizes the role of the family and cultivates a community mindset.

“We interact with other students to discover truth, beauty, and goodness and live that out,” he said. “I thank God every day for that opportunity.” 🇺🇸

From Page 13

“I cannot even begin to tell you how thankful we are for our Guardian Ministers,” Fr. Burns said in an *NTC* interview the next day. “So thankful we have these guys willing to be that line of defense and yesterday’s response was unbelievable. I couldn’t begin to tell you how many Guardians showed up.”

During the standoff, members of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic faith backgrounds and a representative from the city attended a prayer vigil in Good Shepherd’s chapel, Fr. Higgins said.

“It was a late development deal that lasted about 45 minutes,” Fr. Burns said. “Just a chance for anyone to get up and offer a prayer or reflection, just people trying to support each other.”

Food prepared for a marriage ministry event scheduled that night which was canceled was donated to feed those on hand. Parishioners and others arrived throughout the day with food and offers to help.

“We actually got more requests to help than we could take,” Short said.

As the day progressed, according to after-the-fact reports from law enforcement, Akram became less communicative and cooperative. Officers made the decision to enter the synagogue, which led to the shooting death of Akram.

Simultaneously, Rabbi Cytron-Walker, according to subsequent reports, threw a chair when Akram was distracted drinking juice, allowing the rabbi and the other hostages opportunity to escape unharmed.

“We were able to hear the explosion as [police] went in and the gunfire from here,” Fr. Higgins said. “That’s how close we are to the synagogue.”

“Even after, the families could not be reunited with their loved ones for a few hours because the FBI needed to do their interviews and witness statements and so forth.”

Fr. Burns, who came to the parish about two years ago from “up north” joked that he was told beforehand that

people in Texas, Catholic and otherwise, tend to live out their faith in everyday life.

“That was very evident today,” Fr. Burns said.

Bishop Michael Olson agreed.

“Thanks be to God for their safety,” Bishop Olson tweeted after the hostages’ safe release.

Bishop Olson went on to thank the leaders of Good Shepherd, first responders, and members of Congregation Beth Israel.

Fr. Burns noted that Rabbi Cytron-Walker, a proponent of interfaith dialogue, has long been a friend of Good Shepherd.

“My whole time here has been under the pandemic, so I haven’t had a chance to meet with many area leaders of other faiths,” Fr. Burns said. “But myself and [Fr. Higgins] had lunch with Rabbi Charlie recently and it’s ironic that yesterday I saw maybe the largest interfaith gathering I’ve ever seen out of what was a very hectic and tragic day.” 🇺🇸

Police lights shine in the parking lot as a father carries his child out of Mass at Good Shepherd on January 15, 2022. Police responded to a hostage situation after reports that a man with a gun was holding people captive at the nearby synagogue. (Getty Images/Brandon Bell)



cooperating with the HOLY SPIRIT

Fr. Binoy Kurian, TOR, named the new Hospital
Chaplain for the Diocese of Fort Worth

By Jerry Circelli

At age 16, while growing up in the southernmost Indian state of Kerala, Binoy Kurian clearly heard God's call to the priesthood. A dedicated altar server for much of his young life, inspired by his local parish priests, the teenager welcomed whatever role was in store for him to serve Christ's Church going forward. He didn't realize, however, that this higher calling would eventually take him to the other side of world, 10,000 miles away from home, to serve Catholics in Fort Worth, Texas.

"I never expected that I would end up in the U.S.," the priest said.

"It's part of being a Franciscan missionary. You can be anywhere at any time. You only need to be available to the calling."

In his latest assignment, Father Binoy Kurian, TOR, serves the spiritual needs of people receiving medical care at All Saints Medical Center, Cook Children's Medical Center, Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital, John Peter Smith Hospital, Kindred Hospital, and Plaza Medical Center — all in downtown Fort Worth. The spiritual care that Fr. Kurian provides to patients, in addition to prayers and his compassionate presence, includes administering the sacraments of Anointing of the Sick, Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Baptism.

"I am merely an agent in

administering the sacraments in my work here," Fr. Kurian said. "Christ is present, and the Holy Spirit is at work. There is no doubt about that."

In his first full month as the diocese's hospital chaplain — a new priestly role for him — Fr. Kurian responded diligently to 78 hospital calls, and that pace continues today.

Fr. Kurian said most of the calls he receives from hospitals, via an around-the-clock diocesan call center, are requests for Anointing of the Sick.

In his early work in Fort Worth and in hospital ministry in particular, Fr. Kurian said he has found "the effects of the sacraments are often very immediate. That is how faith works."

Fr. Kurian cited one example involving a man who was in one of the local hospitals facing serious heart surgery.

"The man, and his wife and son who were there with him, prepared for the worst," the priest said. Responding to a call to visit the patient and administer the Anointing of the Sick, Fr. Kurian arrived to find the individual "very discouraged."

"I held his hand and tried to comfort him. I said, 'You are a faithful Catholic and we have sacraments that can help you,'" Fr. Kurian recalled.

"He eventually said, 'I am ready, Father, I am ready.'"

After the sacrament was administered and the priest prayed with the family, the

man grew quiet, perhaps in an introspective state of mind. The priest reached for his stole and prepared to leave quietly. Suddenly, the patient reached out again for Fr. Kurian's hand, holding it firmly, and exclaimed, "I will live, Father! I will live!"

The priest explained that the man had accepted whatever God had planned for him, whether it was continued life on earth or life after death with Christ.

"It was just so immediate," Fr. Kurian recalled. "The Holy Spirit was at work."

The priest has also found importance in responding immediately to the needs of patients in dire cases. In one of his first duties here, the priest received a call at 5:45 a.m. on a cold December day. It was not an emergency call, but one from a hospital requesting a visit sometime that day to a seriously ill patient and his family.

"I could not go back to sleep," Fr. Kurian said. "I thought, 'I should go now,' and so I did. I arrived at the hospital at 6:20 a.m.

"I anointed the man and prayed with his family. I assured them I would keep him in my prayers."

At 7:15 a.m., one of the hospital nurses informed Fr. Kurian that the man had passed away and his family was thankful for his timely and very important visit.

Fr. Kurian stressed, "Anointing of the Sick is not a farewell ceremony. It is a sacrament, a healing; a healing for the soul."

Father Binoy Kurian, TOR,
outside of St. Patrick
Cathedral on Jan. 19, 2022.
Fr. Kurian is the new hospital
chaplain for the Diocese of
Fort Worth. Currently, he
visits patients at five Fort
Worth hospitals. (NTC/Juan
Guajardo)



“It’s part of being a
Franciscan missionary.
You can be anywhere
at any time.
You only need to
be available to the
calling.”

— Fr. Binoy Kurian, TOR

In addition to the sacraments of Anointing of the Sick, Reconciliation, and the Eucharist that Fr. Kurian administers as a priest and hospital chaplain, is the sacrament of Baptism. This is especially important for cases in which parents seek the sacrament for a hospitalized baby who has not yet been baptized.

Fr. Kurian reiterated that one of the most important responsibilities of his work involves being available to the faithful at any time. Inspiration to successfully carry out that task comes from St. Francis, he said.

“From St. Francis we learn about humility, understanding, selfless giving, and commitment to others,” the priest said. “And being available for God’s people in these ways is what I take from St. Francis, spiritually, to carry out this ministry.”

Fr. Kurian comes from a background of 16 years as a principal for Catholic schools in India and as a financial director for the St. Louis Province of his religious order in Bengaluru, India. Although different

from his present ministry, the experience has taught the priest that God’s calling for him can include diverse tasks.

In addition to serving as hospital chaplain, he celebrates Mass several times each week at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth and is involved in many other pastoral duties including hearing confessions. “I am happy to be of service at the cathedral and for the pastoral experience,” the priest said.

Fr. Kurian welcomes his new role in hospital ministry with open arms. He sees it as another assignment from God.

“Many people are in the hospital, not knowing what tomorrow holds. They may be having moments of realization that they need to reconcile with the Lord.

“I need to be responsible in answering their spiritual desires on their journey. Their souls may be yearning for forgiveness from the Lord. God wants me to be there for them right now. This is a call from God.” 🇺🇸

when medicine meets MORALITY

Health care providers find congruence between teachings of the faith and their medical careers

By Alice Murray

To find your life's calling and to be able to attain it while staying true to your faith has been a blessing for Dr. Sally Kurz and Mary Arnold, PA.

Kurz is a family practice physician and Arnold is a family practice physician assistant at WholeLife Authentic Care Clinic, at 1000 Bonnie Brae Ave. in Fort Worth.

Dr. Kurz's interest in medicine started at an early age with her routine visits to the pediatrician.

"I admired him and looked up to him," Kurz said. "That was my initial formation of the idea," plus her interest in science classes.

Kurz said this was a "little bit of Catholic guilt — to have a 'help everyone' attitude. To combine the two — helping and liking the science — seemed like a good fit," she said.

Kurz grew up in Wall, Texas, and graduated from Texas Tech University and the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

Arnold began her path in business before switching to the medical field.

"I was actually doing business in college, in accounting," Arnold said.

But after being present when her sister had a baby, Arnold found she "just loved the hospital atmosphere." She considered being a nurse, but instead found her way to PA school.

"I just really liked health care," Arnold

said. "I love working with people and not sitting behind spreadsheets all day."

Arnold was born and raised in the Bay Area of California. Ultimately, she found her way to Texas, graduated from the University of Dallas, and received her Master's in Physician Assistant Studies at the UT Medical Branch in Galveston.

As they embarked on their careers, the two women found challenges as Catholic medical professionals.

Arnold said her training rotations were "a little bit of a dangerous practice for a practicing Catholic." Sterilization, birth control, and abortion crossed over into so many more fields than she thought was possible and avoiding or staying away from that was not an option, she said.

Kurz said early on she was "determined to go into OB-GYN."

"I was going to be a pro-life OB-GYN and just be like — a great miracle worker," she said.

While in medical school, Kurz became aware of the Creighton Model FertilityCare System (CrMS). According to the WholeLife website, "CrMS relies upon standardized observation and charting of biological markers that are considered essential to a woman's health and fertility."

"I certainly wasn't going to learn this in medical school, so I pursued additional training on my own," Kurz said.

But, instead of an OB-GYN residency, Kurz applied to family medical programs.

Treating a variety of people — from a geriatric patient, a diabetic person, a newborn, or a pregnant woman, drew Kurz to family medicine.

"But, from a faith perspective, I saw a need for doctors to take care of everyone else. There are pro-life aspects to family care, more than just taking care of a pregnancy," Kurz said. "I felt the need to play a role in taking care of people once they're born."

Today, Kurz and Arnold are at home at WholeLife Authentic Care Medical Clinic caring for patients from newborn to old age. Opened in November 2019, the clinic has four providers and 17 staff members.

"We built this clinic on Catholic values and will serve the whole community because we are Catholic and called," said Nicole Harvilla, president and founder of WholeLife Authentic Care Clinic. "We offer care for the whole family, for their whole life, by providing family practice and OB-GYN care."

Kurz said pursuing a medical career and living out her faith "actually is a lot like parenthood — very challenging, but very rewarding."

"As a parent, you put in a lot of hard work to set your child up for success — through creating a safe and peaceful environment, teaching virtue, and constantly looking for help outside yourself, when you realize you have no idea what you're



Mary Arnold, PA, (left) and Dr. Sally Kurz at WholeLife Authentic Care. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

doing,” Kurz said. “After failing at these goals frequently, I am tempted to take the easy way out of parenting — zoning out on my phone or letting my TV babysit my kids for hours on end — but that ultimately doesn’t help any of us get to heaven.”

In medicine, “It is easy to find a way out of difficult or complex patient cases,” Kurz said.

“But again, I am more conformed to Christ when I do the hard work to create a safe space, educate patients about their conditions, and do the research and coordination of care, when necessary, all while respecting the life and dignity of each person,” Kurz said.

When looking for a place to practice, Arnold found WholeLife appealing

because, “I feel like it’s a very safe place to practice in terms of my religion,” she said. “It would definitely be a challenge to practice medicine in a manner that doesn’t violate my conscience in most clinics, which is why I love working for WholeLife.”

“It is rewarding to be a medical home for an entire family and have a unique insight into an entire family’s health history,” Arnold added.

Also, many of the patients that come to the clinic are frustrated by “the lack of insight” shown by previous health care providers.

“I love that we take the time to actually investigate patients’ symptoms, not just place a Band-Aid on them,” Arnold said.

For Kevin Fitzpatrick of Irving, his

family’s path to WholeLife began about a year ago when his wife, Laura, was pregnant with the couple’s second daughter, Gianna, who is now 3 months old. They also have a 2-year-old daughter, Zelig.

Fitzpatrick is glad his whole family is now being cared for by the clinic’s medical team.

“They’re teachers at heart and want to educate and provide answers that are in line with Catholic teaching, as well as our own conscientiousness and parenting styles,” Fitzpatrick said.

Fitzpatrick recalls that one of the earliest and “most powerful experiences” at the clinic was when he and his wife

Continued on Page 27

A MARRIAGE MADE IN

heaven

Local Catholics develop programs and assist in ministry to strengthen marriages

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

What makes a healthy, successful marriage? Communication, commitment, and knowing how to resolve disagreements with your partner is key. But there's another important element that's often forgotten once the vows are recited and the honeymoon is over.

Strong marriages place faith first. For Catholics, marriage is not just a civil contract.

It's a sacrament that symbolizes Christ's unconditional love for His people. Grace received from the sacrament helps a couple express God's truth and love in the world.

"People forget that marriage is a sacramental vocation — a calling, as opposed to a temporary decision," said Good Shepherd parishioner Sonja Lange.

Together with her husband, Donald, she organizes Marriage on Tap evenings at her parish to remind couples their marriage is a call to holiness, unselfish service, and concern for the other person.

"It was just something that was

on my heart," Lange said, explaining the genesis of the ministry. "There is marriage prep and groups for marriages that are in crisis, but I felt there was a complete lack of sustained catechesis for people who want to grow in a God-centered marriage."

