



North Texas Catholic



VOL. 33 NO. 3 MAY / JUNE 2017

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



AROUND THE DIOCESE

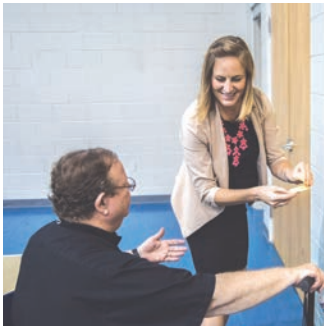
Student missionaries, Good Friday Rosary, St. John Paul II Summer Ministry Conference, and more.

4

7

JEFF HENSLEY RETIRES

After 29 years, editor Jeff Hensley retires, but his legacy endures through his influence as a mentor.



GIVING BACK

Stewardship – of time, talent, and treasure – is about giving back to the One who first gave.

8

10

ADVOCATES FOR THE GOSPEL

Local Catholics join 4,000 delegates at the Texas Capitol to advocate for the poor, the unborn, and immigrants.



A HEART FOR THE POOR

With 36 years as a missionary, Father Robert Thames proves that living simply isn't easy.

14

18

WHEN THE SUN DANCED

On the 100th anniversary of her appearance, Our Lady of Fatima continues to mystify and inspire.



HE IS RISEN

Believers and nonbelievers have been arguing about the empty tomb ever since Jesus' resurrection.

24

29

MARY CHANGED MY LIFE

After some initial trepidation, columnist Ali Hoffman lets Mary into the home of her heart.



TAKE FIVE WITH FATHER

Father Boyalla, SAC, worried about fitting in. Now he makes parishes in Mineral Wells and Graford inviting.

31

ON THE COVER

Jesus and Mary visit Sister Lucia of Fatima in the convent of Pontevedra on December 10, 1925. (Courtesy Raúl Berzosa, Spanish artist, Raulberzosa.com)



Friend, mentor, man of God

Time flies. I was surprised the other day when I was hit by the realization that I've been friends with Jeff Hensley for eight years now (and counting).

After guiding the *NTC* for 29 years, Jeff retired in early April and he will be missed.

He's done a lot for the *North Texas Catholic*, making it a perennial award winner practically since he arrived as editor. He's done a lot for the Catholic press too, mentoring a small army of writers, columnists, editors, photographers, and authors — many of whom continue to build up the Kingdom of God through their gifts.

But you know a person is a great leader when you learn more than “the ropes” from him or her. Yes, Jeff has taught me and many others a textbook's worth of information regarding our craft, but he's gone beyond that. He's taught us valuable life lessons.

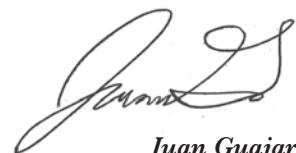
For instance, he's a great model of humility. The man is always quick to give the credit to others, especially to God. “Praise God!” is one of his most-said expressions. He has always given the limelight to his writers and staffers and has a way of making others feel valued and appreciated.

I admire Jeff's courage and integrity, too. In the years I've known him, he's never held back when it came to standing up for the truth, or for the “least of us.” Oftentimes this meant writing or publishing what secular society would dub the “unpopular opinion” — which we know is much more than opinion — it's our beck and call as Catholics. His actions said: It's better being an honorable man than a popular man.

Jeff also radiates a very Christ-centric life. He is constantly learning about his faith, studying Scripture, and praying. For Jeff, every page, every story, every word was for God's glory and crafted with every intention to bring fellow souls closer to our Blessed Lord.

Although Jeff is no longer sitting next to me in the office, his words of wisdom, hope, and virtue carry on. As both his friend and successor, I ask that you keep him in your prayers as he continues returning to full health.

In Christ,



Juan Guajardo
Editor

North Texas Catholic



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Hundreds prayed the Rosary outside Planned Parenthood with Bishop Olson on Good Friday. (NTC/Joan Kurkowski-Gillen)

Rosary vigil on Good Friday a growing family tradition

FORT WORTH — The annual Rosary Vigil for Life, held every Good Friday, attracted several hundred parishioners from across the diocese.

Led by Bishop Michael Olson, young and old participants lined the sidewalks outside Planned Parenthood to meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary and pray for unborn babies and those lost to abortion.

Organizer Bobby Warren says the vigil offers a voice of prayer to the unborn who don't have a voice.

"This is an especially poignant day for that to happen as we meditate on the crucifixion," explained the St. Patrick parishioner. "We're out here on the sidewalk as a visible, prayerful presence to remember the death of Christ and those babies who lose their lives in the abortion mill."

"But this day brings out a special group of people," Warren added, referring to

the many families with young children in the crowd. "It's important to be in prayer on Good Friday."

Many in the pro-life movement believe their prayers are being answered. Recent pro-life bills under consideration by the 85th Texas Legislature have buoyed the spirits of those working in respect life ministries.

Pat Pelletier, who helped organize the first local Rosary Vigil for Life with her late husband, Chuck, said, "For the first time since we started this (the vigil), I see a possibility of *Roe v. Wade* being overturned," referencing the U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion.

"Just given the hope that abortion may someday be illegal is unbelievable. It could happen in our lifetime and I never expected that," she pointed out.

— *Joan Kurkowski-Gillen*

St. Ann Parish's Seder meal connects past to present

BURLESON — Steve Gats is making his grandfather proud. Jewish by birth, he converted to Catholicism 13 years ago, and he honors his Jewish heritage by hosting a traditional Passover Seder each year at St. Ann Parish in Burleson.

Gats explained, "The Seder has been celebrated for 3,500 years." St. Ann's Seder: four years.

The Passover meal, which featured symbolic foods and Hebrew music, attracted nearly 175 guests on April 4.

According to Father Mel Bessellieu, pastor of St. Ann's, the Passover celebration is "the skeleton

on which the skin of the Mass is built."

Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist at his last Passover on Holy Thursday. Many rituals of the Seder correspond to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, including handwashing, blessing of the wine, and breaking of the bread.

Gats added that guests "get the connection between Passover and Holy Communion. It's exciting to understand where our traditions come from. When you understand the connection, your faith grows even more."

— *Susan Moses*



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

The 2016 priestly ordination Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



St. John Paul II Institute to host Summer Ministry Conference

FORT WORTH — Each June the St. John Paul II Institute sponsors a Summer Ministry Conference for diocesan lay ministers and Catholic faithful. The conference includes a series of theology lectures during the week and Saturday workshops in four ministerial areas.

This year's English lecture series speaker is Father Albert Haase, OFM Cap. Father Gerardo Guerra, OP, will present in Spanish. From June 12-15, Fr. Haase, will present lectures entitled "True Self, False Self: Growth in Spirituality" at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville. Fr. Haase is a popular preacher and author. His latest book is *Catching Fire, Becoming Flame: A Guide for Spiritual Transformation*.

Fr. Guerra is a scientist and theologian. Born and educated in Mexico, Fr. Guerra will speak on "Laudato Si," Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment

published two years ago. His lectures will be given at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in south Fort Worth from June 20-22.

All Saturday workshops will be held at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. One workshop will be given in each of four ministerial areas in both English and Spanish. English workshops include: Catechetical ministry — Fr. Carmen Mele, OP, "Teaching Catholic Morals"; liturgical ministry — Dcn. Don Warner, "Devotions and Evangelization"; pastoral ministry — Connie Martin, "Bringing Christ to Christ: Ministry to the Disabled"; and social ministry — Rozanne Veaser of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, "Mini Loan Conversion."

All JP2 Summer Ministry Conference events are free. More information may be obtained at fwdioc.org/jp2i-about or by contacting Fr. Mele at cmele@fwdioc.org or 817-945-9352.

Two to be ordained priests for diocese May 20

FORT WORTH — The Diocese of Fort Worth will soon be blessed with two new priests. God willing, Deacon Stephen Hauck of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington and Deacon John Martin of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills will be ordained to the priesthood and receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders on Saturday, May 20 at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth at 10 a.m. Bishop Michael Olson will preside at the Mass. Look for articles, photos, and video links in the next issue of the *North Texas Catholic*.

In Memory

- DCN. RON AZIERE.....January 4, 2017
- FATHER OREN KEY, SJ.....February 26, 2017
- DCN. RAYMOND G. LAMARRE.....March 18, 2017
- FATHER RAPHAEL EAGLE, TOR.....March 18, 2017
- FATHER JEROME JAYASURIYA.....March 31, 2017

Give them eternal rest, O Lord,
and may your light shine on them forever. Amen.

Please keep our recently deceased priests, deacons, and religious in your prayers.
Full obituaries are available at NorthTexasCatholic.org.

FIAT missionaries help out at Penelope, Abbott parishes



PENELOPE — A group of University of Texas at Arlington students dedicated their spring break to helping Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Penelope and Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Abbott as part of the Faith In Action Together (FIAT) young adult mission.

Led by UTA Campus Minister Jeff Hedglen, they cleaned up flower beds, moved church pews, scraped paint, repainted doors, cleaned walls, and other odd jobs needed.

“There are needs at home,” Hedglen said on why the mission trip stays local. “While the needs we are fulfilling here aren’t getting anyone out of poverty, we

are providing a service and doing work that is easier to do with lots of hands and young backs.”

“There aren’t as many young adults in these parishes, and the ones who are (young adults) are all working,” said Father Joseph Keating, parochial administrator of the two parishes.

“This would take us months to do just a day’s worth of work.”

Last year, the group went to the far west reaches of the diocese to host a youth retreat for parishes in Cisco, Ranger, Eastland, and Strawn as well as help with labor-intensive projects at those churches.

— Crystal Brown

Source and Summit

Youth draw close to Jesus during Source and Summit, a three-day retreat focused on the Most Blessed Sacrament.

NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news



Catholic Men’s Conference

More than 1,000 men from more than 100 parishes participated in “Salt and Light, Embracing Christ’s Love,” the sixth annual North Texas Catholic Men’s Conference.

NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news

Come Holy Spirit!

The Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son, yet is the least known person of the Blessed Trinity. Fr. Carmen Mele, OP, shines some light.



NorthTexasCatholic.org/inspiration-news



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See Pages 34-35 for more “Around the Diocese.”

JEFF HENSLEY RETIRES AS EDITOR, LEAVES BEHIND LEGACY

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

After almost 30 years of producing one of the country's most respected diocesan newspapers and magazines, Jeff Hensley, editor of the *North Texas Catholic*, retired March 31.

It's a decision that saddened many writers and readers of the publication who consider the Catholic journalist a mentor, teacher, advisor, and friend.

Former *NTC* correspondent and Word to Life columnist Jean Denton called the *North Texas Catholic* a blessing to the people of the Diocese of Fort Worth.

"But I don't know if they realize how much Jeff is the reason it's a blessing," says the creator of *The Flock* cartoon series featured in the *NTC*. "He was uniquely gifted to produce this paper — by his abilities as an editor, his wonderful sense of visual presentation, and his enormous desire to constantly tell the story of the Church and individuals daily living out the Gospel of Jesus in both large and small ways."

A convert to Catholicism, Hensley became editor of the *NTC* in October 1988. During his tenure, the newspaper transitioned from publishing twice a month to once a month and eventually was redesigned to become a magazine. It also enjoys an increasingly rich web presence.

An award-winning columnist, Hensley created the Word to Life series as a way to provide reflection on Scripture through real life experiences. With commentary provided by several writers, including himself, the feature was syndicated by the Catholic News Service (CNS) from 1997 to 2017. Hensley also found time to serve on the Catholic Press Association (CPA)/CNS Liaison Committee representing Texas diocesan publications and is currently a member of the CPA board of directors.



Jeff Hensley

"Ultimately, Jeff's biggest contribution to the Catholic press cannot be measured in numbers or lists," says Maria Scaperlanda, longtime *NTC* freelancer and author. "No task was too small for his help. Whatever he does is always offered with a positive, often humorous attitude and done in a deeply spiritual, prayerful perspective."

She is one of the many writers who earned Catholic Press Association awards for work published in the *NTC* under Hensley's leadership. During the past 20 years, the *NTC* consistently won awards in a variety of categories.

"Every year we've entered, we've won something and that's due to the excellence of the writers I chose," Hensley explained. "They are the secret to the success of the many changes we've made."

Nothing gave the seasoned editor more joy than watching someone earn a CPA award for the first time.

"I'm proud of the fact we've won in so many categories," he added. "That indicated we were excellent in lots of different ways."

Several recent awards were garnered for articles celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life declared by Pope Francis

in 2013. Writers were assigned stories highlighting the different local religious congregations and their contributions during the long project.

"He put so much time into it and the result was such a beautiful presentation," recalled Sister Yolanda Cruz, SSMN, delegate for women religious in the diocese. "Thanks to the coverage he gave these orders, we know how wonderful they are. He did everything he could to make us visible and alive to the Church."

The journalist put the same care and sincerity into other aspects of his work, added Sr. Yolanda who described her friend as a kind, spiritual, and dedicated person.

Hensley's impact on the Catholic press had a rippling effect not only locally but across the state and nationally. Two former *NTC* associate editors, Jordan McMorrough and Tony Gutierrez, secured prominent positions in the Catholic media. McMorrough is the director of communications for the Diocese of San Antonio and Tony Gutierrez was named editor of *The Catholic Sun* in Phoenix two years ago. *NTC* columnist Kathy Hamer Beck is nationally syndicated and Jean Denton said her syndicated cartoon series "would never have gotten off the ground without Jeff's encouragement."

"There are so many of us out there who are what we are because of Jeff Hensley. He showed us what it means to be a good Catholic editor and a good Catholic journalist," Gutierrez says.

Whether dealing with freelancers, staff, or colleagues at The Catholic Center, the *NTC* editor's pastoral touch made people feel appreciated and included.

"I now try to use that approach myself," says *The Catholic Sun* editor. "Jeff is a faithful Catholic man I look up to on how to live my life."

GIVING BACK

TO THE ONE WHO FIRST GAVE

A look at stewardship progress in the diocese, one year later

Stories by Matthew Smith

Admittedly, it's a challenge many dioceses face.

“Stewardship is a tough one,” said Tracy Gomes, stewardship committee member at St. Michael Parish in Bedford. “Everyone instantly goes to money.”

It's more than financial giving of course. But one obstacle to increasing stewardship participation — which also involves lending one's time and talents — among parishes is that many view the practice as a chore rather than a catalyst for evangelization, discipleship, and spiritual growth.

A stewardship retreat held April 1 at Fort Worth's Holy Family Parish concentrated on changing such perceptions. Pastors, staff, and ministry and lay leaders from 14 parishes heard from guest presenter Father Andrew Kemberling, VF, of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Denver. Fr. Kemberling authored *Making Stewardship A Way of Life*.

