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# NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



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reigns immortal.

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## Raggedy

For the next several weeks we'll be diving into a new set of readings during Mass — the *Acts of the Apostles*. These are some of my favorite passages. They are an honest reminder of how Christ invites the most raggedy messengers to proclaim His Good News and even to take the reins of His Church (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic — remember?).

Pope Francis in one of his first addresses as pope explained this apostolic nature of the Church: “St. Paul compares the Christians to living stones that create the Church’s temple. This temple has the Apostles as its columns and Christ as the stone that supports it.”

Our faith is intricately connected to the Apostles and their courageous testimony. So if Christ is the head of the Church, it makes sense to see the Apostles as the backbone.

Speaking of backbone, they sure had a strong one! Consider the Apostolic Age (from Christ’s ascension to the death of the last Apostle circa 100 A.D.). St. Stephen, the first to die, is stoned to death by the Sanhedrin and Pharisees for testifying that Jesus sits in glory at the right hand of the Father. St. Paul and St. Peter die victims of Nero’s persecution (as did thousands of Christians who were burned alive and became human torches lighting the streets of Rome). St. Thomas died in India, pierced by the spears of four soldiers. St. Bartholomew was flayed. The last of them, St. John, was tortured and exiled for holding fast to the truth, eventually dying on the desert island of Patmos.

Even though countless generations of Christians after them never saw God in the flesh, they believed — largely because of such strong witness from the Apostles!

Archbishop Fulton Sheen explains this in his book *Life is Worth Living*: “The future believers, our Lord implied, must accept the fact of the Resurrection from those who had been with Him. Our Lord thus pictured the faith of believers after the apostolic age, when there would be none who would have seen it, but their faith would have a foundation because the Apostles had seen the Risen Christ.”

We may or may not be called to the pinnacle of martyrdom like they were. But we are definitely still called to be convincing witnesses — because we’re convinced! We are still called to participate in Christ’s offices of priest, prophet, and king — like that once raggedy hodgepodge of tax collector, denier, fishermen, doubter, zealot, persecutor, etc.

Do you feel raggedy? I sure do from time to time. How can a raggedy messenger live a witness that glorifies God and inspires faith in others? By trusting and relying on God, for His “grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 *Corinthians* 12:9).

*Juan Guajardo, Editor*



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Paisley Elliott enlisted family and community support for her latest project: to make capes for refugee children so the children feel “happy, brave, and strong,” she said. (NTC/Ben Torres)

## Helping refugee children be “happy, brave, and strong”

**GRAPEVINE** — Paisley Elliott looks like a normal kid in her kindergarten class at Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine. But this kid has discovered her superpower and has the cape, emblazoned with the letters “PP,” to prove it.

PP stands for Paisley’s Pals, an organization to help refugee kids founded by the five-year-old and her mom Tali Jones and dad Brendon Elliott. Paisley’s superpower? To show you’re never too young to help others, and enlist an ever-widening community of support.

After representatives from Catholic Charities Fort Worth came to school to talk to students about refugees, Paisley, then a pre-K4 student, came into her mom’s room that night crying, holding an armload of stuffed animals.

“She said, ‘I want to give these to refugee kids,’” Jones recalled.

Because of Paisley’s wish, her family and school community collected

hundreds of stuffed animals and Paisley’s Pals was born.

Later last year, Paisley’s Pals collected 500 pounds of personal items to make “blessing bags” for Central American migrant families. Around Christmas, Paisley raised \$1,000 for an outreach to Syrian refugee children.

Now Paisley’s Pals is making superhero capes for refugee children.

The United Nations Refugee Agency recently announced that Paisley was nominated for the Nansen Refugee Award, an honor given to an individual or organization “who has dedicated their time going above and beyond the call of duty to help people forcibly displaced from their homes,” according to the organization’s website.

Jones said, “A kindergarten nominated for a humanitarian award — it’s so cool to see her ideas make this a global project.”