Held on the first Saturday of the month, the meetings are a mix of relaxed fellowship, informal conversations, and speakers who address issues like managing screen time in a family, growing together spiritually, and learning how to apologize and forgive. Lange tries to balance catechesis with counselors, therapists, and psychologists who give useful tips on improving relationships.

The Saturday "date night" atmosphere — enhanced by adult beverages and appetizers — generates a spirit of community among participants. Carving out a time for socializing is intentional.

"We feel it's very important to form relationships with other people who have the same faith journey and belief in marriage that you do," the organizer added. "There are a lot of different



Chris and Alex Cekuta connect during Marriage on Tap at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville on Sept. 4, 2021. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

views on what marriage is. It's nice to have a place that thinks marriage is foundational and important. We have a lot of grateful couples who were hungry for something like this."

BUILDING INTIMACY

When Tom and Micha Aldon married in 1982, the speakers at their pre-Cana retreat strongly urged all couples to eventually consider a Marriage Encounter weekend. Twenty-eight busy years went by before the founding members of St. Ann Parish in Coppell finally took that advice.

"We had a really great marriage, but you can always improve things," Micha Aldon pointed out. "The tools we learned that weekend really changed our world. We have a really intimate relationship thanks to what we learned."

The husband-and-wife team are now

the North American coordinators of Worldwide Marriage Encounter who present retreat weekends in the North Texas area. Information and testimonies given during the program help participants understand that it's a choice to love.

"The world teaches us that love is a spontaneous reaction — a feeling," the veteran presenter explained. "But you can't live your life on a spontaneous feeling. We have to choose to love in relationships."

Based on Church teaching, Marriage Encounter instructs couples how to listen and share so they connect more deeply. Taking 10 minutes every day to write a letter to each other is one of the exercises the Aldons recommend to improve communication and togetherness.

"Then you read each other's letter once for the head, once for the heart, and talk about it," the Catholic convert

explained. "The goal of that simple little tool is to create intimacy because you're communicating feelings versus thoughts."

The practice helps a relationship flourish because people become softer and gentler with one another even when faced with tough conflicts.

Empty nesters and couples looking to rekindle romance in their marriage are some of the circumstances that bring couples to Marriage Encounter. Others may be dealing with the stress of finances or raising children.

"We do hear from people with troubled marriages," Aldon shared. "If they reach out to us and there are serious [issues], we refer them to a spinoff of Worldwide Marriage Encounter called Retrouvaille."

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Sonja and Donald Lange, coordinators of Marriage on Tap at Good Shepherd Parish. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



Monica and David Knesek, sponsor couple with Fully Engaged (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

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The Aldons strongly endorse Marriage Encounter and, as presenters, have witnessed incredible transformations in the couples they meet.

“It’s the greatest gift we’ve ever given ourselves and our marriage,” the wife and mother said.

More information about Worldwide Marriage Encounter, online marriage enrichment help, and retreats for Spanish speakers is available on the national organization’s website, wwme.org.

PREPARING THE NEWLY ENGAGED

Getting young couples to discuss the big issues — not just the wedding day — is part of what David and Monica Knesek do as married sponsors working with their parish’s Fully Engaged program. They meet with the prospective bride and groom at least four times, sharing information about the significance of the sacrament as well as helping them explore potential areas of concern like child rearing and spending habits.

“We want them to talk about things

“You walk side by side with them knowing sometimes you carry, and sometimes you will be carried. Sometimes it’s complete joy and sometimes it’s very challenging but you keep going.”

— Sonja Lange

that could be topics of disagreement in the future and could end in divorce if they’re not ironed out,” Monica said. “I believe this program encourages them to think about major differences other couples might not even broach.”

Married 30 years, they got involved in the ministry at the request of their pastor at Holy Redeemer Church. Guided by a facilitator’s manual and other materials, the Kneseks delve into Scripture readings, Catholic teachings, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* before using insights from their own union to spark a four-way conversation with engaged couples.

“We throw in things like no score-keeping. Since we’ve been married, Monica and I have never kept tabs on who’s next to change a diaper or feed the dog,” David said. “It’s also important to encourage these couples to pursue their faith and be active in the Church. Monica and I are closer because we’ve been on ACTS retreats.”

The one piece of advice he gives all newlyweds, including his daughter on her wedding day, is “Don’t skip weekly Mass.” Hearing the Word of God and receiving the Eucharist makes you a

better person and a better spouse.

“It’s a challenging time for people to get married and to do it in the Church,” David said, referring to social pressures. “It’s tough. Anything you can do to give a couple an edge is beneficial.”

DATE NIGHT BENEFITS

With the American divorce rate hovering around 50 percent, Dana Nygaard has no trouble finding clients.

“It was evident to me how many marriages were hurting,” said the former teacher who left the classroom after 16 years to become a licensed professional counselor and Catholic psychotherapist. Many of the calls she was getting at her new practice were from married couples, “so that became my focus.”

After earning a master’s degree in counseling from Dallas Baptist University, Nygaard became a level one trained Gottman therapist. Although a secular program, the Gottman Method of couples therapy is supported by 45 years of research, “and I infuse it with Catholic teaching,” assured the

Continued on Page 26

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





Marriage counselor and author Dana Nygaard speaks during a Marriage on Tap event at Good Shepherd Parish on Sept. 4, 2021. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

From Page 25

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Plano parishioner.

What is the one thing spouses can do to create and sustain a healthy relationship?

Dedicating time to each other, she said.

“Research backs that up,” Nygaard observed. “If a couple has a weekly date night devoted to each other, they are more likely to have an exceptional marriage and amazing benefits that come along with that. Even the heart is healthier.”

The clinician fleshes out her suggestions for a healthy, more intimate relationship in her book, *365 Dates to Renew Your Christian Marriage* available in Catholic, Christian, and Spanish editions. The one rule for date night is no conversations about the kids.

Instead, Nygaard offers a “ready, set, go” list of questions couples can use to stir meaningful dialogue. Faith-based prompts are sprinkled throughout the chapters. The first date night question helps a couple focus on the evening and reconnect.

“The second question goes deeper but not so deep that you wouldn’t want to be overheard by the table next to you,” the author/speaker continued.

Privacy is required for the third, more intense exchange which may range from feelings about the relationship, childhood memories, or bucket list ideas.

“Couples come in so broken, so wounded, and by using these tools can now communicate in a healthy way,” Nygaard attested. “There are couples who have overcome affairs. They heal and move forward.”

MARRIAGE IS A JOURNEY

Sonja Lange strongly believes marriages are the foundational building block of society and the Church and are worth saving.

When a car or computer breaks down, owners do research and fix it, the advocate said, adding, “but if a marriage isn’t working, you just say you don’t love the person anymore and walk away.”

Marriage has become disposable because people don’t understand its purpose.


“It’s to love the other person and help them in their journey,” Lange explained. “You walk side by side with them knowing sometimes you carry, and sometimes you will be carried. Sometimes it’s complete joy and sometimes it’s very challenging but you keep going.” ✨




SAINT FRANCIS VILLAGE

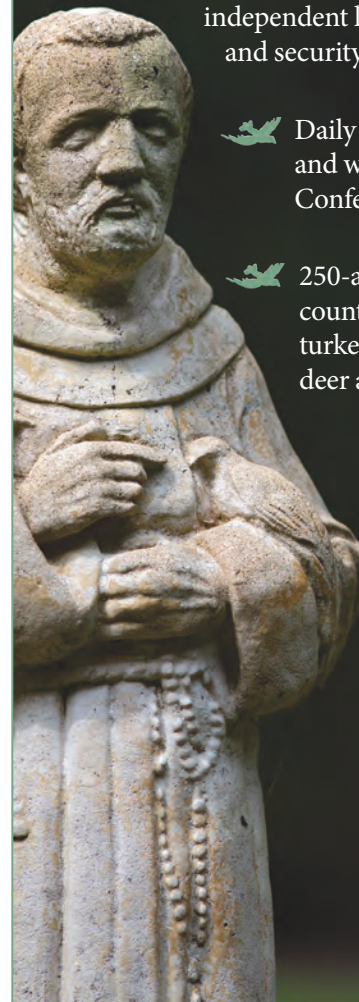
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were waiting for an appointment. A woman and her husband checked in at the front desk and relayed to the receptionist that she had miscarried her baby. The staff member came out from behind the desk to embrace and comfort the woman.

“We have a history of infertility, and we lost our baby in a miscarriage. That was really hard on us, but especially my wife, you know, really crushing,” Fitzpatrick said. To see the care and understanding that can be received from these medical professionals was uplifting, he added.

Kurz agrees.

“I think we provide a place to receive health care that is safe for families who are seeking to stay true to their Catholic faith in all aspects of their life. Not to imply that every piece of medicine is either Catholic or not Catholic, but I think it provides peace of mind to know that your health care provider shares your faith,” she explained.

She added, “And, for our non-Catholic patients, we offer a unique approach to health care they might not have experienced previously.” ✦

Abortion Pill Reversal offered at WholeLife

As part of her practice at WholeLife, Mary Arnold, PA, helps women who are seeking abortion-pill reversal.

“If a woman has taken the first pill in the medical abortion process, (i.e., taken mifepristone, which blocks progesterone receptors and essentially prevents a woman from maintaining a pregnancy) changes her mind, and does not wish to go through with the abortion, she can call the [Abortion Pill Reversal] hotline and will be routed to either myself, Dr. Kurz, or Dr. Kristi King, an

obstetrician/gynecologist at WholeLife, to try to ‘reverse’ the attempted abortion,” Arnold said.

The patient is triaged by the hotline operators, who then call the clinic and provide patient contact information, she said.

“We prescribe high dose progesterone, which competes with the abortion pill, to help maintain the pregnancy,” Arnold said.

The Abortion Pill Reversal hotline can be reached at **877-558-0333** or **AbortionPillReversal.com**.

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I was nothing, now I am CATHOLIC

The story of the incredible Healy family

By Sean Wright

In 1966, Pope St. Paul VI ordained Father Harold Perry auxiliary bishop of New Orleans. President Lyndon Johnson, along with religious and civil leaders across the nation, lauded the appointment of a Black bishop. Still, it was embarrassing to read news stories telling of protesting Catholics waiting outside the Cathedral of St. Louis greeting the newly consecrated bishop with scowls and a home-made sign reading “Jesus Did Not Choose Non-White Apostles.”

Weeks before, Archbishop Philip Hannan informed the press of Perry’s appointment, announcing, “We welcome the first American-born Negro bishop.” While he meant well, he was ill-informed.

The first Black bishop in the U.S. was appointed in 1875 and he did not meet the resistance Bishop Perry at first endured. The bishop was James Augustine Healy who, along with his brothers and sisters, achieved notable accomplishments and distinction.

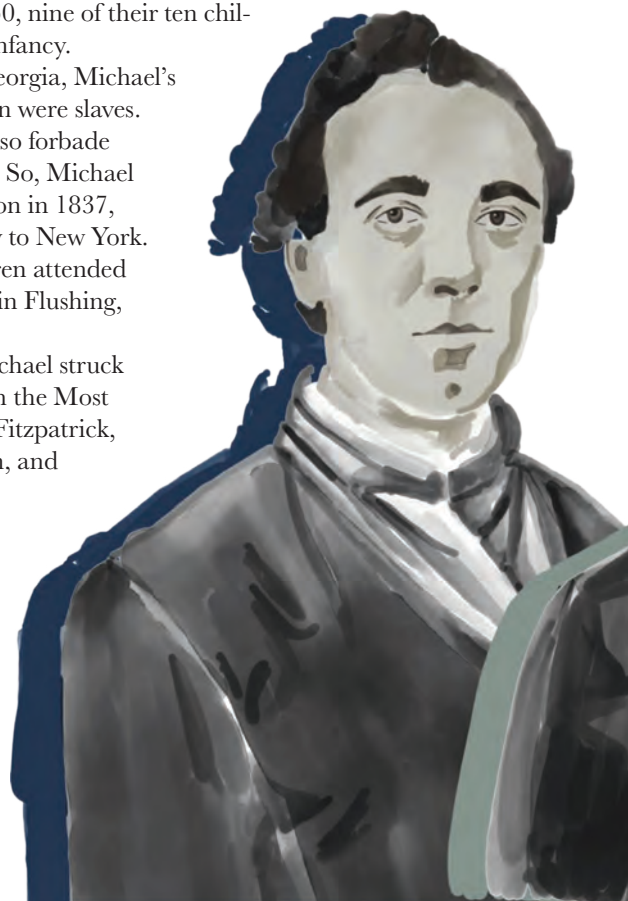
According to the New England Historical Society, the bishop’s father, Michael Morris Healy of County Roscommon, Ireland, made his way to Georgia in 1820, winning

a sizeable freehold near Macon in a land lottery, later acquiring a 1,500-acre cotton plantation, complete with 49 slaves.

Michael soon desired to marry Mary Eliza Clark, a woman of mixed race and a slave. Georgia’s miscegenation laws prevented the union. So, in 1830, Michael wed Mary Eliza while visiting Santo Domingo. They both died in 1850, nine of their ten children surviving infancy.

By law in Georgia, Michael’s wife and children were slaves. The same law also forbade educating them. So, Michael sold his plantation in 1837, taking his family to New York. There the children attended Quaker schools in Flushing, Long Island.

In 1840, Michael struck a friendship with the Most Reverend John Fitzpatrick, bishop of Boston, and acquainted the prelate with his life story and aspirations



(L-R) The four most prominent Healy brothers: ► Patrick Francis, Alexander Sherwood, Michael, and James Augustine. No photos of the three Healy sisters have survived the passage of time, so they couldn’t be illustrated here.
(NTC/Maria Diaz)

for his family. Through Bishop Fitzpatrick's assistance, James, the eldest son, along with brothers Hugh, Patrick, and Sherwood, were admitted to newly founded Holy Cross Jesuit College in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Smitten by the beauty of the Catholic faith, during a student retreat the four brothers expressed their desire for Baptism. "What a change," James confided to his diary. "I was nothing, now I am a Catholic."