The event marked the diocese's second annual stewardship retreat.

“I wanted the parishes to come together and network,” said Diana



Diana Liska, director of stewardship and parish relations, talks with Father Andrew Kemberling, VF, prior to a Q&A session. Kemberling was the keynote speaker at the Leadership Day of Renewal. (NTC/Adrean Indolos)

Liska, director of stewardship and parish relations. “I think it's important that the parishes get to know one another and share best practices.”

Last year's event, held at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, was reflective, Liska said, focusing solely on prayer.

“Fr. Kemberling lives stewardship beautifully and he's able to teach us a lot,” Liska said. “I wanted to bring him here because I think we're really in the infancy stages of stewardship in our diocese.”

Fr. Kemberling broached the subject while celebrating Mass opening

LIVING OUT STEWARDSHIP

the day.

“We are to be countercultural to the values of this world,” Fr. Kemberling said. “Stewardship is a sign that God loves us more than we can ever imagine. Stewardship leads to evangelization.”

Fr. Kemberling delivered three talks on the topic in between group discussions, question sessions, and the testimony of lay witnesses.

“We are made to know, love, and serve God in this life and the next,” Fr. Kemberling said. “That’s the meaning of life. I don’t have to climb a mountain and talk to some guru to find the meaning.

“And we express our love by giving our time, talent, and treasure back to God in thanksgiving for God’s love. It’s the core of spirituality and our entire Catholic faith.”

The frustration, several attendees said, is that they see huge potential for stewardship at their parishes, but limited involvement outside of weekly Mass attendance makes it a struggle.

Fr. Kemberling urged them to relay the reward and importance of stewardship and suggested discussing it throughout the year instead of only on special occasions. Fr. Kemberling also stressed the importance of tailoring the stewardship message to address different cultures within a parish.

“Stewardship needs renewal,” Fr. Kemberling said. “What is your commitment? What are your plans going to look like? Break it down throughout the year into [separate] talks on time and talent and treasure so they don’t just hear money, money, money.”

Charity, be it financial giving,

Continued on Page 23



Linda Price

Spiritual recharge

It brings renewal and an opportunity to recharge her commitment, St. Andrew Church parishioner Linda Price said of her experience during Holy Family Church’s April 1 stewardship retreat. Speakers discussed the tenets and rewards of stewardship throughout the day at the Fort Worth church.

Such events, Price said, bolster the need to look at stewardship afresh and to dialogue with others.

Price, a nurse, volunteers at St. Andrew as a lector and a member of the Fort Worth church’s peace and justice task force, food pantry advisory board, and parish nurse association, among other involvements. Her parish recently reached out to nearby McLean Middle School to offer tutoring and organize fund drives for school supplies and uniforms.

“I think [stewardship] means sharing relations with others,” Price said. “Like we’ve learned today, passing on the blessings we’ve been given and trying to see Christ in every person you meet — just sharing recognition of another person.”

Price said stewardship helps her function in today’s society where many heed religious values scantily.

“It gives me the strength to target everything for good and the wisdom to determine what to focus on.”

Rick Kubes



Going beyond

Church attendance, while essential, is but a start, said Holy Family parishioner Rick Kubes.

“It should be more than, ‘I went to Mass on Sunday. I’m done. I’ll be back next week.’” Kubes said.

He serves as a lector, an usher and greeter at Holy Family, and is involved with Catholic Charities and other groups.

Stewardship is challenging but ultimately rewarding and necessary, Kubes said.

“The problem with society today is that people are turning off and tend to do too much or nothing,” Kubes said. “When I feel that way, I take comfort in what my dad used to say, ‘We all just serve a purpose and that’s what we do in life.’”

“Going to church on Sunday is wonderful because it’s a discipline in exercising your spiritual component.”

That’s where stewardship kicks in and leads to growth, Kubes said. “It helps you look at every individual. That’s the grace of God, to see people as people and not groups.”

Stewardship reveals that it’s not the magnitude of the effort but the effort, Kubes said.

“Everything good comes through love,” Kubes said. “You don’t have to be the president to make an impact.”

ADVOCATES FOR THE GOSPEL

Local Catholics make their voices heard at the Texas Capitol

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Local advocates for the poor, the unborn, immigrants, and needy families joined Bishop Michael Olson and 4,000 other Catholics from across Texas at the State Capitol April 4 for Catholic Faith in Action Day led by the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops.

Following a rally on the steps of the capitol building, delegations from 15 Texas dioceses visited the offices of senators and representatives to offer the Catholic perspective on a variety of bills before the legislature. Fifty adults and 100 Catholic school students from the Diocese

of Fort Worth traveled to Austin for the event.

While older participants spoke with policymakers, most of the 1,500 youngsters at the gathering heard presentations and attended mock hearings on issues supported by the Church.

Bills of the 85th Legislature considered a priority by Texas bishops include: pro-life concerns, immigration reform, the state's foster care system, environmental issues, parental choice in education, death penalty sentencing, mental health services, and human trafficking.

Marlon De La Torre discussed immigration and pro-life issues with the staff or policy directors of Rep. Phil King, Sen. Jane Nelson, and Sen. Kelly Hancock.

"Each office gave us about 15 minutes which is more than you can ask for at times," said the diocesan director of Catechesis who led one of 10 teams from the diocese. "They were very attentive and attuned to what we had to say."

Legislative staff members were very receptive to the Church's position on banning partial birth abortion and other pro-life bills. But the delegation's vocal



opposition to key immigration legislation did not receive the same reaction. SB 4 would allow law enforcement in cities, counties, and college campuses to hold an arrested person in custody while U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement looked into his or her immigration status. If the entities fail to do so, they could be denied state grant money.

"By their non-reaction to our passionate plea, it appears the bill is going to pass," explained De La Torre, a participant in three previous Advocacy Days.

Bringing Catholics from across the state to Austin where they can voice their public policy concerns to legislators is important, he continued.

"I think it brings to light our position

A crowd of about 4,000 people showed up to join a rally during the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Advocacy Day at the capitol building in Austin. (NTC photo/Thao Nguyen)



as the Church universal that we are an advocate not just for the dignity of the person or life, but basic Christian anthropology,” the church worker asserted. “We have a civic responsibility to affect positive change in a charitable manner to help our fellow human beings.”

The growing number of Catholics in Texas — fueled in part by an influx of Hispanics — is making the Church a galvanizing force in the state.

“In many ways we’re growing into the majority. That’s very evident by how representatives are listening to us more attentively,” De La Torre added.

Catholic Charities Executive Director Heather Reynolds met with Rep. Charlie Geren and staff members of Sen. Konnie

Burton and Rep. Bill Zedler to talk about immigration, mental health, and foster care issues.

The faith-based organization is currently working with Sen. Charles Perry’s office on SB 2124 which provides a pilot project to waive certain financial eligibility requirements for selected public assistance programs like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. Under a benefit waiver pilot, parents would continue receiving vital services like childcare and case management while they work to increase their wages and career opportunities.

“This change to the way benefits are structured would be a huge game-changer for us and the way poverty is addressed,” Reynolds said.

Hearing about the work Catholic Charities accomplishes allows legislators to see the importance of holistic case management as a factor in ending poverty for families.

“Advocacy Day is a great chance to show the power of the Catholic Church and to see our Church living the Gospel,” Reynolds asserted.

Delegations visiting with legislators were encouraged to approach the lawmakers and staff members with a spirit of love, compassion, joy, and service.

“Remember not everyone in the building is going to agree on every issue we try to talk about,” reminded Jennifer

Continued on Page 12



Representative Charlie Geren sits with Heather Reynolds (center) and Nichole Rush while they discuss policy during TCC Advocacy Day at the Texas State Capitol. (NTC photo/Thao Nguyen)



Bishop Michael Olson waves to the crowd during the rally held at the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Advocacy Day April 4. (NTC photo/Thao Nguyen)

From Page 11

Carr Allmon, executive director of the Catholic Conference of Bishops. “Let them know we are Christians by our love.”

Addressing the crowd outside the capitol building, San Angelo Bishop Michael Sis outlined the Texas Catholic

Conference’s support of several pro-life bills under consideration during the 85th Legislative Session. Despite recent accomplishments, 55,000 children were killed by abortion in Texas during 2015.

“We know God’s grace is powerful enough to change the hearts and minds of those who are dedicated to the culture

of death,” he said. “Filled with hope that Texans can protect life, and filled with the resolve to take concrete steps to achieve that goal, we’re here today to advocate for laws.”

He called on the Texas Legislature to: ban partial birth abortion; require proper burial or cremation of unborn children; improve the system of reporting abortion complications; ban wrongful birth lawsuits; and end all government contracts to abortion providers.

Austin Bishop Joe Vasquez spoke about the Church’s long, rich tradition of helping migrants. The Church does not condone or encourage illegal immigration, the prelate stressed.

“But we reject the idea that migrants are a problem to be solved. They are our brothers and sisters,” he added as the crowd cheered. “We ask our government leaders to make laws that respect the dignity of migrants.”

The overwhelming majority of immigrants are not criminals and should

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not receive the maximum sentence for minor offenses, he said.

“I ask all people of good will to care for those who are poor or in despair,” Bishop Vasquez implored. “They (immigrants) are the face of Christ before us.”

All of the bills supported by the Texas Catholic Conference deal with the personal care of people — including people not yet born, according to Michael Demma, who met with Rep. Giovanni Capriglione and Rep. Craig Goldman.

“That’s what I tried to emphasize to the legislators,” explained the diocesan director of the Respect Life Office. “Whether you’re talking about immigration or imprisonment, everything addresses the importance of the dignity of man. I found them (the legislators) to be very receptive.”

The lawmakers changed their schedules to meet with Demma and seemed interested in immigration and Catholic Charities. Both men asked to meet with Bishop Olson.

Legislation that promotes strong, stable, and healthy families is a priority for the Church. Allowing parents to choose a school for their children with a safe, productive learning environment is part of that platform. The presence of Catholic school youngsters at the Texas Capitol helped underscore that belief, said Lisa Harrington, communications director at St. Andrew’s School, who accompanied six students to Austin.

“To be with other members of the diocese, other Catholics, and to see all the bishops there was very inspirational for them,” she pointed out.

Her group of sixth and eighth graders expected to hear about pro-life issues but they were also introduced to information about immigration, quality of life for

senior citizens, and keeping families together.

“Children are our future. It’s important for them to know they have power and should stand up for what they believe,” Harrington added. “It was a good lesson to learn.”

Lily Sepanski, a Nolan Catholic junior, participated in Advocacy Day along with other students from the high school’s pro-life club. She’s glad the diocese included young people in the statewide event.

“It’s wonderful to have a voice and represent the views of Texas Catholics who are not just older, but also our peers,” the teenager said. “We talked to the legislators about banning partial birth abortion and got very positive feedback. It was a good experience and left us feeling very hopeful.”



To read more about the Texas bishops’ legislative priorities and positions for the 85th Legislative agenda, please visit:

TxCatholic.org/

A HEART FOR THE POOR

THE MISSIONARY PRIESTHOOD OF FATHER ROBERT THAMES

By Susan Moses

Sometimes, “no” means “not yet.” In the 1960s and ‘70s, Father Robert Thames heard “no” a lot when he requested to be assigned missionary work. When he finally received the “yes,” he made the most of it.

This June, Fr. Thames will celebrate 53 years as a priest for the Diocese of Fort Worth, and he has served 36 of those years in Mexico and Bolivia.

Raised on a dairy farm in Decatur, Texas, Fr. Thames is the eighth of nine children. Monsignor James Tucek impressed the young boy, visiting the family frequently for meals or Bible studies. In fact, Msgr. Tucek made young Robert an offer: “If you decide to become a priest, I will drive you to seminary in San Antonio.”

After high school and college seminary at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, he completed his theology studies at Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. Fr. Thames said studying four years under faculty who were also involved in the Vatican II Council gave him a strong foundation and great zeal for the Church and priestly work.

Ordained on June 27, 1964 at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth, Fr. Thames pastored churches in Dallas

and Longview. While serving as pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Breckenridge in 1975, he opened the doors of the rectory to house three refugee families from Cambodia. In turn, they opened his heart and mind to being a missionary priest.

LIVING SIMPLY ISN'T EASY

Fr. Thames described the next few years as “the happiest in my life.” He joined Maryknoll missionaries in the mountains of Bolivia, walking from village to village, some as high as 15,000 feet, to lead Bible studies. Being arrested and threatened during a military takeover did not dissuade him from his efforts; however, working years without a day off finally did. Exhausted, he contracted hepatitis and returned to Breckenridge to recover.

His next foreign assignment in Ciudad Juárez,

Mexico lasted 11 years. Throughout his priestly life, Fr. Thames chose to “live with the poor in this time and place, like Jesus did.” In Juárez, he met a like-minded priest who invited him to join Prado, an association of diocesan priests “who aim to be poor apostles for the poor,” according to Fr. Thames.

He explained, “People have an innate recognition of God’s presence in simplicity and humility. The doctrine of Jesus Christ is the same as it’s always been. We’re called to live differently, live simply, to be closer to the people.”