— Sandra Engelland

## A time and a place for middle school students

**FORT WORTH** — Onstage, a lively duo with a guitar and ukulele invited middle-school students alongside them to play fake instruments in front of a crowd of their cheering peers.

This camaraderie-building activity led up to keynote talks given by speakers and musicians Kyle Heimann and Dan Harms, at the annual diocesan Middle School Rally.

The rally, put together by Diocesan Director of Youth Ministry Jason Spoolstra, was held all day at Nolan Catholic High School March 9, and featured speakers, musicians, Mass, and Adoration for the roughly 250 sixth- to eighth-grade participants

from 23 parishes.

Spoolstra said, “The first point is to gather the middle-schoolers. There are so many things available for high-schoolers throughout the year. We want to give the youth an opportunity to experience their faith and to experience Christ for a day, for just the middle-schoolers.”

“We try to hit the main points of the Good News in allowing our young people to have a space just for them to be able to embrace who they are as a beloved child of God, where they can hear from amazing speakers, great musicians, and have Mass together,” Spoolstra explained.

— Michelle McDaniel



For full versions of these stories plus more photos, visit [NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news)





Fr. Michael Moloney leads pilgrims in Stations 4 - 6 at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Megargel. (NTC/ Jayme Donahue)



## Journey with Jesus: pilgrims pray Stations at five parishes

**WINDTHORST** — On a sunny, windy Saturday during Lent, parishioners from St. Mary in Windthorst and Our Lady Queen of Peace and Sacred Heart, both in Wichita Falls, set out to pray the Stations of the Cross during a pilgrimage to five churches deep in the Northwest Deanery.

Last year, a group organized by the Windthorst Christian Mother's Society traveled east in a bus during Lent to parishes in Scotland, Henrietta, Nocona, Lindsay, Muenster, and Gainesville. This year, they headed west.

About 30 pilgrims boarded a bus in Windthorst bound for St. Theresa Church in Olney. Father Michael Moloney, parochial administrator of St. Mary in Windthorst, led pilgrims in the first three Stations of the Cross.

Next stop was St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Megargel. After praying Stations four through six and exploring the church, the pilgrims were on the road

again.

At Santa Rosa Parish in Knox City, Mary Escamilla, a Santa Rosa parishioner for 20 years, was delighted to meet the pilgrims from the east. She admitted when Pastor John Perikomalayil Antony, HGN, asked her to open the doors, she expected two or three ladies.

"We have never had anyone make an effort to visit our poor church. We love it here," she said.

With Knox City behind them, the pilgrims soon pointed excitedly at the spire of St. Joseph in Rhineland. "A Cathedral in a Cotton Patch" announced a black and white sign. Several pilgrims proclaimed St. Joseph as their favorite parish of the trip.

At the final stop in Seymour, Father Jjuvarapu Bose, HGN, welcomed the pilgrims to Sacred Heart Parish, where they prayed Stations 13 and 14 with Fr. Moloney.

— *Jenara Kocks Burgess*

## The ethical, spiritual, and legal aspects of end of life

**FORT WORTH** — Three experts will examine end-of-life concerns from human, spiritual, legal, and ethical perspectives at the Bioethics and End of Life Conference, which will be held on Saturday, April 27 at the Great Hall of St. Bartholomew Church from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Bishop Michael Olson will celebrate Mass at 4:30 p.m.

Headlining the conference are Dr. John Brehany, director of institutional relations at the National Catholic Bioethics Center; Attorney Ellen Dorn, founding director of the Catholic Bar Association; and Sister Suzanne Gross, FSE, administrator of Franciscan Home Care and Hospice Care.

The panel will conclude the conference with audience questions.

The \$30 conference includes a gift bag, refreshments, and lunch. A link to register is found on the calendar at [fwdioc.org](http://fwdioc.org).