At Holy Cross the Healy brothers excelled at their studies. In the words of their biographer, James M. O'Toole, "Each brother was more brilliant than the one who came before him." James became valedictorian of the college's first graduating class in 1849.

Hugh later went into business but died in a freak boating accident at the age of 21.

Michael, the fifth son, went to sea at 16. Joining the Revenue Cutter Service — precursor of the Coast Guard — he was commissioned a third lieutenant by President Lincoln. In 1880, Michael — known to

friends as "Hell Roaring Mike" — was placed in command of patrolling the northwest coast. For 20 years he was America's only law enforcement officer for the immense Alaskan territory. A U.S. Coast Guard research ice-breaker is named in his honor.

Eugene was only two when his parents died. He is the only family member who never quite found his role in life.

The three Healy daughters also joined the Church. Martha, the eldest, attended a school in Montreal staffed by sisters of the Congregation de Notre Dame. So impressed was she by their teaching, Martha entered the order. She opted out after a few years, married an Irish immigrant, and settled down in Boston. Through her son and his descendants, the Healy line survives.

Amanda Josephine joined Martha in Montreal. She, too, chose the sisterhood but with the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph,

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THE FAMILY

of SAINTS



The Martin Family. (NTC illustration/Michael Sherman)



A look into the quiet heroism and bold faith of the Martins – the family of the “Little Flower”

By Walker Price

Families are complicated things. The word itself is loaded with sub-surface meanings and connotations; it denotes an intricate web of relationships where each strand is meant to strengthen and support the other. For some, however, the word “family” unfortunately does nothing but conjure a cloud of negative emotions and experiences. We cannot choose our family, in one sense, but we can choose how we live within it. What is the best way to live in such a complicated thing? For Christians, the answer is what it has always been and always will be: simply, and with love.

Allow me to paint a picture for you of a simple family. We have all heard of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: “The Little Flower.” What I wish to do is to open a window into the spirit of the home in which she was raised by her equally saintly parents, Louis and Zélie Martin.

As Father Stéphane-Joseph Piat, OFM, writes in his book entitled *The Story of a Family: The Home of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, the Martin household “was governed by three principles: God’s supreme rights; faith in His providence; a trustful, happy acquiescence to His will... everything [was] arranged *sub specie aeternitatis* – in view of eternity.” Perhaps this pervading sensitivity to spiritual things can be traced to Sts. Louis and Zélie’s shared experience of an initial perceived calling to the religious life; once married (and thus set on another path to holiness), this inward monastic instinct flooded outward into their home.

Louis, a watchmaker, and Zélie, practiced in the art of a specific lacemaking style known as *Point d’Aençon*, plied their respective trades on all days except Sunday. Some of their less religiously disciplined neighbors and acquaintances wondered at this and questioned them as to why they were so obstinate in their refusal to do business on Sunday. They were missing out on profits! One was even bold enough to suggest that Louis keep the front door of his shop locked but surreptitiously keep

the back door open, so as to project the outward appearance of keeping the Third Commandment. To all this, Louis and Zélie answered simply: Sunday was the Lord’s Day, and it should be kept holy.

There were times when some of their neighbors would be awakened in the early hours of the morning at the sound of a door opening and movement out in the street. Whatever misgivings they might have had were soon dispelled with the realization that it was only the Martin family leaving for 5:30 a.m. Mass.

Such was the strength of the monastic character of the home the Martins cultivated that Pauline, one of St. Thérèse’s sisters, would give this testimony during the beatification of her parents, Louis and Zélie: “My father and mother... possessed a profound faith. When we heard them talking together of eternity we were led, young as we were, to look upon the things of the world as pure vanity.” Herein lies one of the greatest triumphs achieved by the Martins. Like all Catholic Christians are called to be, they were in the world, yet they were not of the world. They did not allow themselves to swerve ultimately from their course towards Heaven, and when, like all of us, they inevitably encountered temptation and failure, it was treated like a weed in the garden. One could say that their spiritual compasses unfailingly pointed true north.



Walker Price



Many of the saints about whom we read and hear led lives gilded with heroism of one form or another. St. Joan of Arc fought with and led the French army in the Hundred Years’ War. St. Thomas Aquinas authored one of the most

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influential theological and philosophical texts of all time with the *Summa Theologica*. St. Louis IX, apart from being King of France, crusaded in the Holy Land twice. The towering achievements of saints such as the ones above, while no one would dispute them, may inadvertently cause some to erroneously assume that one must command legions of knights, write works of deeply edifying value, or fight in battles thousands of miles from home to achieve sainthood. Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin, two middle-class parents living in late 19th century France, no strangers to the cares and concerns, joys and sorrows, that the majority of us either have or will experience at some point in our domestic lives, should force us to reevaluate whatever falsely narrow and grandiose conceptions of saintliness and heroism we might heretofore have held.

Heroism can be quiet, patient, and firmly rooted to the earth. It doesn't have to be raucous and world-altering. Heroism can take the form of remaining strong in your faith after four of your children have died soon after birth, as the Martins endured. It can take the form of choosing to eschew extra monetary gain in favor of spiritual gain, storing up treasures which we can actually take with us when we leave this world. And for parents, it can most certainly take the form of raising your children to be the hands and feet of Christ.

There is great wisdom contained in the title of St.

Thérèse: "The Little Flower." Much is said with just the word "little." People often speak about how it's the little things in life that matter most, yet I'm not convinced that most who hear this phrase and give their assent to it, ever think deeper than the surface level truth it presents. So much of what makes Louis and Zélie the saints they are is their attention to those seemingly basic and "little" things, like routinely attending Mass, participating in both the fasts and feasts of the Church, and following the goads of their consciences. Perhaps they could hear a silent harmony within themselves that hummed into place at their adherence to these "little" things.



During Lent, the Church exhorts us to a re-ordering of our lives, a re-orientation of our wills and souls to true north: a spirit of humility, charity, and love in preparation for the resurrection of Christ. Look to the example of the parents of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Louis and Zélie Martin, and you will find a family who lived a continual Lent with heroic simplicity and love — who saw the home as a school for eternity. In the words of Fr. Piat: "The key to the puzzle was that they loved one another as it behooves Christians to do." 🇺🇸

Walker Price earned his degree in English from UT-Arlington. He attended St. Andrew Catholic School and Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth.

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a nursing order which pioneered such innovations as sterile operating theaters for patients.

Eliza accompanied her sisters in Montreal and also entered the Notre Dame Congregation. Here she found the opportunity to hone her teaching and administrative talents. Establishing schools in New York and Canada, Eliza was the first Black woman to become an abbess in the United States.

Patrick Francis was ordained a priest of the Jesuit order. The first African American to earn a doctorate degree, he was a popular and sought-after teacher. Named president of Georgetown University in 1874, Patrick modernized the curriculum and expanded the law and medical schools, all while supervising a mammoth building program. Georgetown remembers him as its second founder. The university's Healy Hall is named for him.

Considered the most exceptional of the brothers, fluent in several languages, renowned for his expertise in theology and Gregorian chant, Anthony Sherwood was ordained a Jesuit after attaining his doctorate in canon law. At one time director of the seminary in Troy, NY, Sherwood was named rector of Holy Cross Cathedral in Boston. Sadly, this devout priest died in 1875 at the age of 39. More than 150 priests and several bishops attended his funeral.

All along, Bishop Fitzpatrick, the family's good friend, kept an eye on the Healys, helping James and the rest of his family pass for white, the great family secret.

In 1849, the bishop sponsored James' entry to the seminary in Montreal, sparing him the need to provide a copy of his parents' marriage certificate identifying his mother as a former slave. James completed his priestly training in Paris, being ordained in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Writing for *Patheos*, Pat McNamara noted:

In June 1854, James became America's first Black priest, but this information was never made public. Boston priests knew and commented on it among themselves, but Bishop Fitzpatrick supported Healy, placing him in key administrative roles such as chancellor and his personal secretary. As James' ability became evident, comments became fewer.

While working among Boston's poor, Father Healy publicly opposed state anti-Catholic laws. In 1866 he was named pastor of St. James Church, Boston's largest parish.

Blessed Pope Pius IX named James Healy the second bishop of the pioneer diocese of Portland, in 1875. The first Black bishop ruled a diocese which included all of Maine and New Hampshire. The list of his achievements is impressive:

- Facing down residual nativist resentment of German and Irish Catholic immigrants, Bishop Healy supervised a doubling of the Catholic population. This growth led to New Hampshire becoming its own diocese in 1885;
- A tireless advocate for Civil War widows and orphans, the bishop established a vacation camp for children of veterans on a small island near Portland;
- More than 60 new parishes, 18 schools, 18 convents, 18 welfare stations, and a girls junior college were established;
- Under his episcopate, vocations to the priesthood grew significantly;
- Recognizing his efforts to ease the plight of Native Americans, Bishop Healy was named a consultant to the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- Attending the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884, he supported the need for an American catechism to aid conversion and help make Catholic teaching better known to the laity, especially children;
- In 1900, his 25th anniversary as bishop, James Healy was named Assistant to the Papal Throne, then a position which often led to the cardinalate.

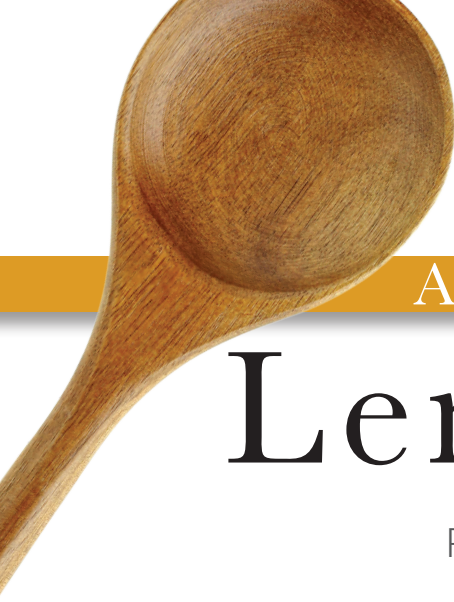
Two months after this appointment, Bishop Healy died of a heart attack at the age of 70.

During the past 70 years a truly fraternal unity has been shown by a multitude of Black priests and bishops ministering among all Catholics, intent on preaching the peace of Jesus Christ.

Let us thank God, the Father of all, for their witness and determination to boldly proclaim the Gospel. Let us continue praying that the need for "passing as white," in ministry and elsewhere, is transcended in our nation. And let us continue praying that we, as Catholics, open wide our hearts to the truth that we are all brothers and sisters equally made in the image of God. 🇺🇸



Sean M. Wright, MA, is an Emmy-nominated writer and a Master Catechist for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.



A CATHOLIC GUIDE TO:

Lenten Cuisine

Recipes for Lenten Fridays from local priests and religious sisters

Father Vijaya Raju Mareedu, SAC, remembers his grandmother and mother cooking this simple dish. He said, “This is poor man’s food like my family and many in India, but all I know is it fills the stomach and reminds [me] of God’s bountiful love.”

Father VJ, as he’s known, enjoys cooking, gardening, and ministering to the parishioners 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.

OUR THOUGHTS: Forgiving and comforting, like God’s bountiful love, as Fr. VJ said. This recipe is forgiving — versatile enough to handle adapting to whatever’s in your crisper. We used the vegetables we had on hand — carrots, broccoli, and potatoes — and no sprouts, but it was creamy, simple food for the stomach and soul.

Indian rice porridge

LEVEL: ● ○ ○ ○ ○ PREP: 5 mins

COOK: 40 mins SERVES: 6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup rice
- 8-10 cups of water/broth*
- 3 cups chopped vegetables
- 1/2 cup sprouts
- Salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Bring the water/stock to a boil and then lower the heat and add the rice. Bring it back to a boil and then lower the heat to medium to let it gently simmer uncovered for about 25-30 minutes, stirring every now and then to prevent the rice from sticking to the bottom of the pot. The rice grains will slowly release more starch and get smoother and creamier starting at about 20 minutes.
2. Add vegetables and sprouts only after the porridge has thickened. Stir periodically until they are cooked through, probably around 10 minutes. Season with salt to taste and serve immediately.
3. The longer the porridge sits, the thicker it will get. You can always thin it out by adding more water or stock.



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

◀ *We used chicken broth to make this recipe, and current canon law considers liquids made from animals to be within the guidelines for abstinence. However, water or vegetable or fish broth could be used.

Father Joe Keating, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster, spent four years in Rome earning a degree in theology, studying sacred music, and polishing his Italian, all the while appreciating some good pasta, no doubt.

He said, “This recipe is easy, delicious, and a perfect meatless meal for your Lenten Fridays. The zucchini really soaks up the olive oil and brings a lot of flavor to complement the fresh basil. Farfalle pasta is recommended, but in a pinch, you really

could substitute another short pasta such as rigatoni. This dish is so quick that you can complete all the prep while waiting for the water to boil.”

OUR THOUGHTS: Beautiful, creamy, with a nice pop from the fresh basil. The red of the tomatoes, green of the zucchini, and white ricotta remind us of the Italian flag. The tomatoes and zucchini are softened by the ricotta, so this dish may past muster with any young vegetable skeptics in your house.

Butterfly pasta with zucchini and tomatoes

LEVEL: ●●○○○ PREP: 15 mins

COOK: 15 mins SERVES: 4

INGREDIENTS

- Salt
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 8 oz. farfalle pasta
(bowtie/butterfly shaped)
- 30-40 cherry tomatoes
- 1 zucchini (medium)
- 1/2 cup ricotta cheese
- 8 fresh basil leaves

DIRECTIONS

1. Put 3-4 quarts of water in a pot on the burner to boil. Salt the water generously.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a saucepan on medium heat.
3. Slice the tomatoes in half, lengthwise. Slice the zucchini in 1/4-inch circles.
4. When the water boils, place the farfalle in the water and boil for the time indicated on the box.
5. Cook zucchini slices in the olive oil for about three minutes on each side, then add the tomatoes and cook an additional five minutes until tender.
6. With a fork, crush the tomatoes in the pan so that they release their juices.
7. Add the ricotta cheese, melt and stir it into the tomatoes and zucchini.
8. Tear the basil leaves into small pieces and mix into the sauce. If the sauce is too thick, add a little of the pasta water to the saucepan. If it's too runny, add a little more ricotta. Taste and add salt if needed.
9. Drain the pasta and toss it with the sauce.