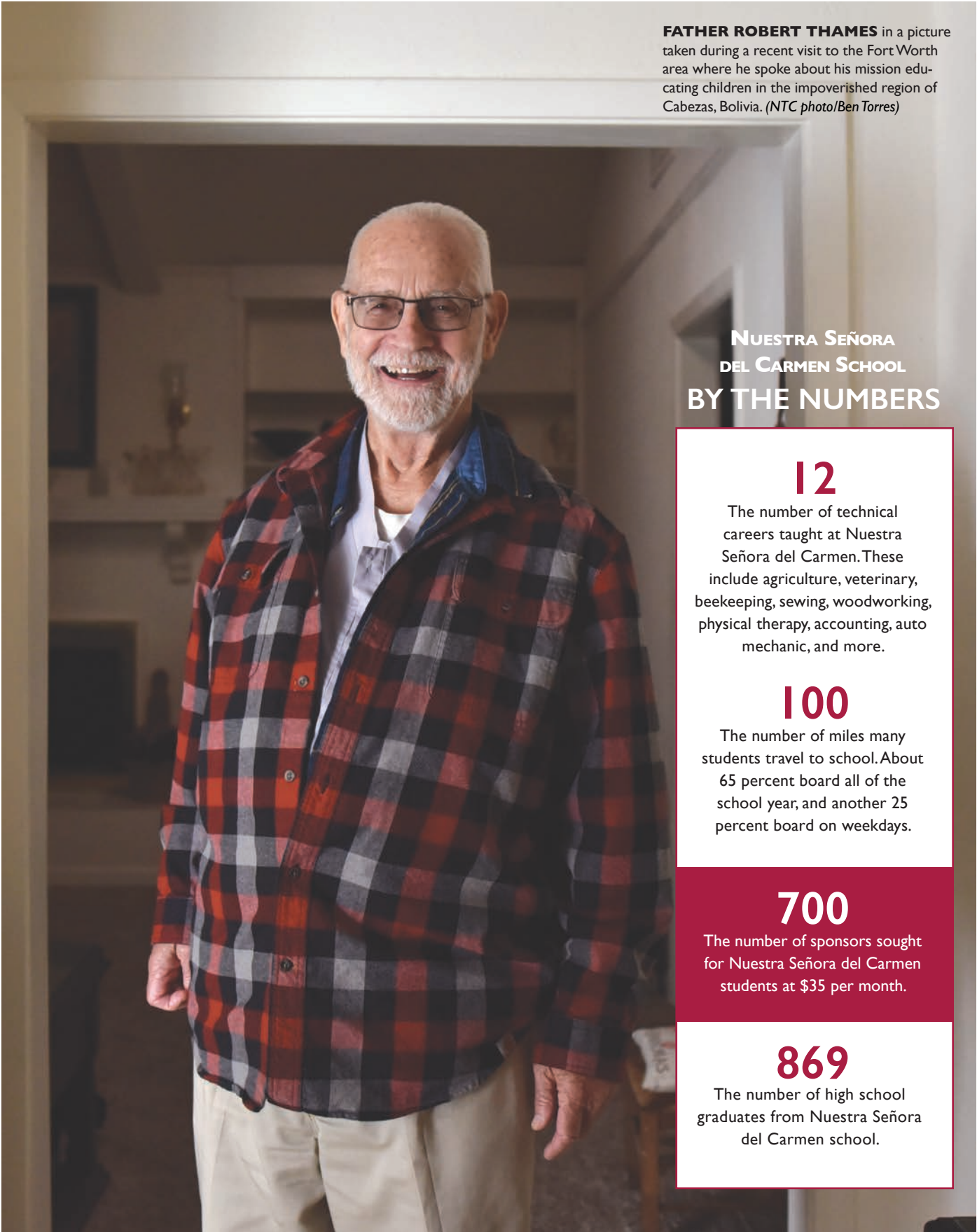
In September 1996, Fr. Thames returned to Bolivia, this time in the bustling city of Santa Cruz, accompanied by a few sisters and lay ministers to help serve a huge parish

6

The number of times Fr. Thames has come close to death.

The list: hepatitis, heart attacks, military coup, hit by drunk driver. “God keeps rejecting me. He won’t take me home,” he says.

Continued on Page 16



FATHER ROBERT THAMES in a picture taken during a recent visit to the Fort Worth area where he spoke about his mission educating children in the impoverished region of Cabezas, Bolivia. (NTC photo/Ben Torres)

**NUESTRA SEÑORA
DEL CARMEN SCHOOL
BY THE NUMBERS**

12

The number of technical careers taught at Nuestra Señora del Carmen. These include agriculture, veterinary, beekeeping, sewing, woodworking, physical therapy, accounting, auto mechanic, and more.

100

The number of miles many students travel to school. About 65 percent board all of the school year, and another 25 percent board on weekdays.

700

The number of sponsors sought for Nuestra Señora del Carmen students at \$35 per month.

869

The number of high school graduates from Nuestra Señora del Carmen school.

From Page 14

with six churches.

After more than four years there, he volunteered for a post that had gone unclaimed for a year: to serve remote, rural villages in Cabezas, Bolivia. Fr. Thames was not deterred by the lack of paved roads, running water, or electricity. However, he did have one condition: his sisters and lay ministers would join him.

A VISION FOR EDUCATION

Fr. Thames and his team asked the residents of Cabezas and the villages beyond what they most needed. The universal response was high school education. The first year, 102 students from rural areas came to Cabezas to attend the only public school within 100 miles. They slept on straw pallets in the church. But teacher strikes and poor management quickly convinced Fr. Thames to open his own school.



For an annual contribution of **\$35** a month you can sponsor a child or the school. Contributions are fully tax deductible. To get involved with Educate the Children, Bolivia, visit fwdioc.org/etc-bolivia

150

The number of times Fr. Thames has read the New Testament. “God speaks to me through the Bible. I can be down or discouraged, and I start praying the Psalms and I’m ready to go with fire again,” Fr. Thames says.

Nuestra Señora del Carmen School opened in 2004 with funding from the Diocese of Fort Worth. Unlike the public schools in Bolivia, the school provides free books and uniforms, which allows the poorest and most disadvantaged to attend.

In the years since, the school has expanded to add technical training, high school education for adults, special education, boarding for elementary students, and housing for state university students in Santa Cruz and Camiri.

Fr. Thames also made vocational training a requirement for graduation — a move that was met with fanfare by Bolivia’s education department.

Henry Del Castillo is a team leader for Educate the Children-Bolivia, the diocesan program that helps sponsor students and provides for the needs of Nuestra Señora del Carmen School.

“When you look at what he’s done down there, it gives you hope,” he said. “You get the sense that one person can make a difference.”

Although he is 78, Fr. Thames intends to continue his mission. “I plan to work as long as I can. I see too much need to retire. As long as I can do some good, I’ll keep working there.”

THE TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS

And how they are changing young lives in Honduras

By Juan Guajardo

Gustavo Villanueva pulled out a thick golden envelope on a recent afternoon.

Flipping it open, he ruffled through the dozens of letters he’s received from grateful students at the two schools that Educate the Children-Honduras is sponsoring in the country’s rural and mountainous Olancho region.

The St. Stephen in Weatherford parishioner pulled out one letter and started reading it.

“I am in my second year of study at Valle Alegre School...,” the small, neat handwriting read. “And am making the effort to finish my studies so I can earn a university degree and become a professional... so I can support my family, live a better life, and give back to the school.”

To Villanueva and his wife, Cecilia, strong supporters of the diocesan Mission Council’s program, the letter is significant, not because it’s a gesture of appreciation, but because it’s a sign of change and hope.

“Over time, we’ve seen the change take place,” he said, explaining that youth, who would otherwise be destined to eke out a living by working low-paying jobs in the fields, now feel as if they have a bright future.

The two schools the program supports, Barro Seales and Valle Alegre in poverty-stricken



A Feb. 2017 photo shows the entire junior high and high school class at Valle Alegre School in Olancho Department, Honduras. (Courtesy photo)

Olancho, provide education from seventh grade through high school. They were established in 2005, after the late Father Bob Wilson and his parishioners at Holy Redeemer in Aledo got involved in a diocesan mission partnership between the Diocese of Fort Worth and the Diocese of Juticalpa, Honduras. Members of the parish they were partnered with identified a need for education past the sixth grade. That's when state-funded schooling stops.

After Fr. Wilson died in 2008, a small group of parishioners carried on his vision, sponsoring the schools through ETC-Honduras and with support from the Diocese of Fort Worth. The Villanuevas got involved in 2012 after a medical mission to the area.

"That was a shocker to us," Cecilia said. "We realized the kids needed a lot more help than they were getting."

Now, the schools, which were founded in 2005, have seen various classes graduate. Some youth have gone on to pursue university degrees, Gustavo said. Others have gone straight into the labor force, but are getting better jobs and higher pay because of their high school

diploma. Three alumni returned to the schools as teachers.

Parents, also, are seeing the benefits of higher education and "talking about their kids going to university," he added.

While the success stories are increasing, the need is still there, he said. With an average wage of \$5 per day, some families still cannot afford to send all their children to school.

The diocese is currently discouraging parishioners from traveling to Honduras for mission work due to increased violence, but sponsorship through ETC-Honduras offers a way to help without having to board a plane.

Similar to Educate the Children-Bolivia, the success of the schools is dependent on the donations of parishioners from the Diocese of Fort Worth. Sponsors give \$30 a month, adding up to \$360 annually, to cover the costs of teacher salaries, school supplies, and building repairs.

"[It's] planting seeds of hope in this community," Gustavo said, paraphrasing what an Olancho parish priest said of the effort.

For an annual contribution of **\$30** a month you can provide education for one child. Contributions are fully tax deductible. To get involved with Educate the Children-Honduras, visit:

fwdioc.org/etc-honduras



WHEN THE SUN DANCED

100 YEARS LATER, OUR LADY OF FATIMA CONTINUES
TO MYSTIFY AND INSPIRE

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

While in Rome to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary, Charles DeCastro asked his wife, Moneta, what gift he could give her to remember the occasion.

“I told him the only thing I wanted was a large statue of Our Lady of Fatima — like the ones you see in a church,” said the Arlington pediatrician. “I’m the mother of three boys so the three children who saw Our Lady always reminded me of them.”

At the time, Dr. DeCastro didn’t know how significant Mary’s words to the visionaries would become in her life. A few years after the anniversary

trip, her husband died in a tragic motorcycle accident. Then her only sister was murdered and the crime never solved.

In May 1917, a luminous lady in white — who later declared herself Our Lady of the Rosary — told young Portuguese shepherds, 10-year-old Lucia dos Santos and her cousins, Francisco Marto, 9, and Jacinta Marto, 7, they would “suffer much but God’s grace will strengthen you.”

Following the first apparition, the Church and government officials subjected the pious but unsophisticated youngsters to harsh treatment and interrogation. Though Lucia lived to the age of 97 as a cloistered Carmelite nun, Jacinta and Francisco died young — as Mary predicted — during the Spanish influenza pandemic. They never lost faith.

“Those children are an inspiration to me,” said DeCastro, who recently returned from a second pilgrimage

Continued on Page 20





TREASURES OF FAITH

This is part of our 'Treasures of the Faith' series which takes a closer look at traditions, aspects, and devotions of our faith.

The National Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima. (Marcin Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk, published by Catholic Church of England and Wales on Flickr.com)



SOLAR SPECTACLE. On Oct. 13, 1917, some 70,000 people who descended on Cova da Iria witnessed the “Miracle of the Sun.” According to a Portuguese newspaper, the people began “weeping and praying” as they witnessed the miracle in astonishment.

From Page 18

to Fatima. “We have suffering, trials, and things that go wrong in our life. Our Lady said we will suffer in this world. If those little ones at the ages of 7, 9, 10 could accept it, how can I not?”

The Holy Family parishioner is one of the millions of people reflecting on the importance of Our Lady of Fatima as the world observes the 100th anniversary of a religious event that continues to mystify and inspire believers.

North Texas Catholics will mark the centennial with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Fort Worth on Oct. 13, 2017. The parish will use the occasion to dedicate a new statue of Our Lady of Fatima planned for the front yard. Church

members launched a fundraising campaign to purchase the Vietnamese-crafted statue.

“Since the beginning of the year, we’ve asked every family to pray the Rosary together,” said Deacon Michael Hoang. “On May 13, the entire parish will pray the Rosary inside the church.”

Forty-five parishioners from Our Lady of Fatima are also planning a pilgrimage to Portugal in June to visit the site of the apparitions.

A century ago, the Blessed Mother appeared six times to Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta at Cova da Iria, now the site of a shrine and one of the most important landmarks in Marian spirituality. The apparitions occurred on the 13th day of the month from May to October and culminated with the “Miracle of the Sun.” Approximately 70,000 observers, standing



CNS Photo

CLOSE CONNECTION. St. John Paul II had a special devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, crediting her “mother’s hand” with guiding a bullet’s path away from his heart and aorta when he was shot during an assassination attempt.



CANDLELIGHT VIGIL. A statue of Our Lady of Fatima is carried through the crowd at the Marian shrine of Fatima in Portugal May 12, 2016. Tens of thousands of pilgrims arrived at the shrine to attend the 99th anniversary of the first Fatima apparition. (CNS photo/Stefano Rellandini, Reuters)

on a rain-soaked field, saw the sun burst through dark clouds and spin or “dance” before seeming to fall toward the earth. Terrified, people dropped to their knees.

Before the solar spectacle, the Lady of the Rosary implored the children to pray the Rosary every day and have a chapel built at the site in her honor.

“It was a private revelation in a public manifestation. That’s why we take Fatima as seriously as we do,” said Sharon Perkins, co-author of the “Word to Life” scripture commentary and secretary director of formation and spirituality for the Catholic Diocese of Austin.

The veteran catechist said the Fatima story is consistent with other Marian apparitions. They occur in places where faith is being attacked or challenged; Mary appears to children or young people who are innocent and can give a guileless account; and a brilliant light of unearthly intensity, that doesn’t hurt the eyes, accompanies the vision.

“There also are certain thematic elements to her message. It’s always about penance, prayer, and reparations to her son,” Perkins pointed out.

Pope Benedict XVI affirmed that in 2010, but took it one step further, saying the heart of the Fatima message was also a call to “the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity.”

A three-part message, communicated to the children at Fatima, is particularly prophetic and offers hope for conversion of the world. Our Lady of Fatima divulged the first “secret” on July 13, 1917 along with a vision of hell Lucia described as “a great sea of fire which seemed to be under the earth.”

Mary then revealed the second “secret,” promising that worldwide devotion to her Immaculate Heart and Communion of Reparation would save souls and restore peace. The apparitions occurred as World War I was ending but she prophesied a worse conflict “if men do not cease to offend God.”

To prevent another, deadlier war, Our Lady asked people to pray for the conversion of Russia and for the Holy Father to consecrate the country to her Immaculate Heart, “otherwise Russia will spread her errors throughout the world.”

Controversy and speculation surround

the third secret. Although the first two secrets were made public in 1942, information about the third was withheld. Lucia eventually wrote down the message and placed it in a sealed envelope. It was delivered to the Vatican in 1957 with the understanding its contents would be revealed in 1960. Pope John XXIII opened the envelope in 1959 but it was placed in the Vatican archives and not published.

Pope John Paul II read the third secret after the attempt to assassinate him on May 13, 1981, the 64th anniversary of the first Fatima apparition. He believed Our Lady of Fatima saved his life and, in appreciation, gave the bullet to the shrine in Fatima where it is part of the Virgin of Fatima’s crown.

Before becoming Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger carefully studied the text of the third secret and provided clarification. The so-called third secret was formally published and released by the Vatican in 2000.

“He said it concerned a radical call

Continued on Page 22



GENTLE INTERCESSOR. A mother and child venerate the pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima in February 2017. (Marcin Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk, published by Catholic Church of England and Wales on Flickr.com)

From Page 21

to conversion, dangers threatening the faith, and the importance of ‘last times,’” Perkins explained.