Theresa Schauf, diocesan director of pro-life ministries, said end-of-life concerns impact everyone, as all of us age, and many care for elderly loved ones.

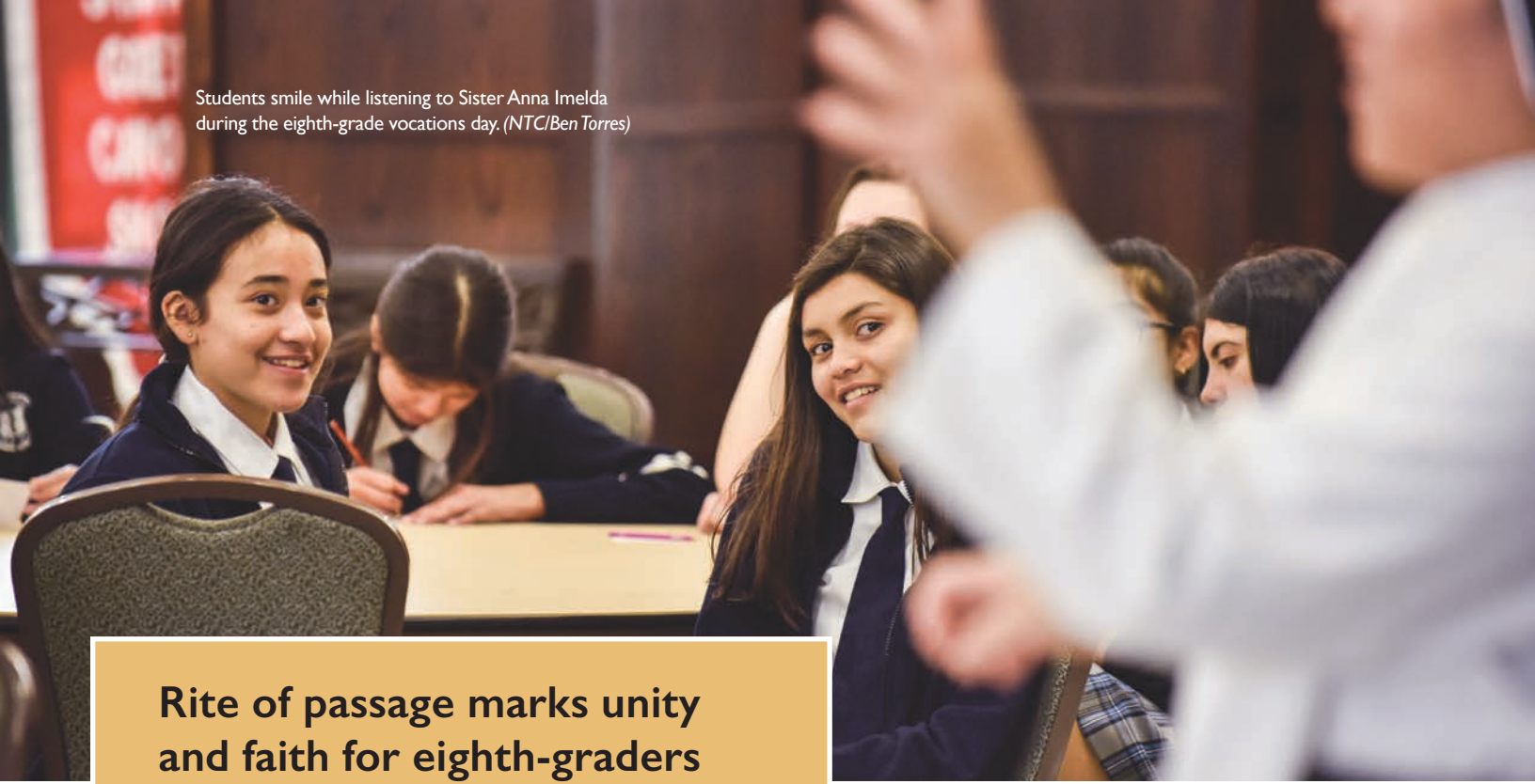
Seven states have legalized physician-assisted suicide. "After abortion on demand was legalized, we were on the slippery slope to euthanasia. This conference will provide the means to take our Catholic faith and incorporate it into decision making," Schauf said.