Vietnamese fried tofu in tomato sauce

Fried tofu can be purchased fresh or frozen in many Asian grocery stores.



LEVEL: ●●○○○ PREP: 5 mins

COOK: 15 mins SERVES: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup rice
- 1 1/2 tbsp canola oil
- 3 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, cut into large chunks
- 14.5 oz canned crushed tomatoes
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp white sugar
- Pepper, to taste
- 1/2 tsp vegetable stock powder (e.g., Vegeta)
- 1 tbsp fish sauce
- 8 oz fried tofu, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1/2 onion, cut into wedges
- 2 spring onions, roughly chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the rice according to package instructions.
2. While the rice cooks, add the oil and chopped garlic to a cold skillet. Turn the heat to medium and allow the skillet to slowly heat up. Let the garlic infuse in the oil for a few minutes, but do not allow it to color.
3. Add the chopped tomatoes and break them up using a wooden spoon. Cook for one minute.
4. Add the canned tomatoes, water, salt, sugar, pepper, vegetable stock and fish sauce. Stir until combined.
5. Add the fried tofu and mix it in well. Turn the heat down to medium-low and cook for six minutes.
6. After 6 minutes, add the onion wedges and cook 2 more minutes.
7. Check the seasoning of the sauce. Add more fish sauce/soy sauce for extra salt and flavor, or sugar to counter the tang of the tomatoes.
8. Serve over rice and garnish with chopped spring onions.

The Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate, who teach in six of our diocesan Catholic schools and one parish, enjoy this vegan dish so much that they prepare it almost every week, no matter the liturgical season. This simple Vietnamese recipe is quick to cook, perfect on a Lenten Friday after work or school.

OUR THOUGHTS: Savory and satisfying. The fried tofu has a meaty mouthfeel and the flavor of eggs, perfect for the family's protein lovers. The tomatoes and onions give the dish a fresh, zesty tang. 🌱

(Courtesy photo/ScruffandSteph.com)



family

THE BUILDING BLOCK

By Susan Moses

A pancake is simple, mostly flour, milk, and egg. A pancake breakfast looks simple — just stack a few and top with butter and syrup. Then repeat as needed.

In the hands, or rather the spatulas, of the Knights of Columbus, a pancake breakfast can help accomplish a primary objective: to build up the family, which in turn strengthens the parish, thereby bolstering the Catholic Church.

Something that spends less than five minutes on a griddle can help the eternal Church?

Yes, said Pat Henz, the state program director for the Knights of Columbus and a parishioner at St. Jude Church in Mansfield.

Pancake breakfasts hosted by the Knights of Columbus, plus their ubiquitous Lenten fish fries, are more than fundraisers, he explains. Bonds are being formed: between men, among families, and across the parish.

For starters, the Knights work together to plan, cook, clean, and serve the meal. “These things don’t just happen,” he said, explaining how the Knights form relationships over the shared tasks.

At the meal, families come together to

socialize, and children and teens have the chance to play or visit with peers with the same faith, beliefs, and values, Henz continued. Connections within the parish are enhanced.

And, without a word, children learn the importance of service and faith by seeing their fathers perform works of charity and assist the parish, Henz concluded.

Pancakes can help fuel families and parishes. That’s food for thought. And delicious.

THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

The family is the building block of society, according to Chris Vaughan, diocesan director of marriage and family life, because it’s where individuals first learn to live in a community with each other and with God.

Furthermore, the father of six asserted, the family is analogous to the Church. The family’s physical home compares to the parish church, the home of God.

In the parish, Vaughan said, you’ll find a father who “instructs us how to live; he shares

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◀ Local families featured in past editions of the *North Texas Catholic*, including in its regular feature, "The Domestic Church." (NTC illustration/ Jillian Brearley)

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the Scriptures with us; he evangelizes us; and he gives us something to eat — the Eucharist.” Parents do the same in their family home.

By instilling values into their children, parents prepare them to enter the broader community for their next stage in life, just as the priest sends the congregation out to “go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

Because of these similarities and more, the Catholic Church often refers to the family as “the domestic church.”

Paragraph 1666 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, “The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason, the family home is rightly called ‘the domestic church,’ a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity.”

The domestic church and the parish pulpit reinforce many of the same lessons in virtue and values. First, Vaughan said, “In family life, children learn that they’re not the center of the world. Particularly they learn that when they have siblings.”

A family teaches that an individual sometimes must compromise their opinion or wants for the good of the larger family.

He said, “Your siblings: you’re not always going to agree with them or like what they say, and you have to learn to be civil to them. That prepares us for life as an adult — an older brother or sister might prepare you for a [future] boss.”

The myriad of lessons from living in a family include “sharing, loving, sacrificing, living with joy, learning to live in community, learning life skills, praying for each other, supporting each other,” Vaughan listed quickly.

FUTURE SAINTS

Most of those habits and skills get shared unintentionally, from a child observing his parents live their daily lives.

The nine-year-old Karol Wojtyla learned a prayer to the Holy Spirit that his father said, and the boy continued to start each day with it for the rest of his life.

Later, when he was Pope John Paul II, he explained, “I never forgot this prayer. It was an important spiritual lesson, more durable and stronger than others which I could pull from readings or teachings which I received. With such conviction he spoke to me! Until this day, I can hear his voice. My encyclical letter about the Holy Spirit is the result of this lesson from my childhood.”

Most children don’t take what they learn from their parents and transform it into an encyclical, but those practices may help them grow up to be saints. And raise future generations of saints.

Vaughan said, “If moms and dads work on growing in holiness, living the sacramental life, teaching their kids to pray, going to confession with their kids — that’s the real work of reforming ourselves, and when we reform ourselves, that passes on to the next generation.”

He continued, “Human nature, unchecked, will always go to the selfish. By trying to make ourselves saints, we fight against that spirit of selfishness, and we grow in greater love.”

The most important teachings to absorb in the domestic church can be pared down to two: faith and love.

St. Paul VI stated in *Gravissimum Educationis (Declaration on Christian Education)*, and St. John Paul II repeated in *Familiaris Consortio (The Fellowship of the Family)*, the importance for parents to help their children understand and live the two greatest commandments, which can be summed up as faith and love.

St. Paul VI wrote, “It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and the office of the sacrament

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Little blocks of wisdom to build up your prayer life

The baby's crying, the dog is whining, and you need to leave for work in five minutes. Finding time for prayer can seem impossible. Amid the busyness of family life, how can one respond to God's ongoing invitation to speak with and listen to Him? Here are 10 pointers to help you do just that.

1. PRAY AS YOU CAN, NOT AS YOU CAN'T.

God calls most Christians to an active life in the world, with family, work, and community responsibilities. Such a call, while holy, does not usually allow for long periods of prayer and reflection. Lay people can become discouraged when they try to pray like a cloistered contemplative. Be realistic about what's possible.

2. TAKE TEN...OR TWENTY.

If a half hour for prayer isn't possible, how about 10 minutes, or 20 minutes? Choose a good time of day and stick with it. Designate a special site for prayer so that spot becomes holy. Spouses can help by minding children during respective quiet times.

3. PRAY AS A FAMILY.

Build upon rituals such as grace before meals. In addition to the usual "Bless us, O Lord..." encourage family members to offer thanks for the blessings of the day, as well as prayers

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(NTC illustration/Jillian Brearley)

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of Matrimony, that children should be taught from their earliest years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor.”

FAMILY ORIGINS

As long as there has been a Catholic Church, the Church has taught about the importance of the family and the responsibility of parents to be the first evangelizers of their children.

In about 400 A.D., St. Augustine preached, “Do not neglect then the least of those belonging to you; look after the salvation of all your household with all vigilance” (*Sermon 44*).

The importance of the family is universal and timeless, and it begins with marriage, according to Father Karl Schilken, pastor of St. Bartholomew Parish in Fort Worth. In his January 16 homily, Fr. Schilken said, “In all societies, every place, since the beginning of time, certainly since the beginning of civilization, men and women have decided to get married and form their own family units. Marriage is a good and natural and holy thing, indeed. It’s a gift that God has given to all people since the beginning of time.

“People get married for the same purpose. To form a partnership of life, to have children, and to have their own families,” the pastor continued.

The universal propensity to marry becomes something even greater in the sacrament of Matrimony. “Matrimony is a sacrament, and a sacrament is simply an encounter with God that is given with the purpose of giving us grace, to help us on our journey toward the Kingdom,” he said.

The intent of the sacrament is twofold: for the husband and wife to build up and support the other person, and for the

couple to be open to the gift of children and take the responsibility to teach and guide them in the ways of the Lord.

The Church states this explicitly in the *Catechism* and the *Code of Canon Law*, which states, “The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptized, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament” (1055).

Fr. Schilken noted the sacrament of Matrimony can teach husbands, wives, and their children several truths about God.

The permanence and indissolubility of marriage “shows us on earth the fidelity of God, the constant presence of God. It is something that reminds us that God is permanently with us,” he said. “God is dependable — we can be assured of His presence.”

Also, husbands and wives are called to be faithful to one another in marriage. “The supernatural reality of Matrimony represents the way God loves His people... God’s love for us is faithful, and we’re called to be faithful to one another.

“The love of husband and wife is a sign of Christ’s love for His Church. We are called to love one another in exactly the same way, to the point of sacrifice.

“Husbands and wives are called to a sacrificial love for one

another where they give of themselves and forget themselves in the process of serving the family, in building up their own human family,” Fr. Schilken said.

Fr. Schilken said the importance and dignity of marriage and the family is often overlooked today.

“One of the greatest problems in our world today is we very quickly forget the dignity that we carry with us as Christians, the dignity that we carry with us because we are the adopted sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters to Christ Jesus. Because we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we are capable of doing great things. We’re capable of proclaiming Christ and His Kingdom by the way that we live in our families,” said Fr. Schilken.

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Little Blocks, continued

for those in need. Couples can deepen their spiritual relationship by taking a few minutes, perhaps before bedtime, to commend to God the joys and sorrows of the day.

4. DECORATE YOUR DOMESTIC CHURCH.

When we enter our parish church, the statues and pictures focus our minds on Jesus, Mary, and the saints. We can create an atmosphere for prayer in our home — the domestic church — by displaying a crucifix, icons, the Bible, and other holy objects. Take the children to a religious goods store and let them choose a picture or statue for their rooms.

5. SHORT PRAYERS COUNT.

When you're stopped at a long light or put on hold, consider it as God's invitation to turn your heart and mind to Him, if only for a few seconds.

6. FIND GOD AT WORK.

Connecting with God in the workplace takes effort. Try to cultivate a few simple habits. For example, offer the day to God as you turn on your computer, or pray for the person you're about to call or wait upon.

7. JUMP START YOUR PRAYER LIFE.

Sooner or later almost everyone experiences dryness in prayer. God seems far away and prayer becomes a burden. Praying with Scripture, perhaps the daily Mass readings, can help us focus. So, too, can an inspirational book, especially one of the spiritual classics. A good choice is



(NTC illustration/Jillian Brearley)

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Little Blocks, continued

St. Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*, written specifically for lay people who are striving for holiness.

8. ASK YOUR MOTHER FOR HELP.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, our spiritual mother, understands our needs and offers profound comfort. One family, gathered around the bedside of their dying husband and father, found peace and healing through the recitation of the Rosary. The Rosary is ideal for the family since children can be taught the simple prayers at an early age. Check out instructions on how to pray the Rosary.

9. READ A GOOD STORY.

Children and adults alike enjoy an inspiring story, and few stories are more compelling than those of the saints. Whether it's the little way of Thérèse of Lisieux or the heroism of Maximilian Kolbe, their stories offer something for everyone. Consider the particular virtue that a saint demonstrates and pray for help to emulate it. Perhaps it's the humility of St. Francis of Assisi, the patience of St. Monica, or the courageous witness of St. Thomas More.

10. WALK WITH A SPIRITUAL FRIEND.

Prayer can lead to new thoughts and questions. Who better to share them with than a spiritual friend? A friend can help us to work through the concerns that inevitably arise in prayer. Good friends will hold each other accountable for their prayer life, making sure that prayer has not been neglected in the busyness of life. For married couples, a spouse is often this spiritual friend, but God will also put wise and holy people in our path when we need them. They can be the answer to prayer.

This article originally appeared on ForYourMarriage.org and is reprinted here with permission. For Your Marriage is a website launched in 2007 as part of the National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage by the USCCB.

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STRONG FAMILY, STRONG CHURCH

The sacrificial love of parents must be balanced with self-care and the freedom to be authentic, according to Amanda Averbeck, MS, LMFT associate, whose 15 years' experience supporting families as an instructor of parenting classes, a caregiver, and a marriage and family therapist associate has given her a view of the frontlines of the domestic church.

The Holy Redeemer parishioner gives the example of Jesus, who preached and cared for others but also took time to be alone. She cited, "In the Gospels, Jesus took care of the needs of others through His ministry of healing; however, we also know He took time to re-center Himself and reconnect with God, alone, away from others."

Averbeck, the oldest of nine children who were raised attending St. Mark Parish in Denton, has noted the importance for the Church to teach about family life "in a way that's welcoming to families, so they can feel supported and continue in their vocation as a family."

Pope Francis does just this in his exhortation *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*, which reflects on the complexities and realities of family life.

In the document, the Holy Father writes, "No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love" (325).

This quote resonates with the marriage and family therapist.