Intrigued by the message of Fatima and inspired by the centennial celebration, millions of pilgrims will journey to Portugal this year. Kim Brown, associate director of vocations for the Diocese of Fort Worth, visited the religious site in October 2012 during a time of introspection and discernment in her life. She described the village of Fatima as a small, peaceful home to a large number of convents that cater to the needs of pilgrims.

“When you get to the older part of the town you see the wall where the famous photo of the three shepherd children was taken,” said Brown, who met the niece of the two younger visionaries.

The home where two of the children lived is now a small museum where some possessions are displayed.

The 100th anniversary provides an opportunity to revisit the story of Fatima, Brown explained.

“The apparitions didn’t happen in our

lifetime so seeing the photos makes it more real and tangible,” she continued. “There is a need for reparations for sinners and I think that’s the part of the message that resonates so strongly with people.”

When it comes to core values, the country has gone “off course,” Brown insisted.

“I truly hope during the 100th anniversary, the message of Fatima is heard and people understand what Mary is inviting us to do — go back to Jesus.”

Father Anh Tran, judicial vicar for the Diocese of Fort Worth, recently returned from Fatima and called the experience of visiting the children’s home and the site of the apparition, “amazing.” He hopes everyone can make a similar pilgrimage sometime in their life but, more importantly, people should heed Mary’s plea for prayer, penance, and reparations.

“The devil continues to attack the world and is trying to make us turn our back on God through individualism, indifference, and complacency,” the priest asserted. “We have to believe in God: the God who is love; the God who is mercy; the God who saves.”

Fr. Tran believes prayer can bring peace to the world.

“The Lord gives us messages through Our Lady and it’s a similar message — pray,” he adds. “Our Lady of Guadalupe — pray. Our Lady of Lourdes — pray. Our Lady of Fatima — pray.”

Perkins says the most fitting way to observe the 100th anniversary of Fatima is to do what Our Lady asks: pray the Rosary daily.

“We basically have the opportunity to change the course of history and bring peace to the world by our prayers and sacrifice,” she suggested. “With what’s happening around the world, it’s highly appropriate that we revisit the message of Fatima and take it to heart.”

5 SATURDAYS DEVOTION

Learn about the First Saturday
Communions of Reparation and
the seven Fatima prayers on
[NorthTexasCatholic.org/
inspiration-news](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org/inspiration-news)



From Page 9

time, or talent is not optional, Fr. Kemberling added.

“We are not to bury our talents,” Fr. Kemberling said. “First and foremost, they’re not ours. They’re God’s. Giving is worship, giving back to the one who first gave.”

That includes taking time to pray.

“If you’re only eating once a week you’re starving,” Fr. Kemberling said. “You have to pray and make time for God each day because you’re starving for God.”

Father Jonathan McElhone, TOR, parochial vicar of Good Shepherd in Colleyville, agreed.

“I see a hunger for authentic stewardship because that’s where the teachings of our faith come alive,” Fr. McElhone said.

Beverly Farren, a parishioner at St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth, delivered powerful testimony on her conversion to Catholicism.

“I love being a good steward through sharing how I became a Catholic,” Farren said.

Farren’s oldest son attacked her several years ago and is now in jail, where he later converted to Catholicism. Farren, an evangelical at the time, was not pleased and joked that she was less pleased once she realized her son was converting fellow inmates to Catholicism. She borrowed the books he was reading intent on learning about and debunking Catholicism.

“So, guess what happened?” Farren said.

She and her husband converted about a year ago.

Phil Streib, a lay witness coordinator at St. Bartholomew Parish in Fort Worth, said the concept of stewardship

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was unfamiliar until he attended a retreat last year and subsequently became involved.

“We were uninvolved except attending Mass,” Streib said. “It’s given me insight I never understood before. I now see people as more than just faces in the church. No longer a one-hour-a-week commitment, but Catholics helping one another in their walk of faith, a common goal to reach heaven.”

“It takes an intentional effort and focus,” Liska said. “There’s definitely been some traction in some of our churches since last year. I’m interested to see what phone calls and communications I get after today because generally stewardship efforts are driven by ministry leaders and parishioners. They’re the ones who are going to their priests and saying, ‘We need this.’”



STEWARDSHIP IS FOR EVERY DAY. Prayer cards like these are one way the Office of Stewardship and Parish Relations is helping local parishes teach laity that stewardship is not just a one-time deal, but a way of life. “It is about leading people to heaven,” Diana Liska said. “If we can understand that, then every day becomes an important day for stewardship.”

THE EMPTY TOMB

*He is risen!
Alleluia!
Alleluia!*

By Father Ron Rolheiser



WHAT EASTER MEANS

Bishop Robert Barron explains why the resurrection of Jesus is neither a symbol of new life in the spring nor a mythic claim of his followers, but evidence that God has not given up on his creation.

**NorthTexasCatholic.org/
inspiration-news**

Believers and non-believers alike have been arguing about the resurrection since the day Jesus rose.

What really happened? How was He raised from the dead? Did an actual dead body really come back to life and step out of the grave or was the resurrection a monumental life-changing event inside the consciousness of Jesus' followers? Or was the resurrection both, a real physical event and an event inside the consciousness of believers?

Obviously nobody was there to see what actually happened. Those who claimed Jesus was alive again didn't see Him rise and emerge from the tomb, they met Him only after He had already risen and, immediately, believers and skeptics began to divide from each other, persons who claimed to have touched Him and persons who doubted that testimony.

There have been skeptics and believers ever since and no shortage of persons, professional theologians and non-scholarly Christians alike, who believe in the resurrection of Jesus as a faith event but not as a physical event, where an actual body came out of a grave. The faith event is what's important, they claim, and it is incidental whether or not Jesus' actual body came out of the grave.

Was Jesus' resurrection a faith event or a physical event? It was both. For Christians it is the most monumental event, faith and otherwise, in history. Two thousand subsequent years cannot be explained, except by the reality of the resurrection. To understand the resurrection of Jesus only as a literal

fact, that his body rose from the grave, is to cut the resurrection off from much of its meaning. However, that being admitted, for Christians, the resurrection must also be a radically physical event. Why?

First, because the Gospels are pretty clear in emphasizing that the tomb was empty and that the resurrected Jesus was more than a spirit or ghost. We see, for instance, in Luke's Gospel where Jesus invites a doubting Thomas to verify his physicality: "Look at my hands and my feet. It's really me. Touch me. You can see that I have a living body; a ghost does not have a body like this."

As well, and very importantly, to cut the resurrection off from the literal fact that there was real physical transformation of a once dead corpse is to rob it of some of its important meanings and perhaps of the deepest root of its credibility. For the resurrection of Christ to have full meaning it must, among other things, have been a brute physical fact. There needs to be an empty tomb and a dead body returned to life. Why?

Not as some kind of miracle proof, but because of the incarnation. To believe in the incarnation and not to believe in the radical physical character of the resurrection is a contradiction. We believe that in the incarnation the Word was made flesh. This takes the mystery of Christ and the reality of the resurrection out of the realm of pure spirit. The incarnation always connotes a reality that's radically physical, tangible, and touchable, like the old dictionary definition of matter as "something extended in space and having weight."

To believe in the incarnation is to believe that God was born into real physical flesh, lived in real physical

flesh, died in real physical flesh, and rose in real physical flesh. To believe that the resurrection was only an event in the faith consciousness of the disciples, however real, rich, and radical that might be imagined, is to rob the incarnation of its radical physical character and to fall into the kind of dualism that values spirit and denigrates the physical. Such a dualism devalues the incarnation and thus impoverishes the meaning of the resurrection. If the resurrection is only a spiritual event then it is also only an anthropological one and not also a cosmic one. That's a way of saying that it's then an event only about human consciousness and not also about the cosmos.

But Jesus' resurrection isn't just something radically new in terms of human consciousness; it's also something that's radically new in terms of atoms and molecules. The resurrection rearranged hearts and minds, but it also rearranged atoms. Until Jesus, dead bodies did not come back to life; they stayed dead, so when his came back to life there was something radically new both at the level of faith and at the level of the atoms and molecules. Precisely because of its brute physicality, Jesus' resurrection offers new hope to atoms as well as to people.

I believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, literally. I believe too that this event was, as the rich insights within contemporary theology point out, highly spiritual: an event of faith, of changed consciousness, of new hope empowering a new charity and a new forgiveness. But it was also an event of changed atoms and of a changed dead body. It was radically physical, just as are all events that are part of the incarnation wherein God takes on real flesh.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. He can be contacted through his website RonRolheiser.com.

PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD

But start with those you know

The Easter season is in full swing. After our journey through the desert of Lent and the solemn celebrations of the Triduum, we now bask in the glow of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles reveal how the early Church moves from bewildered, frightened, cautious people to a cohort that sets the world on fire for the love of Jesus. I suppose the question for us in 2017 is where do we stand on this continuum? Are we more with the bewildered, or are we the fired up?

Truth is, many of us are stuck somewhere in the middle. Faith in Jesus, coupled with our baptism, launches us into the role of disciple, literally a follower of Jesus. But following Jesus is a two-part job. Before Jesus ascends to heaven He commissions the disciples to finish what He started. We are instructed to be his followers and to make more followers worldwide. So, let's take a look at this two-fold responsibility of discipleship.

First, we are to be disciplined in the way of Jesus. This evokes the image of a pupil sitting at the feet of the Master, soaking up as much wisdom, knowledge, and insight as possible. Another way of stating this is growing in the "interior life." In other words, working on our inward spirituality, diving deeper into the sacraments, growing as a person of prayer, going to Adoration, reading and meditating on the Scriptures,



and examining our conscience and confessing all our sins. When we strive to do these things, we grow in holiness. But, a deep and developed interior life is only part one of the Christian life.

Part two mandates that we take all that we have learned at the feet of the Master and share it with others. And here is where it gets hard. To be sure, it is one thing to love Jesus and it is another thing to tell others about this love. While I do not necessarily mean walking up to random people and telling them Jesus loves them, I do mean that we need to talk to other people about how we have encountered Jesus' love and invite them into a relationship with the Savior.

Being a disciple has a cost. It will cost you mostly in time. To really explore the interior life takes time. But it takes even more time to invest in another person's life. Notice I said another "person's" life. Not every single person's life. Yes, we are called by God to reach the entire world, but not by ourselves! Start with one person. Maybe there is that one person at work, or someone you

used to see at church, or a neighbor, or a friend from high school.

How do you evangelize them? Well I would suggest NOT leading with "Hey want to spend an hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament?" Start with coffee and reconnect with them. Find out what has been going on in their life. See what they are interested in and suggest you hang out doing those things

together. After a few weeks maybe start talking about something that you experienced at church, or how a homily really touched you. See how they react to that. And in time invite them back to Mass or to a Bible study at church.

You can see that this is going to cost you time. Take an honest look at your week and how you spend your time. Could you watch fewer Netflix shows? Could you play fewer videogames or watch fewer sporting events?

Maybe you are raising a bunch of kids and you don't do any of the above things or maybe your work schedule is about all you can handle. I know life can be crazy. But I also know that Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Start with the people around you and start "discipling."

We have just celebrated the Risen Jesus and this fills our interior life with such joy. Now it is time to ramp up our exterior mission and pray about who Jesus is calling us to disciple. You do not have to be a theologian; you just have to be a friend who helps another friend grow closer to Jesus.

PRIESTS OFFER THEIR LIVES IN *PERSONA CHRISTI*

The desire to grow in holiness, to grow in a real relationship with God, seems at times to be an innate call deep within each human person.

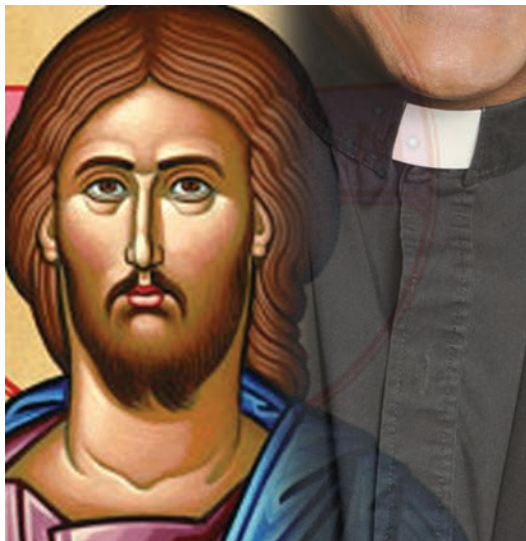
However, through the grace of God, it often takes another person to ignite this desire and help fan it into a burning flame. In the Catholic Church, we are fortunate to have an array of holy men and women — saints — whose lives offer stunning examples of true discipleship. Not all courageous mentors have been declared saints by the Catholic Church; actually, most have not. Nonetheless, their example and influence is important in sparking our desire for holiness.

A few months ago I was asked to lead a prayer. Afterward, someone who knew my childhood pastor commented, “You prayed that like Monsignor [Thomas] Weinzapfel.”

“WOW! What an amazing compliment,” I thought.

While the person was likely commenting on Msgr. Weinzapfel’s matter-of-fact style of prayer and my apparent emulation of that style, I accepted the remark as praise. This good and holy priest (the longest-serving priest of the Diocese of Dallas) had been my pastor and was influential in teaching me what it means to be a priest. Even more recently, Msgr. Weinzapfel’s name came up in conversation with some seminarians, and I was moved to reflect on the lived priesthood of some holy diocesan priests.

Young men in discernment often ask about the difference between diocesan and religious priesthood. In religious life (e.g., Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, Pallottines, etc.) a man first discerns



the charism or mission of the religious order. A religious order is founded to assist the Church in living out a specific area of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For instance, perhaps a man feels called to work with the poor. He may be called to be a Franciscan. Then, within the charism of the religious order, the man discerns the call to priesthood.

A diocesan priest is called to be a shepherd for the people of a particular geographical region, most often for the area in which the man lives. Msgr. Weinzapfel, who passed away in January 2016, was a diocesan priest for 70 years. He had been called to serve the people of his diocese, and he lived this call with great vigor and with a stalwart force that clearly withstood the test of time.

Other diocesan priests offer great examples of holiness. I am reminded of Father Stanley Rother, a diocesan priest of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, who gave his life for the people he served in Guatemala. And of Father

Emil Kapaun, who was a Kansas priest that served during the Korean War. In addition, I recently read about a priest in the Midwest, who while serving as chaplain to the sheriff’s department, assisted in recovering two bodies from the wreckage of an automobile accident.