For full versions of these stories plus more photos, visit [NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news)



Students smile while listening to Sister Anna Imelda during the eighth-grade vocations day. (NTC/Ben Torres)



## Rite of passage marks unity and faith for eighth-graders

**FORT WORTH** — Life is about to change for many of the eighth-grade students at 17 diocesan Catholic schools. Some have cherished the familiar places and beloved faces of their school for 11 years, if they started attending in pre-K3.

As a rite of passage to celebrate their faith and to consider the future, nearly 400 eighth-grade students from across the diocese attended the eighth-grade Mass and vocations day on April 10 at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth.

The eighth-grade Mass, a longstanding tradition in the diocese, marks the unity of the Catholic faith and blesses the students before they disperse to different high schools.

Last year, break-out sessions on religious vocations were added to the day. According to Jennifer Pelletier, superintendent of Catholic Schools, as the

students transition from middle school to high school, they focus on the next steps in their life's journey. The vocation discussions provide a natural time to teach students to consider God's will when discerning their future.

The day began with a prayer and welcome, then the boys and girls broke into separate sessions. Father Maurice Moon, chaplain at Nolan Catholic High School, and several seminarians shared their vocation stories and answered questions from the boys.

The girls visited with Sister Anna Imelda Nguyen, O.P., and Sister Marie Therese Nguyen, O.P.

After lunch, Kay Fialho shared the history of the cathedral, which dates back to 1876, with the students. Bishop Michael Olson celebrated the closing Mass, blessed the youth, and lingered for photos with each class.

## Why (and how) do we know what we know?

**BEDFORD** — How did the Church establish her doctrine? And what is the foundation for that doctrine? Father Brian Mullady, OP, will help unearth the answers to those questions and more by referencing Holy Scripture, the early Church Fathers, the Doctors of the Church, and Church documents through Vatican II.

The diocese is hosting Introduction to Doctrine on Saturday, May 18, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. Michael Parish in Bedford.

Fr. Mullady is well respected and renowned for hosting 12 series on EWTN, according to Marlon De La Torre, diocesan director of evangelization and catechesis. De La Torre

expects Fr. Mullady, a priest and college professor, will approach doctrine with both an academic and pastoral viewpoint.

The subject of Church doctrine is timely, according to De La Torre, who said, "We've had confusion related to marriage and family, morality, the role of the papacy

— what does the Church teach versus what is being miscommunicated. At this point in time, there's a lot of clarity that's needed, so this will help. Sometimes getting to the root of the problem means finding the source, and that's what we're going to do in this workshop."

Details about the workshop and a link to register are found on the calendar at [fwdioc.org](http://fwdioc.org).



Fr. Mullady, OP



See the full article and photo gallery of eighth-grade vocations day, at [NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news)



Javier Lucio and Art Sanford, both on the Cristo Rey Fort Worth Board of Directors, conduct a post-purchase inspection of the property.  
(NTC/Jayne Donahue)



## Cristo Rey Fort Worth purchases new campus to open August 2019

**FORT WORTH** — When Cristo Rey Fort Worth President John Pritchett announced April 1 that the high school was moving to a newly purchased campus with a gym, auditorium, and athletic fields, some students were so surprised, they thought it was an April Fool’s joke.

Applause and smiles quickly filled the room as reality set in.

“It was wonderful to watch the reaction from students,” he said. “It’s an exciting time.”