Averbeck explained, "It starts with the premise that we are

human. We are imperfect. We are not going to get it right. This premise also highlights that more important than getting it right, is learning what to do when we don't. Learning how to reconcile.... All the while communicating what we are experiencing to those around us," she said.

Averbeck pointed out that dialogue and reconciliation is a practice, not a one-time event, but "a constant moving in the direction of growth and ability to love."

Strengthening family bonds is also a continual process. The mother of two has a few recommendations.

"First," she said, "have fun together. Allow time for play," which will look different according to each family. Board games, sports, crafts, nature walks — whatever brings joy and laughter to the family.

"When families have a resource of knowing how to have fun and a memory bank full of happy memories, it makes it easier to stay vulnerable and remain a team while you tackle the tension or the difficult times families also go through," she explained.

The second recommendation parallels the example of Jesus escaping into the hills to pray.

She said, "Work on yourself. What we allow to be healed in ourselves, gets passed on to our children. What we do not heal in ourselves gets passed on to our children too."

Therapy can be a useful space for the introspection needed to nurture healthy coping patterns and more effective communication skills, helping the individual or family, and future generations, she said.

One benefit to a healthy family in which members know they are loved and supported, Averbeck observed, is those relationships

provide a “huge protective factor” against mental and physical illness.

And another benefit of strong families touches on how families impact the communities (or the parishes) in which they reside.

BEYOND THE FAMILY

Ultimately, the family unit is the building block of society.

St. John Paul II expressed that idea in a homily in Perth, Australia on November 30, 1986. “As the family goes, so goes the nation, and so goes the whole world in which we live,” he said.

Averbeck’s first reaction to his quote is that it puts a lot of pressure on families, but when held in context with Pope Francis’ statement that “No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love,” the two quotes together offer hope.

She said, “If we can learn to be more compassionate and forgiving and learn the art of true reconciliation and dialogue in our families, how might that start to affect the types of relationships people form outside of their families? If people learn the skills in the family, they can apply them to the nation and the whole world.”

Plus, said Chris Vaughan, the diocesan director of marriage and family life, the Church and the family offer something unique to the world: love.

He said the values presented by the secular media — power, pleasure, wealth — look attractive, especially to young people.

Vaughan said, “The Church, the family, don’t have billions of dollars to influence, but what they do have, which Hollywood or media or apps can’t give, is love.”

And love, along with faith, begins in the family. 🇺🇸



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Amanda Averbeck

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST ASSOCIATE



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Chris Vaughan

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE



From left, back row: Volunteers Pat Rodriguez, Christy Szempruch, and Marilyn Wachter. Front row: Client Navigator Lythia Green, CCFW Arlington Campus Coordinator Olga Nowlan, and CCFW Volunteer Specialist Kelly Smith, at the CCFW Arlington Campus. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Volunteers prove invaluable at CCFW

By Mary Lou Seewoester

Catholic Charities Fort Worth employs more than 275 paid staff, but the nonprofit also depends on volunteers to accomplish its mission of ending poverty in North Texas, one family at a time. Currently, 130 volunteers support nine CCFW programs.

CCFW Volunteer Specialist Kelly Smith said many volunteer opportunities are now virtual due to the pandemic, including the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), Community Care Call Center, and Refugee Services English Literacy Tutoring for Children.

Sam Moon, a parishioner of St. John the Apostle in North Richland Hills, is in his 10th year as a VITA volunteer. He is not a CPA or an accountant, but he does have a head for math and likes doing taxes. Experience is not necessary for VITA volunteers because they complete online training required by the Internal Revenue

Service to become certified tax preparers. Smith said training and certification are free to volunteers through United Way of Tarrant County which is a VITA partner with CCFW.

The maximum income for VITA eligibility is \$60,000, but Moon said, “A lot of our clients have incomes of only \$20,000 or \$30,000 a year.

“You can make a difference in people’s lives,” he added. “We save them a few hundred dollars and they know [their taxes] are done correctly. It makes me feel humble that these people totally put their faith in us.”

The Community Care Call Center needs volunteers who can patiently listen to client concerns and refer them either internally to a CCFW contact or to a community resource, Smith said. Though some volunteers answer calls at CCFW’s Arlington and Colleyville campuses, many take phone requests from their homes.

“A Community Care volunteer needs to be a people person,” Smith said. “People

call us who are in need and many times it’s their first introduction to CCFW.”

Volunteers support the call center’s small paid staff to reduce the call-wait time for people seeking help. Clients often report that they called other agencies for help and never actually spoke with someone, but “somebody at CCFW is going to answer your call and talk with you,” she noted.

Another virtual volunteer opportunity helps refugee children in grades K-12 learn English. Smith said volunteer tutors read to children and guide them through simple lessons. Tutors do not need teaching experience but should enjoy working with children. In addition to training, tutors can ask for guidance from the CCFW staff member hosting each Zoom tutoring session.

Smith said potential volunteers can email volunteer@ccdofw.org or call 817-289-3871 for information. All volunteers complete an application, free background check, and orientation on CCFW’s mission, values, and volunteer opportunities. 🇺🇸





Powered by the Spirit

HE IS: Father Matthew Tatyrek, pastor of St. Peter Parish in Lindsay since 2018. He also served as parochial vicar at St. Michael Parish in Bedford and chaplain at Nolan Catholic High School.

WALK THIS WAY: He and his brother were raised in Vernon by parents with a strong faith, but “it was my dad’s responsibility to get us out of bed on Sunday.... Especially as boys, what your father sees as important will ultimately become important to you.”

CALLED: While a student at Texas Tech University, he grew more and more involved in the parish and less involved in his ROTC responsibilities. He dropped ROTC and began discerning a call to the priesthood.

HEART OF THE CHURCH: After two years at a Texas seminary, he completed his seminary formation at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. One of the graces was “to experience on a daily basis the universality of the Church,” plus he took advantage of the opportunity to make pilgrimages to sites including Lourdes.

ORDAINED: May 21, 2016, at St. Patrick Cathedral.

LASTING LEGACY: St. Peter Parish, established in 1892 and rebuilt after a fire and again after a tornado, is a beautiful legacy to the time, talent, and treasure that generations have invested in building and maintaining the historic structure.

Understanding the

importance of the parish to Cooke County families, he “wants to guide it in prudence.”

HIGHS AND LOWS: Experiencing the day-to-day living of the Christian faith is the “most challenging and the most rewarding part of [priesthood], because ... oftentimes in the parish setting you experience, on a day-to-day basis, the full range of human experience, from sadness — celebrating a funeral — to joy — preparing people for marriage.”

POWER UP: At Confirmation and other opportunities, Fr. Tatyrek emphasizes the Holy Spirit.

He said, “It’s by the power of the Spirit that we celebrate Mass. It’s by the power of the Spirit that we do any of the sacraments. It’s by the power and urging of the Spirit that we pray. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that conforms us to the person of Jesus, so that God the Father can see His Son in all of us.”

KNOW THIS: He hopes parishioners know “They are loved, and the Lord desires them, wants them. Secondly, ... by your Baptism you have dignity and part of that dignity is to be an evangelizer, be a model of the faith. 🇹🇽”





mission INCREDIBLE

Powered by Jesus' love, the Del Castillo family starts a fifth year in Peru with an ambitious new plan

By Susan Moses

Karen Del Castillo is starting her fifth year of a two-year assignment. And the end is nowhere in sight.

The former youth coordinator and member of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Decatur has served as a missionary in Peru since January 2018 with her two younger children, Julianna and Gabriel.

They arrived in Peru with their “little bitty ‘yes,’” plus a \$10 monthly pledge from one benefactor, said Del Castillo. She admitted it was “a leap of faith,” but the single mother has seen God work miracles.

They spent their first year in Peru in an established mission with others from Family Missions Company, an apostolate of Catholic laity dedicated to foreign missions and headquartered in Abbeville, Louisiana.

After that year, Del Castillo felt called to move her family to a more remote pueblo about nine hours away in northern Peru. The local bishop accepted her proposal, and she and her children moved to Cajaruro, where they serve as catechists to four towns.

“The Church is not doing well” in the region, Del Castillo explained, and two priests struggle to serve the 250 pueblos in the district. On the many Sundays when a priest is not available to celebrate Mass, the family leads a Liturgy of the Word service.

During the week, their ministry is less

structured but just as important.

“The Holy Spirit guides us,” she said. “Every person we meet is meant for us. It’s a single mom. It is torn-apart kids that don’t know where their mom or dad are because they’re living with grandma or tía.

“That’s where our ministry is. Befriending them, helping them, walking with them, discipling them, asking them to come to church, having meals with them, just loving on them as much as we can,” she explained.

Del Castillo’s experience of Jesus healing her wounds from a broken marriage helps her relate to the women, who are often trapped in poverty and damaged relationships.

“My goal is for these women just to know that Jesus is with them. Though your spouse might not be with you, Jesus is always with you,” she said.

Gabriel, now 12, and Julianna, 19, have developed their own ways to serve God through the friendships they have made.

Gabriel has become a lector and altar server and has trained about 10 other youth to serve at Mass. Children of all ages come to play at their home, and Gabriel developed what he calls his “clean water ministry” for his guests, providing them with drinking water and a cup for their exclusive use.

Since completing her home-schooled education, Julianna has taken three semesters of college online while maintaining close relationships with the young women of the pueblo. She’s currently discerning

joining Family Missions Company as a single adult missionary.

Mission work has come with challenges, Del Castillo conceded. The largest obstacle may have been the smallest — the mosquito. Not merely an annoyance, the tiny pests infected all three with mosquito-borne illnesses, which left them “super sick” and caused Karen’s hair to fall out temporarily.

Learning the language was another struggle, as Karen went to Peru speaking some Spanish but was not fluent. Gabriel said he arrived knowing two words: “sí” and “no.”

“Now we’re by no means perfect, but Christ has taken care of the rest,” said Del Castillo. Before she leads worship or teaches, she prays that the Holy Spirit will help people understand what she is saying.

“The best language you have is the language of love....I’m not a very good public speaker, and somehow I have to do that, but Christ works with what you have,” she said.

Stepping into a culture that blends Christianity with the ancient beliefs of their ancestors has not been easy.

When the locals want to sacrifice animals or call on other spirits for healing, “it isn’t easy,” she said. “For us it’s hard to understand, but we can’t be frustrated, we have to have a loving hand and teach them and be true to our Catholic faith.”

Along with the challenges have come joys, including a visit from the local bishop, who visited the pueblo for the first time in more than a decade and confirmed more



Missionaries Karen Del Castillo and her son Gabriel visited Texas for the first time in 34 months in January. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

than a dozen people whom Del Castillo prepared for the sacrament.

Soon, Karen will serve as the team leader for two single missionaries who will join them in Cajaruro, enabling a greater reach into the pueblos.

The extra hands may help with a special project the Holy Spirit has placed on Karen's heart.

"We were blessed to have seen, through prayer, an opportunity to have a place for single mothers and their children," she shared. When presented with the idea, Family Missions Company encouraged the proposal.

She discussed the possibility with the local priest, who said he was "bombarded" with the great needs of single women in the community and had prayed for a means to help.

Working together, they secured land at a reduced price in December and plan to build a cluster of one-room homes for single women and their children, "for them to come and heal and walk with us in the footsteps in the Lord," she described. "An



Julianna Del Castillo plays guitar with some friends in Peru. (courtesy photo)

area for them to encounter Jesus."

She envisions a community center for the families to attend Bible studies, to gather for worship, and to eat meals together. Perhaps religious sisters can offer classes, Del Castillo dreamed.

With a grand plan and new people awaiting them, Del Castillo and Gabriel

returned to Peru following a December – January visit to the U.S., their first in 34 months.

Karen said, laughing, "Our two-year commitment came and went. We're discerning — are we going to stay in missions? We're set. We're definitely feeling the call. Lord, show us the way." 🇺🇸



Wait on Him

Pope Francis wrote his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*) five years ago. The document celebrates families and addresses the complexities and realities of family life at all stages.

He wrote, “Few human joys are as deep and thrilling as those experienced by two people who love one another and have achieved something as the result of a great, shared effort.”

The Skelton family of Wichita Falls can attest to the truth of that statement. Initially attracted to each other’s vibrant faith, they married and started a family. Together, they face the trials and joys of raising children.

The Holy Father has declared an “*Amoris Laetitia* Family” year, which will conclude on June 26.

In honor of the Year of the Family, the *NTC* is expanding its regular feature, The Domestic Church, to explore how local families live with faith and love.



WHERE DID WE MEET?:

Was it the cardboard boat race? Or homecoming festivities? Zachary and Anne Skelton aren't certain, but they know they met through the Catholic Campus Center at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls.

A FAITH HOME:

Anne grew up attending Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster and was an altar server, the youth representative on the parish board, and a charter member of the youth group.

She became involved with Midwestern's CCC even before she matriculated because she wanted a place to grow in faith and friendships.

THE LONGER PATH:

As a football player, Zachary's time was filled with the demands of athletics and the rigors of engineering studies. Back pain eventually caused him to retire from football, reexamine his priorities, and "get his life on track." His new goals included internships, reading the entire Bible, and getting confirmed.

Fearing Catholic students might be judgmental, he was initially reluctant to attend CCC events. He quickly overcame it. "It was nice to be accepted and start doing more things to bring me closer to God and God-loving people," he said.

THE RIGHT LOOK:

Anne noticed him reading the Bible, and Zachary noticed her praying intently during Adoration.

Both thought, "That's a quality I want in a spouse."

ANSWERED PRAYER:

The couple dated for a period and Zachary, now graduated and

employed, considered proposing marriage.

One day when she was at his house, he slipped alone into another room, knelt down, and prayed, "God, I know we're not supposed to test you, but if you want to give me a sign saying that this is the woman you want me to be with, could you make it a pretty obvious sign?"

When he opened his eyes, she was kneeling in prayer next to him.

BECOMING ONE:

They married on August 17, 2013, at Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster. "With half the town at the wedding," joked Zachary.