These are more extreme examples of the work of diocesan priests. However, none of these men accepted the call of Jesus Christ to the priesthood so that their lives could be demure. Rather, a man who says “Yes!” to Jesus Christ in the priesthood is a man who is seeking to lay down his life for his

friends. Perhaps that means celebrating the Eucharist on the hood of an army jeep like Fr. Kapaun. Or, perhaps it means conscientiously serving as a pastor of a parish with a parochial school for more than 25 years like Msgr. Weinzapfel.

In all cases, the virtue of courage practiced by the man who answers the call to priesthood is evidenced in his serving in *persona Christi*. When he was pope, Benedict XVI stated, “the priest, who acts in *persona Christi Capitis* and representing the Lord, never acts in the name of someone who is absent but, rather, in the very Person of the Risen Christ, who makes Himself present with his truly effective action.”

These men and all other diocesan priests live the mystery of supernatural faith. These men are examples of actively and positively choosing to live holy and virtuous lives. These men offer their lives in *persona Christi*, so that we might grow in holiness and in our love for God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

DOES INTERCESSORY PRAYER HELP?

The Fruit of Prayer in Marriage

Imagine if everyone around us came to the realization that praying for someone is actually quite a simple act. We would all be constant intercessors for everyone around us, especially our family and friends. The irony here is something that, in many respects, is so simple and not necessarily time consuming, is quite often overlooked or completely ignored.

When you take the time to reflect on the act of prayer it provides an opportunity to communicate with Christ for the sake of others and not necessarily ourselves. This is what the act of intercessory prayer is really meant to be: a way of looking after the spiritual well-being of others before ourselves. An intercessor intimately and intentionally prays for someone's spiritual and corporal needs rooted in Christ and reflective of the sacrificial nature offered to us out of love.

St. Thérèse the Little Flower would describe prayer as a “surge of the heart, a simple look toward heaven embracing both trial and joy” (CCC 2558). Her succinct explanation reveals the premise behind intercessory prayer as a Christ-like communication which when applied within the marital covenant strengthens the bond of grace between spouses.

THE FRUIT OF PRAYER IN MARRIAGE

The fruit of prayer results in a clearer uninterrupted communication with Christ especially in our understanding of the Paschal Mystery. Christ gave us the sacraments as a means of recognizing who we are as children of God, and in turn, maturing in this relationship through Him in the sacraments.

It is in this maturation of grace

*‘Tenderly in His arms
He’ll take her with
all the love that God
can give and draw her
nearer to the Father all
in unison to live.’*

where intercessory prayer serves as a vital component of the marital covenant between man and woman. If the Church teaches that the vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator (CCC 1603), then it makes sense for the married couple to continually strengthen this vocation by way of interceding for one another. This means that “I” as a husband, place my wife’s needs before my own. It also focuses on the sacrificial character inherent in the sacrament of holy matrimony as an offering of one another in Christ. St. Augustine reflects this notion in describing the loving bond of spouses:

“The deepest desire of the human heart is to see another and be seen by that other’s loving look” (Sermon 69).

PRACTICAL WAYS TO INTERCEDE FOR YOUR SPOUSE

The Catechism (1641) teaches us that the grace proper to the sacrament of matrimony is intended to perfect the couple’s love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity and also to help

one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children. Against this backdrop, here are some practical ways we can intercede for our spouses:

- Set aside 10 to 15 minutes every morning before you do anything else and pray for your spouse by either meditating on sacred Scripture or reflecting on the saint of the day for his or her behalf.
- Call upon your spouse’s patron saint to intercede for them.
- Incorporate a Divine Mercy Chaplet in your daily routine and offer the intentions of your marriage for spiritual growth.
- If you want to take it up a level, fasting for your spouse is a fruitful way of placing his or her needs above yours especially during challenging times.
- Setting some time in Adoration once a week as a means of strengthening your marital covenant.
- If possible, attend a daily Mass and offer up your spouse’s intentions for that week.

Our marital covenant calls us to pray for our spouses. The distinctive character of the sacrament of holy matrimony is its indissolubility. The union of man and woman cannot be separated because of the gift of grace conferred to one another. It is a unique bond that perfectly complements man and women before the eyes of God and is affirmed by Him. St. John of the Cross reminds us of this indissolubility in the following way:

Tenderly in His arms He’ll take her with all the love that God can give and draw her nearer to the Father all in unison to live.

HOW MARY CHANGED MY LIFE

teaching me to love her Son perfectly

Coming to the Catholic Church after growing up in the Protestant tradition for the majority of my life, there were a few Catholic teachings that I had a hard time wrapping my head around.

“Wait, that’s REALLY the Body, Blood, SOUL, and DIVINITY of JESUS CHRIST!?”

“Hold up, I have to say WHAT to a guy in a collar!?”

“Waaaaait a minute, Mary is my Mother as well!? If I love her, I won’t be able to love Jesus!”

Seriously, that last one I thought about for a long time. For some reason, the idea of allowing Mary into my life as my Mother and letting her love me felt like I was betraying Jesus. It almost felt as if I was elevating Mary into the position of my Savior. I knew she was important (after all, of ALL the women in the world, God chose Mary — that’s pretty significant), but I wanted to keep her at arm’s length because I was scared of her.

It wasn’t until I did a year of missionary work with NET Ministries, and was placed on a team of 11 other wonderful young adults, that I learned how gentle and loving Mary is and how her whole role in my life was to constantly point me to her Son.

I’m not a Marian expert in the least, but I have come to know and love the role she plays in my life, and I aspire to love Jesus as perfectly as she did.

I’m a modern calligraphist, a self-proclaimed “doodler.” If I want to be perfect at this trade, then I want to seek out people who are already perfect at it and learn from them. I want to learn from the best so that I too can be the best.

If I want to love Jesus perfectly as He asks me to, then I need to seek out people who love Him perfectly so that I can learn from them. One of the beautiful things



about the Catholic Church is that I don’t have to figure out how to be holy on my own; I don’t have to forge my own path and make up stuff as I go — there are so many amazing holy men and women who have gone before me to imitate. Mary is the perfect disciple, the perfect apostle, the perfect woman to imitate if I want to love Jesus perfectly. One of the prayers I pray constantly is: “Mary, please teach me how to love your Son perfectly as you did.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “By her complete adherence to the Father’s will, to his Son’s redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church’s model of faith and charity” (CCC 967). THAT is what I am striving for, and THAT is my goal, to completely adhere to the Father’s will and promptings of the Holy Spirit. Why not follow the example of someone who has done it perfectly?

As one of my favorite saints, Mother Teresa of Kolkata, says, “Mary, give me your heart: so beautiful, so pure, so immaculate; your heart so full of love and humility, that I may be able to receive Jesus in the Bread of Life and love Him as you

love Him and serve Him in the distressing guise of the poor.”

This is just one tiny gift I’ve received from my growing relationship with Mary. There are a million more revelations I’m eager to discover as I allow myself to be nurtured by the same Mother of our Lord. My prayer for you is that just as the beloved disciple John brought her into his home (*John 19:27*), you also may bring Mary into the home of your heart and allow yourself to love her and let her teach you how to love her Son perfectly.



Here are some excellent books I’ve discovered in my growing devotion to Mary that have really helped change my perspective on her role on my life. If you’ve ever questioned, doubted, or have been skeptical about her, I suggest starting with these:

The World’s First Love by Archbishop Fulton Sheen, this book changed my entire perspective on Mary.

33 Days to Morning Glory by Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC, a beautiful, simplified version of St. Louis de Montfort’s *Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary*.

Ali Hoffman is co-coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Carrollton.

IN GOOD AND IN BAD TIMES

God's graces abound

My first column for the *North Texas Catholic* was about a confirmation letter I wrote to one of my all-time favorite students.

I met Blaine, an extraordinary young teen, when he was on the elementary school yearbook staff I taught in the early 1990s. Later, when he was to be confirmed, he asked me to sponsor him. Because it was my first time to receive this honor, I approached the challenge cautiously.

Technically I knew the role: to set an example by the life I was leading, and to pray for my confirmation candidate. He was a great kid — a brilliant student with extraordinary dependability and strong moral character. I felt in some sense that we should reverse our roles! Perhaps he knew more than I did.

This year, my own grandson, Sam, has entered this road of Christian life, to further develop the grace he received at baptism and “to be sealed with the Holy Spirit.” So, in a similar attempt to leave a good example, I set upon writing a letter, one that would convey my own faith to him.

“When you were born,” I began, “I didn’t think being a grandmother would be my ‘cup of tea.’ I rather relished my youth! But I quickly got used to grandparenthood. Who wouldn’t want a little Sam in their lives?”

“I should be instructing you in ways to enrich your spiritual life,” I told my teenage grandson, “but instead I want to turn the table and tell you the ways you have enriched mine.”

There were so many events to relate to him, beginning with his “sermonizing” before he could talk. He would wave his arms like a young preacher, spewing indistinguishable verbal lessons. Our family



has cherished those images, and nowadays he uses the same skills at Nolan Catholic High School’s theater.

“When you began to serve at our parish Masses,” I wrote to Sam, “you would come down to the assembly during the sign of peace, and you would hug and kiss all our family, the whole pew, before you went back up on the altar... I believe Fr. Tom’s hair got a little bit grayer as he stood up there waiting for his acolyte to return.

“Later you became a Eucharistic minister. I was proud, because that had been one of my joys, too. We had that in common. It felt great. Then of course when you became a lector and song leader, it was a direct connection to the Sam you were as a toddler preacher, and life goes on....”

I continued the letter with: “The year your sister Emma was born was also the year your daddy had cancer. We were engrossed in the joy of one thing and the terror of the second. One of the jobs I got to do during those months was to help your momma with baby Emma.... And it was all my pleasure.

“One night, I rocked Emma in the living room, while the rest of the family

sat down for dinner. Since you were such a good ‘pray-er,’ you led the grace, saying something that would stick with me forever.

“You began with ‘Dear God, thank you for this day; thank you for us being together; thank you for the food; thank you for my family; thank you for daddy getting better.’”

The way Sam prayed the grace was sweet. Then, even though he was a very young child, he concluded meaningfully and dramatically: “Dear God, thank you for the good things, and thank you for the bad things.”

My confirmation letter to Sam was due in February, during the time I was in New Mexico, saying goodbye to my deceased sister Georgene. So often I found myself crying, because of the bad things: I would never see her again.

Still, I remembered the good things: Georgene was in heaven. She was with her son, Davy; and with her parents, Sam, Natalie, and Emma’s Grand-Gammy and Grand-Grandpa.

I concluded Sam’s confirmation letter like this: “You, Sam, are full of talents and graces, but I shall not forget the grace you spoke during dinner at your house, when your daddy was ill, and you were very young.

“Through the years I have tried to be the best influence I could be for you and your sisters, but ironically it is you who have turned the table and become a great influence on our family.

“For that I am grateful.”

Kathy Cribari Hamer Beck’s column has been recognized repeatedly by the Catholic Press Association. For more information about her book, ME AND THE CHICKENS, visit

SomethingElseAgain.com.

Take 5 with Father



Fr. Balaji Boyalla

Joyful missionary finds love everywhere

HE IS: Father Balaji Boyalla, SAC, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Mineral Wells and St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Graford. He is also dean of the Southwest Deanery.

A Pallottine priest from the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province, he was ordained on April 18, 1999 in Vijayawada, India.

He has also served at Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth, pastored a church in India, and taught at a Pallottine seminary.

KNOWN AS: Fr. B. Shortly after arriving at Holy Family in 2008, Msgr. Joseph Pemberton heard varied pronunciations of Fr. Boyalla's name and declared, "You will be called 'Father B.'"

THE CALL: Growing up in a Catholic family in southeast India, Fr. B. was inspired by his church's pastor. A large man, he made a big impression. He carried children into church on his arms, he rode a motorcycle, and he made parables come alive.

ENTERING SEMINARY: After completing high school, his cousin entered the Pallottine seminary and invited Fr. B. to join him. His cousin left after a week.

AND LEAVING IT: While in his novitiate "spiritual" year, his father was diagnosed with lung cancer. "My father's last desire was for me to be with him." Fr. B. left seminary to care for him, telling his superior that he would not return. The day of his father's death, Fr. B.'s vocation promoter happened to stop by to check on the family.

"God worked it out to be like that. God's hand was so powerful, I couldn't miss it. If God wants a person, you cannot run away from Him. He will not leave you." With his family's consent, Fr. B. returned to seminary.

AND STAYING: After finally completing 13 years of formation, Fr. B. was eager to work in a parish. His provincial told him, "Sorry, you're appointed as the seminary prefect." Fr. B. thought, "Apparently 13 years was not enough!" In his second and final year as a seminary instructor, he coordinated vocation promotion and established a small parish, where he involved the seminarians in youth programs, prayer services, and parish activities.

AND GOING: After Fr. B. served seven years as pastor of St. Vincent Pallotti Parish in Amaravathi, India, his provincial asked him to fill a request for a priest in the Diocese of Fort Worth. Fr. B. was fearful. "I worried about whether I would fit in: my size, my accent. But when there is love, there is no height, no weight, no color, no accent, and they love me."

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A PRIEST: "Being present when you are most needed. Visiting the sick and homebound — some of these people were the cornerstone of the Church. When you go there, they are very happy to see a priest, and it gives you contentment to be a priest."

His favorite experiences include expanding the orphanage in the Amaravathi parish from 20 children to 100. He also served on the provincial council, helping with leadership and mentoring young seminarians and priests.

ON BEING A PALLOTTINE PRIEST: "St. Vincent Pallotti broke barriers between the Church and the people. He wanted to make the laity active. He taught that everyone is called to be an apostle by virtue of their baptism."

HIS GOAL: "Wherever I go, I want a joyful parish, an inviting parish, a prayerful parish."

Interview by Susan Moses, correspondent.



◀ Andy and Judy Cordell are volunteer drivers for CCFW's transportation program. (NTC photo/Donna Ryckaert)

Couple provides a lift out of poverty at CCFW

Andy and Judy Cordell have earned the right to enjoy leisurely mornings. The Holy Family parishioners and longtime educators both taught physics for many years until their retirement in 2003: she, from Nolan Catholic High School, and he, from Country Day School in Fort Worth.

Instead of sleeping in, however, the couple awakens in the predawn hours each Monday morning and heads to the Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) campus to begin their weekly 6 a.m.

to noon shift. Volunteer drivers for the CCFW transportation program for the past three years, the Cordells say their shared commitment to service is a satisfying aspect of their rich family life, which includes three adult children and eight grandchildren.

"We have gotten to know some wonderful people quite well, because we often drive the same clients on an ongoing basis," Judy said. "Andy and I really enjoy driving together and sharing this experience."

According to CCFW officials, less

than 25 percent of Tarrant County provides fixed bus routes, making transportation a significant challenge for individuals and families without a reliable way to get to work, to social service agencies, or to critical medical appointments.

CCFW's transportation program began in 2011 with four vehicles. The program now operates with an impressive fleet of cars, buses, and wheelchair-accessible vans, offering rides from agency locations in Fort Worth, Arlington, and Colleyville. The program provides approximately 90,000 rides to clients in need each year.

Andy said he and Judy split driving responsibilities during each shift. While one concentrates on navigating the roadways, the other chats with their passengers, thus providing a valuable form of emotional support and encouragement.

"We get to know people and their stories," he explained. "We usually have about four clients during a shift, but we might have as many as six. We've had several dialysis patients, and we take some to places like their medical clinic, or to a senior center. Everyone is just so appreciative of the opportunity for a safe and affordable ride. It's very rewarding."

He added that their shared Monday mornings offer a special opportunity for the couple. "It just makes retirement a lot more fun, to drive each week with Judy," he said.

For more information or to volunteer, visit CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org, or call (817) 534-0814.

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LIFE INSURANCE DISABILITY INSURANCE LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE RETIREMENT ANNUITIES

Official Assignments for the Diocese of Fort Worth

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL F.
OLSON, STD, MA

REV. BRIJIL LAWRENCE, SAC, has transferred residence from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Mineral Wells to Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Breckenridge, without prejudice to his appointment as **SACRAMENTAL MINISTER** of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish and Jesus of Nazareth Parish in Albany, effective March 1, 2017.

REV. JAMES AMASI, SAC, new to the diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **PAROCHIAL VICAR** at St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville, effective March 1, 2017.

REV. JOSE MANUEL JIMENEZ, CORC, new to the diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **PAROCHIAL VICAR** at Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, effective March 23, 2017.

REV. MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN, SAC, formerly serving St. Patrick Cathedral and St. Stephen Parish, has been appointed **PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR** at St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, effective March 27, 2017.

DCN. ISIDRO OLVERA, formerly serving at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, is no longer residing in the Diocese of Fort Worth, effective February 5, 2017.

See Pages 4-6 for more "Around the Diocese."



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

Notice of Loss of Clerical State

April 20, 2017

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH ISSUES THE FOLLOWING:

To all concerned:

Please be advised that petitions of the Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, Bishop of Fort Worth, to the Holy See for the loss of the Clerical State, including being dispensed from all the obligations connected with Sacred Ordination to the Priesthood, along with sacred celibacy, were granted, with regard to **David Franklin OWEN, William Joseph AARON, Stanley John HADSELL, Thomas Michael HAUSER, and Robert Theodore LITTEKEN**, by Supreme Decision, against which there is no appeal or recourse.

Should there be a question concerning the matter and scope of Mr. Owen's, Mr. Aaron's, Mr. Hadsell's, Mr. Hauser's, and Mr. Litteken's loss of the Clerical State, please consult with the Chancery Office of the Diocese of Fort Worth, 817-560-3300.

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

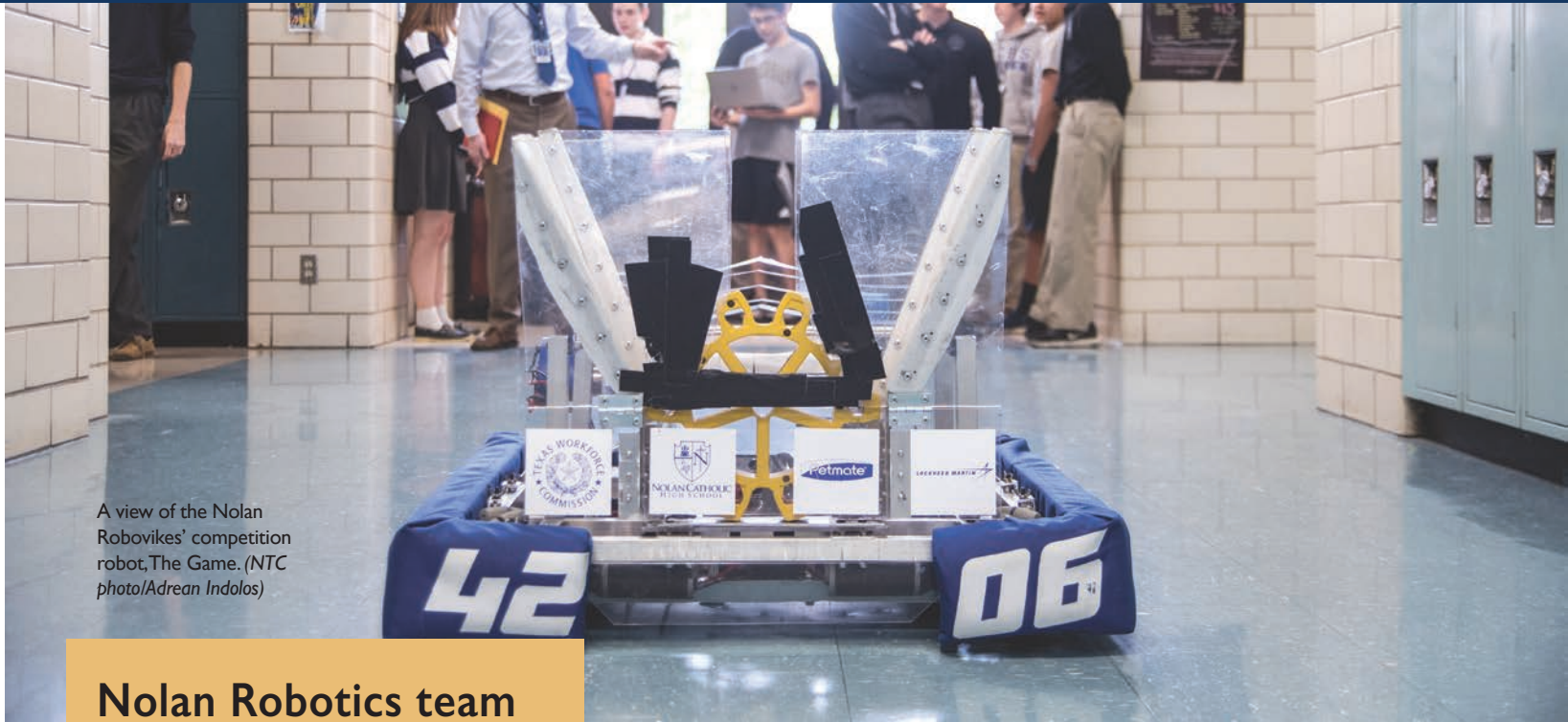
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Principal Feasts: May & June



Save the dates! The Feast of the Ascension of the Lord, **May 28**, commemorates the bodily Ascension of Jesus into heaven.

Pentecost Sunday, **June 4**, commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples and Apostles and the fruits of that event.



A view of the Nolan Robovikes' competition robot, The Game. (NTC photo/Adrean Indolos)

Nolan Robotics team takes first place in regional

FORT WORTH — For members of Nolan Catholic High School's robotics team, the hundreds of hours of after-school and weekend work, study, fundraising, and building paid off.

The Robo Vikes took first place at the international FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition Dallas Regional in Irving on March 12, competing against 54 other schools — some from as far away as Chile and Brazil.

The victory qualified the team to compete against 600 other teams in the World Championship in Houston, April 19-22.

The robotics tournament features teams collaborating to perform challenging tasks with their robots, like lifting and loading gears, launching balls, and even climbing up a rope.

For video and results from the Robo Vikes competition at the World Championship, go to NorthTexasCatholic.org.

Go fish: Men's Club offers drive-thru fish fry

ARLINGTON — A few years ago, St. Vincent de Paul Parish Men's Club member Pat Irwin proposed that the club should add a "drive-thru" section to their already established and successful Friday Lenten fish fry.

Other members said, "It will

never work!" But the drive-thru idea took off. On a typical Friday, the Men's Club served almost 900 meals, and almost a third of those were served in the drive-thru.

Every Friday during Lent, the men fried 800 to 900 pounds of fish. The 200-plus member Men's Club has been hosting their fish fry since 1997. About 75 members showed up every Friday during Lent to work the event.

— Donna Ryckaert

Knights raise funds for new church

LEWISVILLE — St. Philip the Apostle Knights of Columbus Council 9884 stepped up with a \$250,000 donation to the parish building project. The parish is in the midst of a major new building development at a 40 acre location in Flower Mound.

Father Raymond McDaniel, pastor, accepted the donation on behalf of St. Philip's parishioners

stating, "It was a major show of commitment to the parish by the Knights of Columbus."

Dan Jacobs, Grand Knight of the 320-member council, said "It was the proper action for the organization to do. We need to aid the church in its rapid growth..."

The new church will accommodate 1,600 parishioners.

Lighter & Brighter



A woman holds a palm frond during Palm Sunday Mass April 9 at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles. (CNS photo/Victor Aleman, Angelus News)



A silhouette of the Crucifixion is seen outside the Cathedral of Alabarderos in Madrid Good Friday, April 14. (CNS photo/Emilio Naranjo, EPA)



Children in Bangalore, India, hold Easter eggs on April 16. The Easter season runs through Pentecost Sunday, June 4. (CNS photo/Jagadeesh Nv, EPA)

The FLOCK by Jean Denton

Quotable

“Great occasions for serving God come seldom, but little ones surround us daily.”

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES



TOMICS by Tom Gould



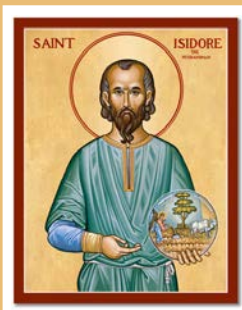
Umbert the Unborn by Gary Cangemi



Your Holy Advocates

BY CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

St. Isidore the Farmer



Patron of farmers and rural communities

Feast: May 15

Isidore has become the patron of farmers and rural communities. In particular, he

is the patron of Madrid, Spain, and of the United States National Rural Life Conference. When he was barely old enough to wield a hoe, Isidore entered the service of John de Vergas, a wealthy landowner from Madrid, and worked faithfully on his estate outside the city for the rest of his life. He rose early in the morning to go to church. All day long, as he walked behind the plow, he communed with God. He was known for his love of the poor, and there are accounts of Isidore's supplying them miraculously with food. He died May 15, 1130, and was declared a saint in 1622.

St. Marguerite d'Youville

'Mother of Universal Charity'

Feast: June 15



Born in Varennes, Canada, Marie Marguerite Dufrost de Lajemmerais had to interrupt her schooling at the age of 12 to help her widowed mother. Eight years later, she married Francois d'Youville; they had six children, four of whom died young. Even though she was caring for two small children and running a store to help pay off her husband's debts, Marguerite still helped the poor. Once her children were grown, she and several companions rescued a Quebec hospital that was in danger of failing. She called her community the Institute of the Sisters of Charity of Montreal. Pope St. John XXIII, who beatified her in 1959, called her the "Mother of Universal Charity." She was canonized in 1990.

To Report Misconduct

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

- Call the victim assistance coordinator at (817) 602-5119.
- Or call the Victim Assistance Hotline (817) 945-9345 and leave a message.

To Report Abuse

Call the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (Child Protective Services) at (800) 252-5400.

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EL ENCUENTRO CON EL RESUCITADO

VATICANO (ACI) — La Resurrección de Jesús fue el tema de la catequesis del Papa Francisco para la primera Audiencia General después de Semana Santa.

En ella el Papa pidió mirar a Cristo para darse cuenta de lo que significa el cristianismo: el encuentro con el Resucitado.

“No es una ideología, no es un sistema filosófico, sino es un camino de fe que parte de un advenimiento,

testimoniado por los primeros discípulos de Jesús”, afirmó.

A continuación, el texto completo de la catequesis:

Queridos hermanos y hermanas, ¡buenos días! Nos encontramos hoy, en la luz de la Pascua, que hemos celebrado y continuamos celebrándola en la Liturgia. Por esto, en nuestro itinerario de catequesis sobre la esperanza cristiana, hoy deseo hablarles de Cristo Resucitado, nuestra esperanza, así como lo presenta San Pablo en la Primera Carta a los Corintios (*Cf. cap. 15*).

El apóstol quiere resolver una problemática que seguramente en la comunidad de Corinto estaba al centro

de las discusiones. La resurrección es el último argumento afrontado en la Carta, pero probablemente, en orden de importancia, es el primero: de hecho todo se apoya en este presupuesto.

Hablando a los cristianos, Pablo parte de un dato indudable, que no es el éxito de una reflexión de algún hombre sabio, sino un hecho, un simple hecho que ha intervenido en la vida de algunas personas. El cristianismo nace de aquí. No es una ideología, no es un sistema filosófico, sino es un camino de fe que parte de un advenimiento, testimoniado por los primeros discípulos de Jesús. Pablo lo resume de este modo: Jesús murió por

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 46

LA VENIDA DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO

La venida del Espíritu Santo en el Día de Pentecostés no sólo concluye el tiempo de la Cuaresma, sino que, aún más importante, cumple con el propósito de este largo período y el de la Pascua.

EL CARÁCTER ENIGMÁTICO DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO

El Espíritu Santo, la presencia de Dios en nosotros, es Dios, uno e igual al Padre y al Hijo. No obstante, se podría decir que, de acuerdo a lo mayormente observado, el Espíritu Santo es la persona de la Santísima Trinidad que es menos conocida y entendida. Tal vez, este carácter enigmático puede ser explicado por la carencia, relativamente hablando, de las referencias al Espíritu Santo en las Escrituras. No debería ser identificado con “el espíritu de Dios” del que se habla en el Antiguo Testamento, aunque es la fuente de todas las proclamaciones de los profetas. Las referencias al Espíritu Santo en el Nuevo Testamento son muy pocas hasta que llegamos al discurso de Jesús en la Última Cena en el Evangelio según San Juan y la Primera Carta a los Corintios. El Espíritu Santo dirige la acción en los Hechos de los Apóstoles, pero de un modo tan sutil que muchos lectores no se dan cuenta.

EL EFECTO DEL ESPÍRITU EN LA VIDA MORAL

La carencia de conocimiento del Espíritu Santo tiene consecuencias en la manera en que vivimos nuestra vida. Al recibir el Espíritu en el Bautismo nosotros los católicos deberíamos vernos

a sí mismos como poseídos por Dios, de modo que podamos hacer maravillas. Nos otorga el poder para ponernos en marcha y hacer las obras de misericordia. A la inversa, aquéllos que carecen de la presencia del Espíritu Santo a menudo pierden el deseo de atender a los demás.