ALL FOR ONE:

Between their second and third child, Anne earned a master's degree in social work at University of Texas at Arlington.

"We knew it was going to be an intense year of studying where I was going to be locked in a room every night and not helping him out," Anne recalled.

Zachary added, "There were some tough times when she felt like she wasn't pulling her weight, but I kept telling her, 'You're doing it for the family.'"

CENTER OF MASS:

The Skeltons attend Mass as a family each Sunday, even though young children can't always be quiet for an hour.

Anne said, "There have been instances when kids are loud at church...but you're trying to teach your children. The kids need to be in church. Everybody should want to have kids in church."

Zachary is a lector, which provides two benefits to their children. First, it demonstrates the importance of participating in

Mass. Secondly, he practices the readings ahead of time in front of the children and explains the meaning of the passage.

STAYING TOGETHER:

Three children make for a lively home, so the couple eats lunch together once or twice a week while the children are at school, giving them a chance to communicate before the day's activities have left them depleted.

They enjoy doing home renovations together and have replaced floors and put in a patio.

As a family, they enjoy walks, park visits, and playing sports.

PASSING ON THE FAITH:

The parents pray intentionally with the children every day, and they weave God into daily life.

For example, they developed a chart of family rules which includes Bible verses and refers to the Ten Commandments.

"The rules for the family are parallel to God's rules," explained Zachary.

WALK THIS WAY:

Anne hopes her children learn that "God is always there" and develop a strong prayer life.

Zachary doesn't "want them to live their life feeling like they are going around making mistakes. I want them to know that Jesus forgives. But I also want them to know what God expects of them and what Mom and Dad try to live by."

PATIENT PEOPLE:

The couple covers their decisions with prayer, whether choosing a spouse, buying a home, or creating a budget.

Zachary said, "If we just sit back and wait for His timing, it turns out best." 🇺🇸

THEY ARE: Our Lady Queen of Peace parishioners Zachary and Anne Skelton, with Claire, Leo, and David, outside Midwestern State University Catholic Campus Center in Wichita Falls. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Icon of Love

By Father Nghia Nguyen

“A picture is worth a thousand words.” This simple saying helps me appreciate the efforts of those who prayerfully draw wonderful icons that we can enjoy.

One icon that I am very fond of is “The Trinity” made by Andrei Rublev. Looking at the icon has made me think of many symbolic imageries, most of which are in the context of the Lord’s Supper as the representation of God’s love for us. The first image that come to mind when I look at the icon is the circle represented by the table. The three angels are the Holy Trinity, who make up the circle, and based on their sitting position they also form a triangle. The next image I want to focus on is the Lord’s Supper; this is represented at the center of the table, through the cup which has a face peering out, which to me represents the Holy Eucharist. His love for us in His incarnation is a total self-gift.

This icon led me to meditate on *John 13:31-35*, the new and last commandment to the Apostles. Jesus said, “I say it to you. I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Pope Benedict XVI during his Angelus address on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, June 7, 2009, called God “Love.” He said, “Three Persons who are one God because the Father is love; the Son is love; the Spirit is love. God is wholly and only



“The Trinity” by Andrei Rublev (1425-27)

love, the purest, infinite and eternal love. He does not live in splendid solitude, but rather is inexhaustible source of life that is ceaselessly given and communicated.”

Pope Benedict reminds us that God is love and that it is because of His love that we can be. The icon shows this love by the way the figures look at each other. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit are looking at the Father and, in turn, the Father looks back at them.

This love that they have for one another is what simply represents God: love. God communicates this love with us by giving us His only begotten Son. But in return, God receives this love back by the commandment Christ gave to us, thus

creating a constant and unending cycle. “Love one another as I have loved you.” God gives us the example of this perfect cycle of love by entering humanity and by doing so He gives His Holy Spirit to us as well.

The Holy Eucharist is how we remember God’s continual love for us by remembering first that God the Father has been present in the affairs of men — always watching, always loving us.

Second, the role that Jesus undertook for us was that He emptied Himself and took the form of man, and then showed us how to love each other as God loves us. He shows us how to do this by giving His life for us on the cross.

And lastly, by the continual work of the Holy Spirit, we can remember Jesus’ life,

death, and resurrection by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass so that we continue to remember God’s continual love for us and His people.

I hope my reflection on prayers before an icon will help those who are seeking to find another method of prayer, especially during this time of Lent, when we are called to draw closer to the Lord by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. ✚

Ordained on May 21, 2016, Father Nghia Nguyen serves as the pastoral administrator of St. George Parish, Fort Worth and as Vocations Liaison with the Vocations Office.



UN MATRIMONIO HECHO EN EL

cielo

Refuerzos para crecer y mantener el matrimonio

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

¿Qué hace que un matrimonio sea saludable y exitoso? La comunicación, el compromiso y saber resolver los desacuerdos con su pareja son clave. No obstante, hay otro elemento muy importante que a menudo se olvida una vez que se recitan los votos y la luna de miel termina.

Los matrimonios sólidos ponen la fe en primer lugar en sus vidas. El matrimonio para los católicos no es sólo un contrato civil. Es un sacramento que simboliza el amor incondicional de Cristo por su pueblo. La gracia recibida mediante el sacramento ayuda a una pareja a expresar la verdad y el amor de Dios al mundo.

“La gente se olvida de que el matrimonio es una vocación sacramental; es un llamado, en lugar de una decisión temporera”, afirmó Sonja Lange, feligrésa de la Parroquia del Buen Pastor.

Sonja organiza junto con su esposo, Donald, las veladas Marriage on Tap en su parroquia para recordarle a las parejas que el matrimonio es un llamado a la santidad, al servicio desinteresado y a preocuparse por la otra persona.

“Es algo que sentía en mi corazón por mucho tiempo”, dijo Lange, explicando el origen de este ministerio. “Ya teníamos el programa de preparación para el matrimonio y grupos para los matrimonios que están en crisis, pero

sentía que había una gran falta de catequesis continuada para las personas que quieren crecer en un matrimonio centrado en Dios”.

Las reuniones, que se llevan a cabo el primer sábado de cada mes, son una combinación de compañerismo relajado, conversaciones informales y charlas que abordan temas tales como el manejo del tiempo frente a la pantalla en una familia, el crecer espiritualmente juntos y el aprender a disculparse y a perdonar. Lange trata de combinar la catequesis con consejeros, terapeutas y psicólogos que brindan consejos útiles para mejorar la relación matrimonial de las parejas.

El ambiente de “una cita de la pareja” el sábado por la noche, realizado por bebidas y aperitivos para los adultos, crea un espíritu de comunidad entre los participantes. El propósito es dedicar un tiempo para socializar con otras parejas.

“Creemos que es muy importante entablar relaciones con otras personas que tienen el mismo trayecto de fe y que comparten la misma creencia en el matrimonio que uno tiene”, agregó la organizadora. “Hay muchos puntos de vista diferentes sobre lo que es el matrimonio. Es bueno contar con un lugar en el que se piensa que el matrimonio es fundamental e importante. Tenemos muchas parejas que están

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Karla y Jason De Los Reyes celebran su boda en Santiago, España, el 12 de diciembre de 2019, la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. (CNS/cortesía De Los Reyes family)

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muy agradecidas, ya que estaban muy deseosas de tener algo como esto”.

CREANDO INTIMIDAD

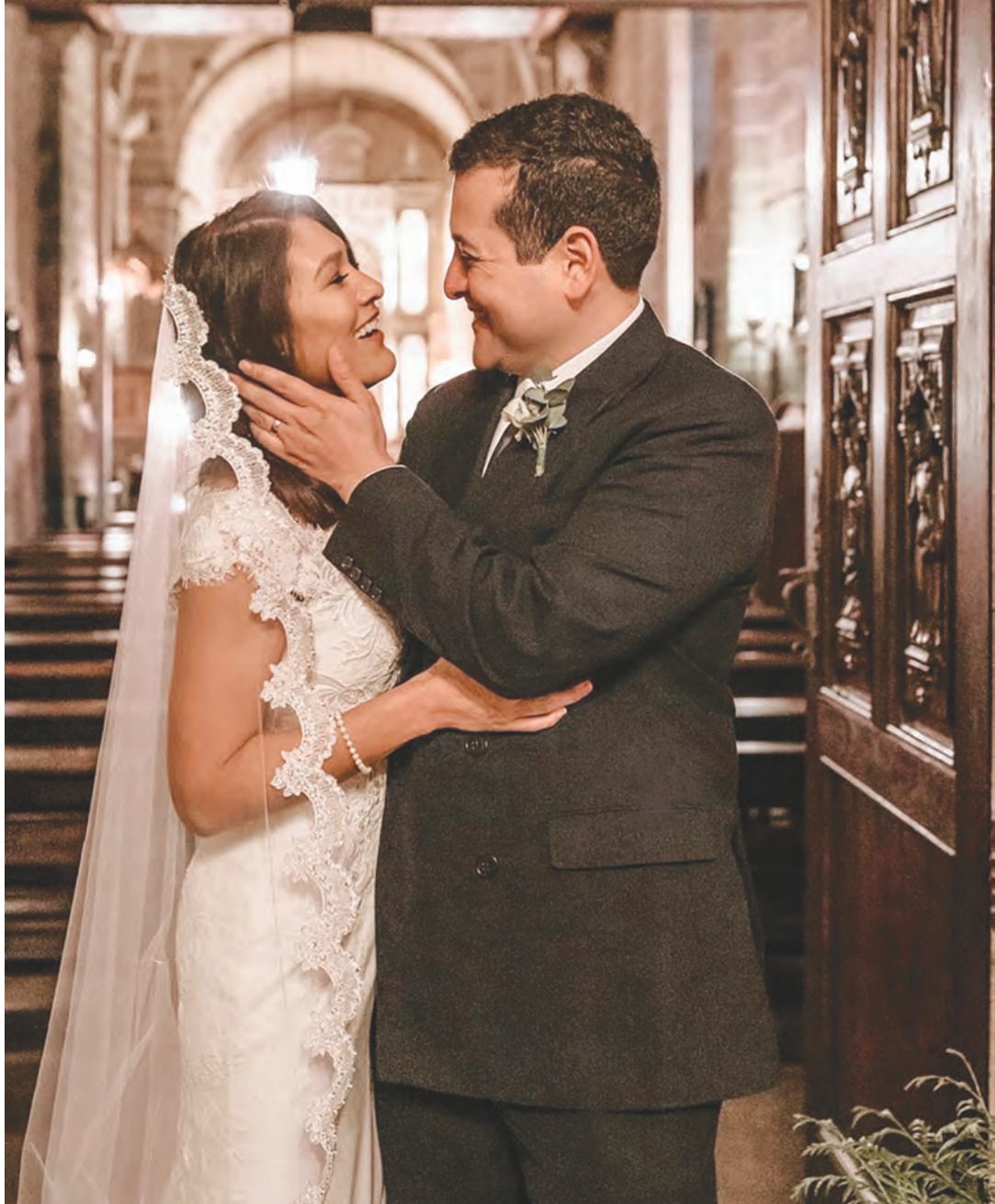
Cuando Tom y Micha Aldon se casaron en el 1982, los presentadores de charlas de su retiro Pre-Caná instaron enfáticamente a todas las parejas a considerar eventualmente acudir a un fin de semana de Encuentro Matrimonial. Pasaron 28 años antes de que los miembros fundadores de la Parroquia de St. Ann de Coppell siguieran finalmente ese consejo.

“Teníamos un gran matrimonio, pero hay siempre cosas que puedes mejorar”, señaló Micha Aldon. “Las herramientas que aprendimos en ese Encuentro cambiaron realmente nuestro mundo. Tenemos una relación muy íntima gracias a lo que aprendimos ese fin de semana”.

Tom y Micha trabajan como equipo y son actualmente los coordinadores norteamericanos del Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial que presentan los retiros los fines de semana en todo el área del norte de Texas. La información y los testimonios que se brindan durante el programa ayudan a los participantes a comprender que hay que elegir amar.

“El mundo nos enseña que el amor es una reacción espontánea, un sentimiento”, explicó la veterana presentadora. “Sin embargo, no puedes vivir tu vida según un sentimiento espontáneo. Tenemos que elegir amar en las relaciones”.

Basado en la doctrina de la Iglesia, el Encuentro Matrimonial instruye a las parejas sobre cómo escuchar y compartir para que puedan conectarse más profundamente. Los Aldon recomiendan tomarse 10 minutos todos los días para



escribirse una carta uno al otro como uno de los ejercicios para mejorar la comunicación y la unión de la pareja.

“Luego, cada cual lee la carta del otro una vez para entenderla con la cabeza, una vez para sentirla con el corazón y, por último, los dos hablan sobre todo lo escrito”, explicó la católica conversa. “El objetivo de esa pequeña y simple herramienta es crear intimidad porque se trata de llevarlos a comunicar los sentimientos versus los pensamientos”.

La práctica ayuda a que una relación florezca porque las personas se vuelven más apacibles y amables entre sí, incluso cuando se enfrentan a conflictos difíciles.

Las parejas, cuyos hijos ya han crecido y se han marchado del hogar,

y las parejas que buscan reavivar el romance en su matrimonio son algunas de las circunstancias que atraen a los esposos al Encuentro Matrimonial. Otros pueden estar lidiando con el estrés de las finanzas o de la crianza de sus hijos.

“Sabemos de personas con matrimonios problemáticos”, compartió Aldon. “Si se comunican con nosotros y tienen problemas serios en su matrimonio, los remitimos a un derivado de Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial llamado Retrouvaille”.

Los Aldon respaldan fuertemente el Encuentro Matrimonial y, como presentadores, han sido a través de los años testigos de transformaciones increíbles en las parejas que conocen.

Dana Nygaard, consejera y autora local de matrimonio católico habla durante el evento de Marriage en Tap en la Iglesia Católica de Good Shepherd en Colleyville. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



“Es el mejor regalo que nos hemos dado a nosotros mismos y a nuestro matrimonio”, dijo la señora Aldon, esposa y madre.

Hay más información disponible sobre el Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial, la ayuda en línea para el enriquecimiento matrimonial y los retiros para los hispanohablantes en la página web de la organización nacional, wwme.org.

PREPARANDO A LAS PAREJAS RECIÉN COMPROMETIDAS

Lograr que las parejas jóvenes discutan los temas importantes, no sólo para el día de la boda, es parte de lo que hacen David y Monica Knesek, una pareja casada que trabaja como padrinos para el programa de Fully Engaged de su parroquia. Se reúnen con los futuros novios al menos cuatro veces, comparten información sobre la importancia del sacramento y los ayudan a explorar posibles áreas de preocupación, como

la crianza de los hijos y los hábitos de compras y gastos de cada uno.

“Queremos que hablen sobre esas cosas que podrían causar desacuerdos en el futuro y que podrían terminar en el divorcio de la pareja si no se atienden y solucionan”, dijo Mónica. “Creo que este programa los alienta a reflexionar sobre las principales diferencias entre ellos, que muchas parejas ni tan siquiera podrían mencionar”.

David y Monica llevan casados 30 años y se involucraron en este ministerio a pedido de su pastor en la Parroquia del Santo Redentor en Aledo. Guiados por el Manual del Facilitador y otros materiales, los Knesek profundizan en las lecturas de las Escrituras, las enseñanzas católicas y el *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* antes de referirse a las ideas de su propio matrimonio para iniciar una conversación con las parejas comprometidas.

“Les hablamos sobre diferentes cosas, como por ejemplo, el no estar apuntando

lo que cada cual hace. Desde que nos casamos, Mónica y yo nunca hemos estado al tanto de quién será el próximo en cambiar un pañal o alimentar al perro”, dijo David. “También es importante alentar a estas parejas a seguir alimentando su fe y a mantenerse activos en la Iglesia. Mónica y yo nos sentimos más cercanos porque hemos estado en varios retiros de ACTS”.

El único consejo que él les da a todos los recién casados, incluida su hija el día de su boda, es “No dejen de ir juntos a la Misa semanal. El escuchar la Palabra de Dios y recibir la Eucaristía te hace mejor persona y cónyuge”.

“Los tiempos actuales son un momento difícil para que la gente se case y lo haga en la Iglesia”, aseveró David, refiriéndose a las presiones sociales. “Es duro. Cualquier cosa que uno pueda hacer para darle una ventaja a una pareja será algo beneficioso”.

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BENEFICIOS DE LAS NOCHES DE CITA PARA LA PAREJA

Con la tasa de divorcio alrededor de un 50 por ciento en los Estados Unidos, Dana Nygaard no tiene problemas para encontrar clientes para su práctica de terapia matrimonial.

“Era evidente para mí cuántos matrimonios estaban sufriendo”, dijo la que fuera maestra y que dejó el magisterio después de 16 años para convertirse en consejera profesional licenciada y psicoterapeuta católica. Muchas de las llamadas que recibía en su nueva práctica eran de parejas casadas. “Así que eso se convirtió en mi enfoque”.

Al cabo de obtener una maestría en consejería de la Universidad Bautista de Dallas, Nygaard se convirtió en una terapeuta de Gottman capacitada de nivel uno. Aunque se trata de un programa secular, el Método Gottman de terapia de pareja está respaldado por 45 años de investigación, “y lo infundo con la doctrina católica”, aseguró la feligresa de la Parroquia de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton de Plano.

¿Qué es algo que pueden hacer los cónyuges para crear y mantener una relación sana? Dedicarse tiempo el uno al otro, dijo.

“Los estudios de investigación lo respaldan”, señaló Nygaard. “Si una pareja tiene una noche de cita semanal dedicada el uno al otro, es más probable que logren un matrimonio excepcional y que obtengan beneficios increíbles. Incluso el corazón será más saludable”.

La terapeuta brinda y explica sus sugerencias para una relación sana y más íntima en su libro titulado *365 fechas para renovar su matrimonio cristiano*, que se encuentra disponible en una edición católica, cristiana y en español. La única regla para la noche de cita es no tener conversaciones sobre los niños.

Nygaard ofrece una lista de preguntas “en su marca, listo, vaya” que las parejas pueden utilizar para generar un diálogo significativo. A lo largo de los capítulos del libro se incluyen varias sugerencias e indicaciones basadas en la fe. La pregunta de la primera cita

nocturna ayuda a una pareja a concentrarse en la noche y reconectarse.

“La segunda pregunta es más profunda, pero no tan profunda como para que no quieras que la gente que está alrededor te escuche”, agregó la autora y presentadora.

Se requiere privacidad para el tercer intercambio, que es más intenso y puede abarcar desde compartir sentimientos sobre la relación, recuerdos de la infancia o ideas para la lista de cosas por hacer en la vida (conocido en inglés como ‘bucket list’).

“Las parejas llegan tan rotas, tan heridas, y al usar estas herramientas pueden volver a comunicarse de una manera saludable”, atestiguó Nygaard. “Hay parejas que han superado los romances fuera del matrimonio. Sanan y siguen adelante con su matrimonio”.

EL MATRIMONIO ES UN VIAJE DE TODA LA VIDA

Sonja Lange cree firmemente que los matrimonios son la piedra angular de la sociedad y la Iglesia, y que bien vale la pena salvarlos. Cuando un automóvil o una computadora se descomponen, los propietarios investigan y buscan arreglarlos, dijo la ferviente defensora del matrimonio. Agregó, además, “sin embargo, si un matrimonio no funciona, la tendencia es que simplemente dices que ya no amas a la persona y te vas”.

El matrimonio se ha vuelto desechable porque la gente no entiende su propósito.

“El matrimonio se trata de amar a la otra persona y ayudarla, y acompañarla en su viaje por la vida”, explicó Lange. “Caminas junto a ellos sabiendo que a veces los llevas y que, a veces, te llevan. A veces, es una alegría completa y, a veces, es un gran desafío, pero sigues adelante”. 🇺🇸

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





La Marcha por la Vida del Norte de Texas el 15 de enero de 2022 en Dallas conmemoró el 49º aniversario de la decisión *Roe v. Wade* que legalizó el aborto en los Estados Unidos. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

abriendo un CAMINO

¿Qué significa para América Latina el posible fin del aborto legal en los Estados Unidos?

Por David Ramos | ACI Prensa

La Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos podría hacer historia en los próximos meses y revertir el fallo de *Roe v. Wade*, que abrió las puertas al aborto legal en todo el país en 1973. Si esto llegara a suceder, ¿qué impacto tendría en América Latina?

Líderes Pro-Vida de América Latina se pronunciaron sobre cómo impactaría en cada uno de sus países un fallo a favor de la vida y que *Roe v. Wade* sea revertido. Entre estos efectos, apuntaron a un cambio en las presiones para legalizar el

aborto en la región, que con demasiada frecuencia llegan, a nivel político y económico, desde los Estados Unidos.

El 1 de diciembre del año pasado la Corte Suprema, conocida como SCOTUS por sus siglas en inglés, comenzó a escuchar los argumentos orales en el caso *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, sobre una ley del estado de Mississippi que restringe la mayoría de los abortos posteriores a las 15 semanas de gestación.

Un fallo favorable a la ley de

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Pro-Vida de Mississippi podría afectar las sentencias de *Roe v. Wade* y a *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* de 1992, en la que la Corte Suprema reafirmó el primer fallo y estableció que “un Estado no puede prohibir a ninguna mujer tomar la decisión final de interrumpir su embarazo antes de la viabilidad”.

Se considera que un bebé es “viable” fuera del vientre materno alrededor de las 24 semanas de gestación, aunque en los últimos años bebés nacidos alrededor de las 21 semanas de embarazo han sobrevivido.

Rodrigo Iván Cortés, presidente del Frente Nacional por la Familia de México, y vicepresidente de la Political Network for Values, dijo a ACI Prensa que una “decisión histórica”, que revierta *Roe v. Wade* “significaría un revés enorme para el activismo ideológico a favor de la cultura de la muerte” desplegado por los Estados Unidos en América Latina, especialmente bajo el Gobierno de Joe

Biden y su Vicepresidenta, Kamala Harris.

En México, dijo Cortés, “se ha notado de una manera evidente que esa Administración presiona a México para que se efectúen cambios en las leyes y políticas para imponer el aborto y la ideología de género”.

Además, dijo que ese cambio “significaría un referente importantísimo” para los ministros de la Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación de México, que “están claramente subordinados a esa ideología de muerte”.

El caso de *Roe v. Wade* se basa sobre una mentira. Norma McCorvey usó el pseudónimo de “Jane Roe” al presentar el caso ante la Corte Suprema a inicios de la década de 1970, diciendo que quedó embarazada tras ser violada por una pandilla. Años después admitiría que todo fue una mentira y denunció haber sido manipulada por los promotores de la legalización del aborto.

Durante el proceso ante la Corte Suprema, McCorvey dio a luz y su bebé

fue dado en adopción.

Norma McCorvey se convirtió al catolicismo y se dedicó a la defensa de la vida desde la concepción. Falleció el 18 de febrero de 2017.

Julia Regina de Cardenal, presidenta de la Fundación Sí a la Vida de El Salvador, destacó que si se revirtiera *Roe v. Wade* “ayudaría a El Salvador, en el sentido de que se desvirtuarían los argumentos y mentiras que usaron en los Estados Unidos para legalizar el aborto y que siguen usando acá los promotores del negocio del aborto”.

Aunque cabría esperar “más presión de la International Planned Parenthood Federation, en un intento desesperado de legalizar su lucrativo negocio que sería muy afectado”, la presidenta de la Fundación Sí a la Vida destacó que con un fallo provida de la Corte Suprema de Estados Unidos “se evidenciaría más la humanidad del feto de 15 semanas, que ya ha sido demostrada por la ciencia y la tecnología”.

Ligia Briz, directora ejecutiva de la

Miembros de las iglesias católica y evangélica y sectores conservadores participan en una manifestación contra el aborto en Ciudad de Guatemala. (Getty Images/Johan Ordonez)



Miembros de organizaciones civiles y religiosas marchan durante una protesta nacional llamada "Por Las Mujeres y la Vida" contra la despenalización del aborto en Guadalajara, México. (AFP / Ulises Ruiz)



Asociación la Familia Importa (AFI) de Guatemala, afirmó que revertir *Roe v. Wade* “para nosotros sería una excelente noticia”.

“Las organizaciones que están intentando mover este tema en nuestros países, en contra de nuestra legislación, especialmente en Guatemala, tendrían que cesar por ley”.

“Creemos que es una oportunidad histórica para cambiar esta sentencia, debido a que actualmente se tiene una mayoría de jueces que parecieran a favor de la vida”, añadió.

Giuliana Caccia, directora de la Asociación Origen en Perú, dijo que revertir *Roe v. Wade* “sería una muestra clara de una premisa indiscutible, que es que la verdad siempre triunfa”.

“En el Perú creo que, de revertirse, nos daría un argumento indiscutible, porque siempre se apelaba a este fallo. El aborto no tiene ningún sustento legal, y ninguna sentencia o ley puede negar que es un deber el defender la vida desde la concepción, bajo cualquier circunstancia”, dijo.

“Nuestro país es una de las naciones que más han resistido, porque el aborto es legal en Argentina y en muchos países de la región. La reversión del fallo sería un arma más para seguir conteniendo el avance de esta agenda regional que camina a paso firme a través de ONG financiadas por la cooperación internacional”, señaló.

El presidente de la Fundación Más Vida de Argentina, Raúl Magnasco, dijo a ACI Prensa que “la posibilidad de revertir” *Roe v. Wade* “significa, para todo el mundo, una luz de esperanza muy importante, por cuanto con ello se revierte el aborto en prácticamente todo el país”.

“Siendo los Estados Unidos el país más influyente en cuanto a medios de comunicación, significaría un gran avance para toda la región y el mundo, que entendería, a la luz de la experiencia norteamericana, que el futuro es inclusivo respecto del cuidado y reconocimiento de las dos vidas, tanto la de la madre, como la del hijo en gestación”, afirmó.

Jesús Magaña, presidente de la plataforma Unidos por la Vida de Colombia, subrayó que la sentencia de *Roe v. Wade* “ha sido nefasta no sólo para los Estados Unidos, sino para el mundo”, pues “se legaliza el aborto mediante un acto jurídico que termina extralimitando las funciones de la Corte Suprema, porque prácticamente es una legislación contraria al espíritu de la Constitución que defiende la naturaleza humana y del pueblo en su conjunto”.

“De hecho, en Colombia el modelo que se ha utilizado para despenalizar el aborto ha sido precisamente el de los Estados Unidos, ya que la Corte Constitucional, actuando en contra de la Constitución, ha despenalizado el aborto”, señaló.

Para Magaña, “que se revierta el fallo sería muy importante porque volvería a colocar en sus justos límites y en sus cauces democráticos al Poder Judicial”.

De esa forma, continuó, se evitaría “este desbalance tan terrible que tenemos hoy en nuestros países, donde la ingerencia del Poder Judicial es tan agresiva que termina destruyendo el sistema democrático, al invadir las esferas del Poder Legislativo o del Poder Ejecutivo”.

Para Elizabeth Bunster, directora del Proyecto Esperanza de Chile, “la posibilidad de revertir el fallo *Roe v. Wade* sería una señal de esperanza, frente a una fuerte arremetida que hay contra la vida en América Latina y el Caribe”.

Aunque el 30 de noviembre la Cámara de Diputados rechazó un proyecto de ley de aborto libre hasta las 14 semanas, dijo, “sabemos que hay grupos que seguirán insistiendo en esta ley”.

“Para Chile representa una gran esperanza que se revierta este fallo, que dentro de los argumentos que se esgrimen para legalizar el aborto se habla de progresismo de países desarrollados”, señaló.