Como los estudiantes que no rinden todo y, no aspiran a asistir a la universidad porque nadie les alienta en su casa, sus talentos y, por tanto, sus logros se quedan en gran parte sin desarrollar.

Sin una verdadera apreciación del Espíritu Santo actuamos como si la Nueva Ley de la gracia fuera parecida a la antigua Ley que San Pablo declarara como incapaz de salvarnos. Nos preocupamos de no faltar a la Misa dominical como si esto nos fuera a hacer santos. Tan necesario como es la Eucaristía para conservar la presencia del Espíritu, la santidad tiene que ver más con pasar de la Misa a la acción en el mundo.

La gracia santificante que nos comunica el Espíritu Santo y que, por tanto, constituye “la Nueva Ley del Espíritu”, es la disposición del alma a amar como Jesús ama. Es una regla de vida que nos dirige al servicio. Como sugiere la autora norteamericana Annie Dillard, no deberíamos ir con ropa fina a la iglesia el domingo, sino con uniformes de bomberos, enfermeras y delantales para que podamos salvar las vidas de los afligidos, atender a los enfermos y dar de comer a los hambrientos.

LOS DONES DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO

El Espíritu Santo reside dentro de nosotros. Nos infunde sus “dones” para impulsar nuestras mentes y corazones a responder a situaciones particulares con la gracia. Por ejemplo, el don de la sabiduría nos mueve a ver a los demás del modo que el siempre misericordioso Dios lo hace y no con el cinismo que con frecuencia los humanos lo hacemos.

Recientemente, un obispo joven manifestó la sabiduría del Espíritu Santo al aceptar la invitación para dar una charla a un grupo marginado de homosexuales católicos. El obispo sabe que está siendo criticado por hacerlo, pero explicó que sólo quiere presentar al grupo una interpretación católica de lo que dice la Escritura sobre la homosexualidad. Él preguntó: ¿Cómo no se puede dar consuelo a esta gente, a menudo ridiculizada y difamada, particularmente, cuando se le pidió esto durante el “Año de la Misericordia”?

El Espíritu Santo otorga también valor como uno de sus dones, que se dice que son siete, pero pueden ser enumerados y descritos de múltiples maneras. El valor nos mueve a actuar según nuestras convicciones que sabemos que son ciertas. Los “consejeros de acera” (“sidewalk counselors”) muestran valor en las clínicas de abortos. No sólo son frecuentemente objeto de rechazo e insultos, sino que también deben incorporarse en las vidas personales de mujeres a menudo desesperadas.

CÓMO PINTAR AL ESPÍRITU SANTO

Alice Dalton Brown pinta imágenes que invariablemente incluyen la luz, el agua y el aire. Ella titula sus pinturas, pero todas se podrían denominar “Las manifestaciones del Espíritu Santo”. Pues el Espíritu, como la luz, ilumina nuestras mentes para ver a los necesitados desde una perspectiva divina. Como el agua que se echa a una planta marchita, el Espíritu da vida a nuestros espíritus que, a menudo, son sofocados por las comodidades y los placeres materiales. Y como el viento que sopla las semillas para cultivar nuevos bosques, el Espíritu nos mueve a dejar atrás a la indiferencia y el letargo para ayudar a crear un mundo nuevo.

AYUDANDO AL INMIGRANTE

Taller de Caridades Católicas ofrece información migratoria

Por Violeta Rocha

El deseo de informarse y buscar soluciones a su situación migratoria probó ser más fuerte que el miedo que puede paralizar a muchos inmigrantes sin documentos legales, ante la actual posición del gobierno sobre estas normas.

Fueron más de 300 personas las que asistieron al taller de migración organizado por Caridades Católicas el pasado 4 de marzo, en la Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe al centro de Fort Worth.

Arrancando con un sesión ampliamente informativa, las abogadas Margarita Morton y Fatma Marouf, así como el cónsul mexicano Victor Arriaga, en representación del cónsul general de México en Dallas, explicaron a los presentes sus derechos constitucionales que los protegen, cómo evitar situaciones de riesgo a ser detenidos, cómo crear planes de organización con su familia, y cómo reaccionar en caso de ser arrestados por el Departamento de Inmigración (ICE por sus siglas en inglés). Sumado a esto, alrededor de 25 representantes legales, entre abogados, asistentes, y pasantes, tuvieron entrevistas individuales con cada uno de los interesados, a los cuales no se les pidió ni nombre, ni dato alguno. A su llegada, a



Foto CNS/Gregory A. Sherritz

Araceli Ruiz, un inmigrante de Atlixco, México, sostiene a su hija de tres meses de edad durante una misa en Nueva York en el 2013. Para ayudar gente como ella, Caridades Católicas recientemente ofreció un taller de "Conozca sus Derechos" en la Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en Fort Worth.

Resumen

“CONOZCA SUS DERECHOS”

cada persona se le asignó un boleto con número para poder esperar su turno y explicar su situación buscando algún camino disponible de alivio migratorio.

“Este taller es la manifestación en la práctica de las enseñanzas sociales de la Iglesia. Tenemos que estar del lado de los más necesitados, tenemos que ser una comunidad que da la bienvenida” señaló Xergio Chacin, director de Servicios de Inmigración de Caridades Católicas en Fort Worth.

Chacin agregó que los abogados, asistentes y pasantes de abogado presentes llegaron gracias a que “ya conocemos a estos abogados, sabemos de su honestidad, de su interés en la comunidad”, relató resaltando la importancia de organizar este evento informativo “no con la intención de hacer política, sino sencillamente ofrecer el servicio... en la Iglesia, un lugar donde la gente se siente bienvenida, segura, a salvo”, dijo.

El Padre Alejandro Olivera, párroco de la Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, se mostró contento del número de asistentes, pues señaló, en ocasiones pasadas los números en talleres como éste no rebasaban las 50 personas. “Es importante abrir las puertas a este tipo de talleres porque a veces la ignorancia, el no conocer nuestros derechos, nos hace cometer errores, nos asustamos. Siempre el conocimiento nos da la fuerza para saber cómo actuar en caso de necesidad” señaló el sacerdote de la orden de los Hermanos Menores Capuchinos.

La solidaridad y deseo de ayudar se dejó sentir con decenas de voluntarios que según sus dones, se hicieron presentes trabajando para el pueblo de Dios.

Jaime Cabazos, 57, está próximo a graduarse en el mes de mayo, de leyes en la Universidad de Texas A&M, y estuvo orientando legalmente a los presentes.

“Es importante que la gente sepa lo que puede pasar para que se preparen, no solo ellos, sino sus hijos, muchos de ellos ya nacidos aquí. Hay mucha mortificación, preguntas sin respuestas, y es cuando debemos ayudar,” afirmó.

El grupo de Paz y Justicia, de la parroquia St. Andrew en Fort Worth, también llegó para ayudar “con nuestra presencia, acomodando sillas y dirigiendo a la gente,” señaló Luan Ibarra, uno de siete miembros del equipo que se hicieron presentes.

“Es mostrar nuestra solidaridad porque nos damos cuenta de la inmensidad del problema. De la forma que sea, definitivamente queremos ayudar”, agregó.

Manuel de Jesús González, 70, feligrés de la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, quiso ayudar acomodando sillas y cambiando bolsas de basura, pero también con sus oraciones.

“Pido a Dios que haya una legalización porque conozco mucha gente que lo merece, y tristemente habrá gente que tiene algún detalle por el que va a ser elegible, y se siente, pero quiera Dios que muchos si puedan recibir un beneficio migratorio. Me siento optimista y agradecido de que se brinde esta ayuda a la gente que lo merece,” insistió.

- No está obligado a abrir la puerta de su hogar si ICE toca a su puerta. Ellos deben mostrar una orden judicial.
- Todo lo que diga puede ser usado en su contra. Tiene el derecho de permanecer en silencio. Es importante que lo exprese. No solo se quede callado, sino que el oficial pueda escucharlo decir, quiero mi derecho de permanecer en silencio.
- Siempre tenga con usted documentos de Estados Unidos que lo identifiquen, no de otro país. Nunca lleve consigo documentos falsos. Nunca mienta al oficial.
- Tiene el derecho a hablar con un abogado.
- En caso de una redada, nunca corra, no resista. Manténgase en calma, para que pueda recordar a detalle todo lo que paso y relatarlo a su abogado.
- Tiene el derecho a negarse a firmar cualquier documento.
- No hable sobre su situación migratoria con nadie, solo con su abogado.
- Tiene derecho a una llamada. Tenga planeado a quien le va a llamar para que esta persona sepa quién es su abogado, y donde está toda su documentación.
- Si es detenido por ICE, solicite su número de extranjero y memorícelo. Déselo a la persona que usted va a llamar. De esa forma su abogado lo podrá localizar.
- Si es detenido por ICE, solicite su derecho a una audiencia para fianza. Esto debe ser lo más pronto posible.
- Ahorre dinero, el mínimo de fianza es de \$1,500, pero el promedio es de \$8,000.
- Elabore un plan con su familia. Consulte un abogado para saber si puede aliviar su situación migratoria.

Preparando el camino para el **V**

El proceso de cuatro años está en marcha en la Diócesis; más de 30 parroquias ya está

Por Violeta Rocha

Líderes parroquiales están listos para la primera etapa de preparación del V Encuentro Nacional del Ministerio Hispano/Latino, que comenzará a nivel parroquial y se extenderá a nivel diocesano y regional; culminando nacionalmente del 20 al 23 de septiembre del 2018 en el Centro de Convenciones Gaylord Texan de Grapevine.

La Diócesis de Fort Worth es la anfitriona de este evento trascendental.

“Más de 124 coordinadores, en representación de las 90 parroquias de la diócesis, recibieron una jornada de formación el pasado 8 de abril para presentar en sus parroquias el enfoque del V Encuentro que lleva por título “Discípulos Misioneros: Testigos del Amor de Dios”. “Esto se realizará mediante reuniones mensuales a partir del mes de mayo de este año con temas de formación y reflexión sobre el amor de Dios y el servicio al prójimo”, explica Joel Rodríguez, Director Diocesano del Ministerio Hispano.

En este momento, hay 30 parroquias de la diócesis que están participando en el proceso de preparación del V Encuentro. Cada una de estas parroquias cuenta con un equipo de delegados compuesto de líderes de diversos ministerios, personas de diferentes edades y culturas.

“Cada coordinador va a entregar un informe que será examinado por los obispos, en el que podrán escuchar la voz del pueblo latino y así preparar y proveer las guías que muestren las necesidades, pero también los dones que nuestra



comunidad latina ofrece”, añadió Rodríguez, que enfatizó que estas reuniones buscan “desarrollar discípulos y entender el papel del discipulado”, lo que requiere a su vez “una conversión”.

“Que Dios nos guíe como pueblo suyo a través de todo este proceso de discernimiento”, agregó.

Para Rodríguez, este V Encuentro plantea la pregunta de ¿cómo el pasado influye en el presente y cuáles son las

V ENCUENTRO

...a están participando



◀ **Un Encuentro Para Todos.** Deliris Palmer, izquierda, y Dolores Calderón, centro, reaccionan con risas durante un momento cómico en un taller para delegados del V Encuentro en Nazareth Retreat Center en Grand Prairie el 8 de abril. (Foto NTC/Ben Torres)

¿Sabías que?

20.000 nuevos líderes pastorales serán formados durante el V Encuentro.

necesidades del presente? “Mucho ha cambiado desde el I Encuentro en 1972”, comentó.

“Con la preparación y formación que nuestros hermanos hispanos han ido adquiriendo, junto con las generaciones que han crecido aquí, la presencia hispana tiene un rostro diferente hoy en día”, dijo destacando que todo el material es bilingüe.

En una reunión reciente del Encuentro que Rodríguez tuvo con los párrocos de la Diócesis, él explicó que hay actualmente latinos de tercera, cuarta y quinta generación que se han asimilado a la cultura estadounidense, pero conservan aún su idioma, costumbres, y raíces.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 44

DE LA PÁGINA 43

A menudo, “los hispanos de segunda y tercera generación están tratando de averiguar cuál es su lugar en la sociedad y la Iglesia,” dijo el Obispo Michael Olson en esa reunión. “¿Cómo abordamos esto? Hay que mantenerlos involucrados; darles la oportunidad de permanecer involucrados en la vida de la Iglesia”.

Los nuevos inmigrantes — que vienen no sólo de México, sino también de América Central y Sudamérica — están contribuyendo al rostro cambiante de la Iglesia americana.

“Como Iglesia, tenemos que hacer frente a una nueva frontera”, comentó Rodríguez.

A través del proceso de oración y discernimiento, el V Encuentro fortalecerá y ayudará a “evangelizar el hogar”, brindar renovación, y crear una Iglesia de encuentro, agregó el Obispo Olson. “El fin de un Encuentro es encontrar a Cristo en nuestro prójimo”.

Para lograr su misión, el proceso

del V Encuentro tiene como objetivo proporcionar a la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos un mayor entendimiento de cómo responder a las necesidades de los hispanos. Al mismo tiempo, se intenta discernir la manera en que una creciente comunidad hispana puede utilizar sus dones para responder mejor a la llamada a ser discípulos misioneros que sirven a toda la Iglesia.

El Encuentro Diocesano de la Diócesis de Fort Worth será el 5 de noviembre de 2017 en el Centro de Convenciones de Arlington y la convención regional se llevará a cabo en San Antonio desde abril 13 a 15 en el 2018.

Para el Padre José Gildardo Álvarez, CORC, párroco de la Parroquia Inmaculado Corazón de María de Fort Worth, el enriquecedor camino hacia el V Encuentro es “motivo de mucha esperanza”, pues ayudará a “que la Pastoral Hispana se organice mejor todavía y que se logre tener una mayor capacidad misionera para que la Iglesia Católica se siga difundiendo con más

fuerza entre todos los hispanos”.

“Y que a la vez los hispanos sigan enriqueciendo a la Iglesia Católica en los Estados Unidos, de tal forma que, en septiembre del 2018, cuando culmine el V Encuentro, contemos con muchos elementos de aportación positiva”, dijo el Padre Gildardo.

El V Encuentro está despertando un gran interés en los grupos parroquiales, asegura el Padre Gildardo, quien menciona que en su parroquia hay dos coordinadores y 16 líderes de grupo; “estos líderes tendrán que ser el fermento de la parroquia para entusiasmar a todos y reunirse con numerosos grupos para lograr una preparación que sea lo más amplia posible”.