“En estos temas se mira a los Estados Unidos como modelo”, señaló. ✨

Nota del editor: Colaboraron en este artículo Walter Sánchez Silva y Diego López Marina.

Danza Azteca;

UNA ALEGRIA QUE SE OFRESE A DIOS

Al honrar a la Virgen Morena, este ministerio
invita a todos a acercase a Jesús

Por Violeta Rocha

Diego Alanís, de 15 años, afirma que entrar a la iglesia danzando en honor de la Virgen de Guadalupe, al ritmo del fuerte sonido de los tambores, acompañado del vibrante sonido del caracol, vestido con orgullo de su penacho de largas plumas, el colorido pectoral y las hueseras en sus tobillos característicos de un danzante azteca, es reflejo de su fe.

En ese momento “siento que estamos sólo Dios y yo, y le ofrezco lo que puedo darle, que es mi baile”, dijo Alanís, y agrega que es a través de la danza azteca como expresa su amor hacia Dios y la Virgen de Guadalupe.

Alanís forma parte del ministerio Danza Azteca de la Parroquia del Santo Nombre de Fort Worth, que se formó hace tres años y cuenta con veinticinco integrantes que tienen entre 12 a 60 años.

Los rítmicos y vigorosos movimientos propios de una danza azteca comprenden grandes saltos, vueltas rápidas y constantes agachadas, que exigen buena condición física, por lo que ensayan dos veces a la semana. Comienzan sus ensayos a finales de febrero para estar listos el 12 de diciembre, Fiesta de la Virgen de Guadalupe. El resto del año participan de diferentes actividades parroquiales, como las ventas de cocina y el rezo del Santo Rosario, para fomentar el crecimiento espiritual. El grupo tiene como misión “acercar los feligreses a la fe”, dijo Juan Matías, 32, uno de los iniciadores de la Danza Azteca y feligrés de la Parroquia del Santo Nombre desde hace cinco años.

Danzar no es hacer ejercicio o meramente un espectáculo, “sino una alegría que se ofrece a Dios”, apunta Matías, quien ha sido ‘danzante azteca’ desde que tenía 16 años en su natal Ciudad de México. Él asegura que es una “bendición” compartir su experiencia y enseñar los tradicionales pasos de la danza azteca.



(I-D) Rosy Nava de Alanís, su hijo Diego Alanís, y Claudia Patlán y su marido, Ismael Patlán, son todos miembros del ministerio de Danza Azteca en la Parroquia del Santo Nombre de Jesús en Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

“Comenzó como un sueño porque en el área de Fort Worth no había un grupo de Danza Azteca”, señaló. “Gracias a Dios, nos dieron permiso para ensayar en la parroquia”. Matías recordó cómo en los primeros ensayos el grupo se componía solamente de cuatro miembros.

“Como católicos no queremos que se piense que en estas danzas se alaba a otros dioses”, apuntó Matías. “Por el contrario, significa recordar las apariciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe en el Cerro del Tepeyac, tras la caída del Imperio Azteca, frente a la conquista española, y su hermosa imagen plasmada en la tilma de San Juan Diego. Gracias a la Virgen Morena, gran parte del pueblo indígena se convirtió a la fe católica y comenzaron a venerarla con las danzas, explicó Matías, y afirmó el compromiso del ministerio de sólo participar en eventos religiosos.

Luego de cada ‘gala Guadalupana’ los coloridos vestuarios, que son hechos a mano en México, se lavan a vapor.

Las múltiples plumas de cada penacho, que miden hasta tres pies de largo, se desmontan para limpiarse. Los seis tambores son retocados con pintura para mantenerlos en buen estado, así como los ocho caracoles.

Encomendados a Dios y a la Virgen Morena, apunta Matías, han visto numerosos frutos, tales como dirigir el rezo del Rosario cada domingo antes de la Misa de las 10 a.m., invitaciones a bailar en otras parroquias, ver familias que danzan juntas, así como la “alegría” de que algunos miembros siguen el proceso de RICA para regresar a la fe católica.

Rosaura Nava, de 48 años y originaria de la Ciudad de México, comentó estar muy emocionada de que sus hijos la acompañan al hacer la danza azteca y de que comparten este ministerio con una decena de otros jóvenes.

“Es una dicha muy grande tener a mis hijos danzando conmigo y verlos entusiasmados al bailarle a la Virgen

y estar cerca de Dios”, dijo sobre su hijo, Diego Alanís, y su hijo mayor, quien danzó también antes de irse a la universidad.

Nava, que ayuda en la coordinación del grupo, resaltó el entusiasmo de los jóvenes y anhela que ellos “sigan el legado” de la Danza Azteca, “y que usen esa energía que tienen para vivir su fe, y se involucren plenamente en la vida parroquial”.

Por su parte, Diego, no sólo celebra “compartir mi fe con más gente de mi edad”, sino que también dice que “veo el ejemplo de los adultos que se afanan por conseguir cada material de la danza y mantener unido el ministerio”. Él no quiere detenerse “hasta realizar lo que me propongo, porque todo esto es para agradar a Dios”, añadió.

El danzar le trae a Rosaura gratos recuerdos de su niñez, cuando iba a visitar la Basílica de Guadalupe junto a su

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Valeria Rodríguez, del grupo Danza Azteca de la Parroquia del Santo Nombre, actúa en la Feria Internacional de Santa Rita el 3 de octubre de 2021. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

El simbolismo azteca en la danza como ofrenda

PLUMAS EN EL PENACHO:

Se usan grandes plumas para emular a un pájaro volando en el cielo al brincar, agacharse y dar vueltas rápidas. Representan el momento en que los pájaros cantaban cuando apareció Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en el Cerro del Tepeyac.

TAMBOR: Se hace de una sola pieza de un árbol y habla de la tierra. Está bien fundamentado, como esa roca que es nuestro Dios.

CARACOL: Su sonido simboliza el agua que cae del cielo. Dios manda la lluvia y llega al mar, se llenan los lagos y los ríos, y de ahí nace el caracol.

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madre y “veía el fervor de los danzantes que llegaban a ver a la Virgen”. Cada vez que entra a su parroquia con ese mismo traje que veía de niña, ella se siente que lleva a su comunidad parroquial “un poquito de nuestro México, para que se sientan en familia, y celebren a nuestra Madre, la Virgen de Guadalupe, quien nos lleva a su amado hijo Jesucristo”.

Ismael Patlán, de 49 años, fue uno de los primeros cuatro integrantes de la Danza Azteca que se motivaron al escuchar a Matías y se animaron a comenzar una danza diferente en su parroquia.

“Nunca antes había danzado”, dijo Patlán “Fuimos aprendiendo los pasos y, poco a poco, vimos un cambio muy grande. Animados por el deseo de bailarle a la Virgencita, hemos visto que se puede seguir adelante como en familia”.

Patlán también destacó la unidad que se ha visto a través del rezo del Rosario antes de la Misa dominical, y el crecimiento de la participación de los jóvenes en el ministerio.

No es común ver a jóvenes rezando el Santo Rosario, señaló, “eso motiva a uno y a los feligreses de la parroquia

porque mediante el rezo del Rosario hemos podido ver que un mayor número de jóvenes se acercan a la Iglesia”.

“Cuando a uno lo mueve y dirige la fe, hay una entrega mayor y una alegría inmensa”, afirma Claudia Patlán, esposa de Ismael, y quien se unió a la danza tras ver a su esposo ensayar.

El matrimonio Patlán, además de participar en el grupo de Danza Azteca, es también parte de la Escuela de Evangelización San Andrés. Ellos participan de otros ministerios, al igual que la mayoría de los miembros del grupo, que sirven como lectores, ministros del altar, integrantes del grupo de jóvenes y acomodadores.

“Al involucrarte en un ministerio conoces a tu comunidad parroquial y estás consciente de que tu servicio es para Dios, por eso entregas lo mejor de sí mismo”, aseveró Claudia. Ella reconoce que, aunque el esfuerzo físico para la danza requiere mucha práctica y constante interés, lo más importante es el crecimiento espiritual. “No sólo rezamos el Santo Rosario y la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia en la iglesia, sino que también oramos al comenzar cada ensayo. Eso ha ayudado a que el grupo esté sólido y que siga creciendo”, agregó. 🇲🇽

LA DIGNIDAD DE LA VIDA FAMILIAR

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



 @BpOlsonFW

El Papa San Juan Pablo II dijo proféticamente en su homilía de la histórica liturgia que celebró el 7 de octubre del 1979 en el National Mall de Washington, D.C. las siguientes palabras: “La vida humana es preciosa porque es un don de Dios, cuyo amor es infinito; y cuando Dios da la vida, la da para siempre. La vida, además, es preciosa porque es la expresión y el fruto del amor. Ésta es la razón por la que la vida debe tener origen en el contexto del matrimonio y por la que el matrimonio y el amor recíproco de los padres deben estar caracterizados por la generosidad en su entrega. El gran peligro para la vida de familia, en una sociedad cuyos ídolos son el placer, las comodidades y la independencia, está en el hecho de que los hombres cierran el corazón y se vuelven egoístas. El miedo a un compromiso permanente puede cambiar el amor mutuo entre marido y mujer en dos amores de sí mismos, dos amores que existen el uno al lado del otro, hasta que terminan en la separación”

Es importante que recordemos las reflexiones del Santo Padre en estos momentos que existe la posibilidad muy real de que la Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos pueda restringir, o hasta rescindir, *Roe v. Wade* y el acceso ilimitado al aborto. Hemos de recordar que todavía

tenemos mucho trabajo por hacer para proteger la dignidad de la vida, incluso el que promovamos primero la integridad del matrimonio natural y el sacramento del Santo Matrimonio entre un hombre y una mujer unidos en un compromiso amoroso y respetuoso de permanencia, fidelidad y apertura a la concepción de nueva vida como fruto de su mutuo amor.

Parte integral del primer ataque a la vida humana es el ataque a la naturaleza e integridad del matrimonio natural y el sacramento del Santo Matrimonio. La protección del niño debe comenzar con la protección del matrimonio natural entre un hombre y una mujer. Sin matrimonio natural, la institución del matrimonio se denigra y se reduce meramente a un acuerdo de conveniencia mutua y temporal entre dos individuos, independientemente del género, que elimina las cualidades humanas de permanencia, fidelidad y fertilidad del amor sacrificial de parte del esposo y la esposa. Esto es especialmente perjudicial para la vida de nuestra nación y sociedad porque de manera egoísta e intencional se priva a los niños de la relación necesaria tanto con la madre como con el padre.

El desafío que nosotros enfrentamos hoy es que muchos hombres y mujeres jóvenes tienen miedo de hacer el sacrificio de un compromiso matrimonial

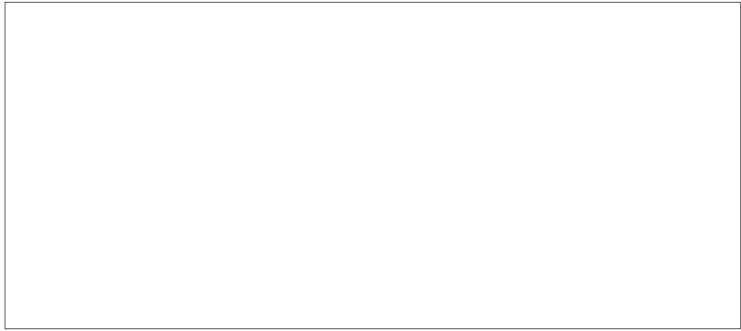
porque creen y temen que el divorcio es inevitable. A su vez, esto los lleva a la falta de confianza y se niegan a casarse porque no quieren divorciarse. Se niegan a comprometerse con el amor y el sacrificio del uno por el otro, por lo que tienen miedo de tener hijos; o eligen tener hijos sólo por su propio deseo personal de un legado o para satisfacer sus propias necesidades emocionales. Esto, en parte, conduce al fenómeno actual de que muchos padres y madres traten a sus hijos como iguales, en lugar de cumplir con su responsabilidad de ser los padres y madres de sus hijos, enseñarles la fe y guiarlos gradualmente a una independencia madura.

El gobierno no puede reemplazar el papel primordial de los esposos y esposas, padres y madres, como tampoco puede reemplazar el papel esencial de la Iglesia en la formación y educación de los seres humanos. Como valientemente predicó el Papa San Juan Pablo II en esa misma homilía de octubre del 1979: “Mucho queda por hacer para poder ayudar a aquéllos cuya vida está amenazada y reavivar la esperanza de quienes tienen miedo a la vida. Se requiere valentía para resistir a las presiones y falsas consignas, para proclamar la dignidad suprema de toda vida, y exigir que la sociedad misma la proteja”. 🇺🇸



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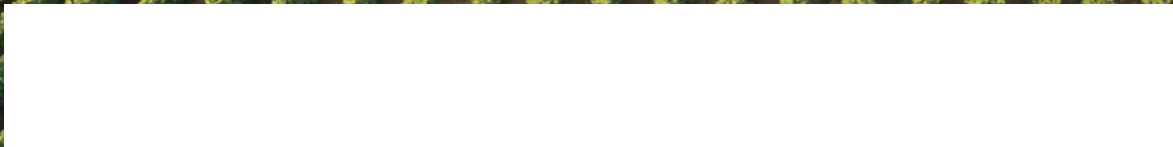
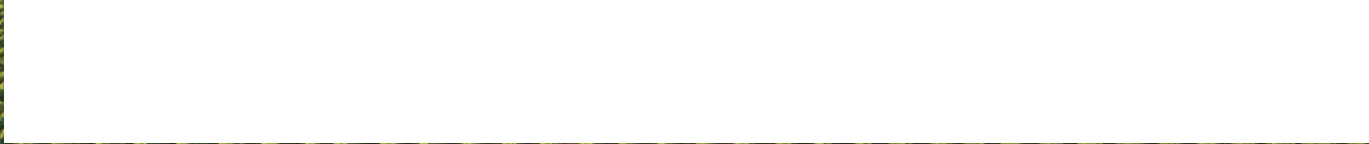
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