El padre guanajuatense considera que ser la sede del V Encuentro “va a motivar a todos en la Diócesis a poner más empeño para una preparación muy consciente y mostrar una gran actitud de acogida y hospitalidad con todos los hermanos que van a visitarnos”, dijo.

Se esperan más de 3,500 ‘hermanos invitados’, que incluye a líderes del Ministerio Hispano, directores, asistentes, y delegados de cada diócesis, procedentes de todas partes de los Estados Unidos, señala Oscar Carranza, Director de Mercadeo y Eventos de la Universidad de Dallas y que está a cargo de la logística de la clausura del V Encuentro. Se estima que más de 80 obispos también asistirán.

“Estamos preparando la coordinación de los cuatro días del evento y queremos que sean exitosos”, confirmó Carranza, señalando que se reservaron 1,500 habitaciones del Gaylord Texan, así como las instalaciones de su Centro de Convenciones, lo que representa la capacidad total del complejo hotelero.

Agregó que contará con la ayuda de personas claves del equipo diocesano,



◀ **Joel Rodríguez**, Director del Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis de Fort Worth dirige una reunión del Encuentro con varios párrocos de toda la Diócesis el 15 de marzo. (Foto NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Los Números

Una estimación de los participantes del V Encuentro:

- ▶ **1** millón de líderes pastorales
- ▶ **5,000** parroquias
- ▶ **175** diócesis
- ▶ **42** organizaciones
- ▶ **30** parroquias de la Diócesis de Fort Worth
- ▶ **13** movimientos laicos de la Iglesia

Datos según ENAVE-USCCB

así como, con el apoyo de alrededor de 100 voluntarios que serán el rostro de la hospitalidad de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, para recibir a “este grupo que trabajará en la preparación de un documento que va a ser, con la gracia de Dios, usado como una guía de cómo los ministerios a los hispanos deben ser en adelante”, dijo.

Según Carranza, además de servir para unirnos en una sola voz, el V Encuentro es muestra del crecimiento como hispanos y como católicos y “definitivamente, éste no será el último Encuentro; ésa es la idea de este tipo de esfuerzo, que intenta mejorarnos en todos los aspectos, principalmente, en nuestra fe”.

En la Diócesis de Fort Worth, el 40 por ciento de las parroquias son de mayoría hispana, población que se ha



El Obispo Michael Olson saluda a los feligreses durante un taller de formación para los delegados diocesanos del V Encuentro en abril 8. (Foto NTC/Ben Torres)

visto cobijada por el Obispo Michael Olson desde su instalación en 2014. Con la “visión de Jesucristo en la que todos somos Iglesia, el obispo tiene muy cercano a su corazón al pueblo hispano de su diócesis”, afirma Joel Rodríguez al describir el tremendo apoyo que el Obispo Olson representa para este V Encuentro.

Marlon De La Torre, Director de Catequesis de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, declara que este V Encuentro representa la “oportunidad de convivir no sólo como comunidad hispana, sino como Iglesia Universal”.

Reconociendo el campo fértil que existe gracias a los frutos de los Encuentros anteriores, que han permitido identificar y apreciar la diversidad cultural de los católicos hispanos en los Estados Unidos y el descubrimiento de mejores caminos para ejecutar la justicia social de la Iglesia, ayudar a las familias y brindar servicios de inmigración, De La Torre resalta que este V Encuentro está impactando más el sistema de la evangelización, la catequesis y la

formación de fe.

“Si no tenemos gente bien formada en la doctrina de la fe, el *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*, la Sagrada Escritura y misioneros dispuestos a entender el Evangelio de Dios, entonces, lo demás no se va a sembrar”, De La Torre dijo.

“Para nosotros este V Encuentro es muy importante porque vamos a tener representantes de todos los Estados Unidos,” De La Torre añadió. “Entonces, como una familia diocesana, todo el mundo va a ver cómo nosotros practicamos la fe, cómo actuamos con cada uno, cómo somos una comunidad de fe en el amor con Jesucristo”.

“Para nosotros es motivo de gran orgullo y mucha felicidad, más que una justicia social, es una justicia de fe, de que estamos vivos en nuestra fe y estamos anunciando el Evangelio de Jesucristo, que es el Evangelio de la Iglesia Universal”, De La Torre continuó.

Se puede encontrar información sobre el V Encuentro en vencuentro.org y en fwdioc.org/v-encuentro.

nuestros pecados, fue sepultado, resucitó al tercer día y se apareció a Pedro y a los Doce (Cfr. 1 Cor 15,3-5). Este es el hecho. Ha muerto, fue sepultado, ha resucitado, se ha aparecido. Es decir: Jesús está vivo. Este es el núcleo del mensaje cristiano. Anunciando este advenimiento, que es el núcleo central de la fe, Pablo insiste sobre todo en el último elemento del misterio pascual, es decir, en el hecho de que Jesús ha resucitado. Si de hecho, todo hubiese terminado con la muerte, en Él tendríamos un ejemplo de entrega suprema, pero esto no podría generar nuestra fe. Ha sido un héroe. ¡No! Ha muerto, pero ha resucitado. Porque la fe nace de la resurrección. Aceptar que Cristo ha muerto, y ha muerto crucificado, no es un acto de fe, es un hecho histórico. En cambio, creer que ha resucitado sí. Nuestra fe nace en la mañana de Pascua. Pablo hace una lista de las personas a las cuales Jesús resucitado se les aparece (Cfr. vv. 5-7). Tenemos aquí una pequeña síntesis de todas las narraciones pascuales y de todas las personas que han entrado en contacto con el Resucitado. Al inicio de la lista están Cefas, es decir, Pedro, y el grupo de los Doce, luego “quinientos hermanos” muchos de los cuales podían dar todavía sus testimonios, luego es citado Santiago. El último de la lista — como el menos digno de todos — es él mismo, Pablo dice de sí mismo: “como un aborto” (Cfr. v. 8).

Pablo usa esta expresión porque su historia personal es dramática: pero él no era un monaguillo, ¿eh? Él era un perseguidor de la Iglesia, orgulloso de sus propias convicciones; se sentía un hombre realizado, con una idea muy clara de cómo es la vida con sus deberes. Pero, en este cuadro perfecto — todo era perfecto en Pablo, sabía todo — en este cuadro perfecto de vida, un día sucedió lo que era absolutamente imprevisible: el encuentro con Jesús Resucitado, en el camino a Damasco. Allí no había sólo un hombre que cayó en la tierra: había una persona atrapada por un advenimiento que le habría cambiado el sentido de la

vida. Y el perseguidor se convierte en apóstol, ¿Por qué? ¡Porque yo he visto a Jesús vivo! ¡Yo he visto a Jesús resucitado! Este es el fundamento de la fe de Pablo, como de la fe de los demás apóstoles, como de la fe de la Iglesia, como de nuestra fe.

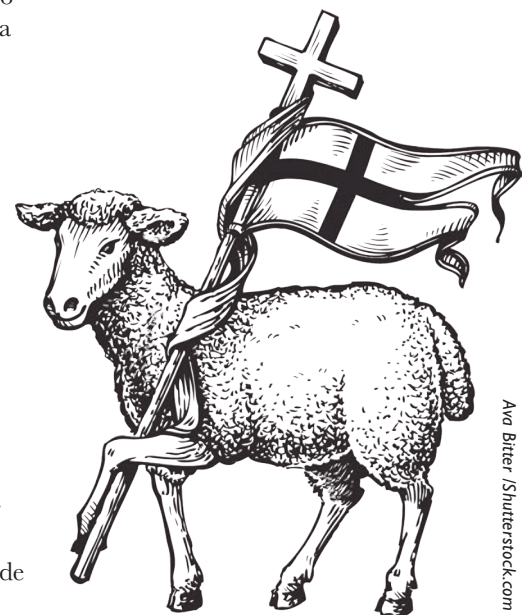
¡Qué bello es pensar que el cristianismo, esencialmente, es esto! No es tanto nuestra búsqueda en relación a Dios — una búsqueda, en verdad, casi incierta — sino mejor dicho la búsqueda de Dios en relación con nosotros. Jesús nos ha tomado, nos ha atrapado, nos ha conquistado para no dejarnos más. El cristianismo es gracia, es sorpresa, y por este motivo presupone un corazón capaz de maravillarse. Un corazón cerrado, un corazón racionalista es incapaz de la maravilla, y no puede entender que cosa es el cristianismo. Porque el cristianismo es gracia, y la gracia solamente se percibe, más: se encuentra en la maravilla del encuentro.

Y entonces, también si somos pecadores — pero todos lo somos — si nuestros propósitos de bien se han quedado en el papel, o quizás sí, mirando nuestra vida, nos damos cuenta de haber sumado tantos fracasos. En la mañana de Pascua podemos hacer como aquellas personas de las cuales nos habla el Evangelio: ir al sepulcro de Cristo, ver la gran piedra removida y pensar que Dios está realizando para mí, para todos nosotros, un futuro inesperado. Ir a nuestro sepulcro: todos tenemos un poco dentro. Ir ahí, y ver como Dios es capaz de resucitar de ahí. Aquí hay felicidad, aquí hay alegría, vida, donde todos pensaban que había sólo tristeza, derrota y tinieblas. Dios hace crecer sus flores más bellas en medio a las piedras más áridas.

Ser cristianos significa no partir de la muerte, sino del amor de Dios por nosotros, que ha derrotado a nuestra acérrima enemiga. Dios es más grande de la nada, y basta sólo una luz encendida

para vencer la más oscura de las noches. Pablo grita, evocando a los profetas: “¿Dónde está, muerte, tu victoria? ¿Dónde está tu aguijón?” (v. 55). En estos días de Pascua, llevemos este grito en el corazón. Y si nos dirán del porqué de nuestra sonrisa donada y de nuestro paciente compartir, entonces podremos responder que Jesús está todavía aquí, que continúa estando vivo entre nosotros, que Jesús está aquí, en la Plaza, con nosotros: vivo y resucitado.

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From Page 48

A recent gathering at the latter included students from the parish school who sang hymns during the morning liturgy.

“We want them to be conscious of the needs of other people,” Fr. Holguin pointed out, explaining the reason for the field trip. “We are all blessed in so many ways. It’s important to be compassionate for those who are alone and have no family.”

Standing in front of the small gathering of wheelchair-bound worshippers and a few caregivers, the enthusiastic priest delivered a simple, sincere message: You are precious in the eyes of God.

“I preach to them about the love of God always, always,” he stated passionately. “That’s the most important message we receive during our life. I remind them God is with them no matter what situation they are in.”

His elderly listeners respond to the comforting words with smiles and a spark of recognition.

“I see their joy,” said Fr. Holguin who believes even those confined to nursing homes need meaning, purpose, and hope in their lives. “If they cannot go to Church, the Church has to go to them.”

Joe Herness began his nursing home ministry in Idaho and continued the practice after moving to Texas and joining St. Peter’s in 1982. Today he coordinates the Eucharistic ministers assigned to the Trinity location. Finding long-term volunteers is sometimes difficult.

“There are a lot of conditions (in nursing homes) that are not very pleasant,” he admitted. “People want to help but after two or three weeks, they drop out.”

Herness sees beyond the dementia and other medical issues associated with institutionalized care. He believes the suffering nursing home patients endure is like a purgatory.

“And when they die, they’re going straight to heaven,” the 75-year-old said. “That’s my opinion.”

During his Sunday visits, Herness holds a few hands and prays with anyone — even non-believers — if they ask. Many times, he’s the last person to



Students from St. Peter the Apostle School pray a blessing over a Catholic nursing home patient after a recent Mass celebrated at Trinity Healthcare Residence. (NTC photo/Juan Guajardo)

administer Communion before an elderly or sick patient passes away. The layman recites a special prayer for the critically ill.

“And when I give holy Communion to these people who are on their deathbed or in severe pain, you can see Jesus in their eyes,” he observed.

The Second Vatican Council changed the role of laity in the Church and made it possible for extraordinary ministers of holy Communion to bring consecrated hosts to the sick and homebound.

Harriett Colvin was encouraged to become a Eucharistic minister more than 30 years ago by her mother-in-law, Adele Colvin — one of the first parishioners to take Communion to the elderly and homebound.

“I guess, in the early days, people would rather have a priest visit them but that’s all changed now,” the longtime parishioner said lightheartedly. “Now when we walk into a room, they expect us.”

She believes meeting the spiritual needs of the sick and elderly can improve their emotional and physical well-being.

“They rely on their faith and, so

often, their faith is strong and so important to them,” Colvin emphasized. “Receiving Communion gives them strength.”

The volunteer is one of six or seven people from the parish who host bingo games at the White Settlement Nursing Center twice a month for anyone who wants to attend.

Coordinators of St. Peter’s ministry to nursing homes make sure Catholic patients are visited at least once a week on Sunday or Wednesday. Facility directors or family members provide the names of Catholic residents who want to receive the sacraments.

Gerard is on the list of names Ernie Phillips receives before he travels to the West Side facility on Sunday. During a recent visit, the Eucharistic minister knocked before entering the room of Gerard, who is younger than the typical nursing home resident.

Gerard suffers from a disability and, “that’s made it impossible for me to drive,” he explained. “I look forward to Ernie’s visits because receiving the Eucharist is the most important thing.”

BRINGING THE CHURCH TO THEM

St. Peter the Apostle parishioners gladly bring the joy of Jesus to the sick and elderly living in nursing homes



◀ *Father Manuel Holguin fist bumps a resident during the Sign of Peace during a recent Mass celebrated at West Side Campus of Care.*

(NTC photo/Ben Torres)

Clair Orth, an extraordinary minister of holy Communion at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, always looks forward to visiting the West Side Campus of Care.

He knows the elderly patients, living in the residential facility, are anxiously

waiting for him to walk through the door.

“I have a lot of sympathy for the sick — especially those living in nursing homes,” explained the volunteer who became involved in the outreach ministry to the sick and homebound more than 10 years ago. “There are a lot of Catholics who aren’t able to get to Mass or church anymore and they appreciate when someone brings Communion to them.”

Orth is one of a dozen parishioners who regularly visit three nursing homes in White Settlement — Trinity Healthcare Residence, West Side Campus of Care

and White Settlement Nursing Center. Volunteers take Communion to the Catholic residents, pray with them, and spend a few moments in friendly conversation.

Since Father Manuel Holguin became parochial administrator at St. Peter the Apostle in July, the parish has renewed its efforts to reach out to the forgotten, the infirm, and the disabled. Once a month, the young priest celebrates Mass at two of the centers — West Side and Trinity.

Continued on Page 47