The plan to relocate Cristo Rey Fort Worth to a 4.47-acre site at 2633 Altamesa Blvd. from its current home at Our Mother of Mercy Parish will help the innovative, entrepreneurial school grow quicker, faster, and for less money, according to Pritchett. Efforts to raise \$2.8 million in cash and pledges for the property, as well as an additional \$2.5 million needed for renovations, began quietly in January after the school’s board of directors approved the purchase.

Work at Cristo Rey’s new location will begin shortly to ready the campus for the 2019-2020 academic year. Further improvements will continue each summer as the school grows.

Organizers originally planned a 10-year, multi-phase expansion on land bought in Terrell Heights adjacent to Our Mother of Mercy. The \$20-million projected design did not include a gymnasium or auditorium.

“We love being at Our Mother of Mercy and part of a legacy that goes back to 1929 but, last fall, an opportunity presented itself,” he explained. “The former Baptist church purchased has a very large education building with classrooms, a gymnasium, and auditorium, and offers us greater flexibility.”

“People like the speed at which it will enable the school to grow, as well as the opportunity it provides our students for academic success and performance,” he added.

Opened in July 2018, Cristo Rey Fort Worth provides families with limited income a quality, Catholic, college-preparatory education for their children. A corporate work/study program enables students to earn a portion of their tuition. Family contributions and philanthropy cover the remaining cost of education.

— *Joan Kurkowski-Gillen*

## Official Assignments

BY BISHOP MICHAEL F. OLSON

### REV. MARK MCKENZIE, SJ

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Retreat Director** at Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House, effective January 2, 2019.

### REV. EMMET O’HARA, SAC

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, effective March 4, 2019.

### REV. MICHAEL O’SULLIVAN, SAC

Has been appointed **Vicar Forane** of the Southwest Deanery without prejudice to his current assignment as Pastor of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, effective March 1, 2019.

### REV. JOHN PAYNE, SJ

**Priest** at Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House, has been recalled by his religious order community, effective January 2, 2019.

### REV. GEORGE PULLAMBRAYIL

Has been appointed **Vicar Forane** of the North Deanery without prejudice to his current assignment as Pastor of St. Mark Parish in Denton, effective February 20, 2019.

## Holy Orders



### TRANSITIONAL DIACONATE ORDINATION

Bishop Michael Olson will ordain **Pedro J. Martinez** to the transitional diaconate.

As a transitional deacon, he serves in parish ministry for a year as part of his final preparation for ordination to the priesthood, God willing, in 2020.

- Saturday, May 18, at 10 a.m.
- St. Matthew Parish in Arlington

# Diocese Continues to Strengthen Security at Parishes, Schools

Continuing efforts to strengthen security and safety at the parish and school level, the Diocese of Fort Worth is implementing the second phase of its protection plan.

“Protecting the faithful is a priority,” said Stephen Becht, diocesan director of real estate and construction. “Because the bishop as shepherd wants to protect the souls [of local faithful], but also protect them while they’re worshipping, in a welcoming way.”

The next phase involves collaborating with Sabbath Shield, now known as Guardian Response security consultants, to recruit and train volunteer teams at each parish that will work closely with local law enforcement to provide safety during Masses or other large events.

The aim of the teams is to thwart crisis situations and provide “decisive and life-saving action during emergencies while supporting the role of first responders until their arrival,” Monsignor E. James Hart, Diocesan Chancellor and Moderator of the Curia, said in a memo.

Some of the volunteers in these teams will be armed and will provide additional “rings of security,” Becht said. They will operate similarly to FAA sky marshals — covert officers who provide in-flight security. Many parishioners won’t even notice who belongs to the security team.

Medical teams will also be formed and trained in advanced first aid, including the use of blood clotting powder and gauze that the military uses. “We are requiring each church to have a first aid kit with all the most advanced first aid available,” Becht said.

The armed protection team, which will be strictly vetted and extensively trained, will make up the inner ring of security, in order to “protect the lives of parishioners from worst case scenarios like the Sutherland Springs shooting,” Msgr.



Hart said.

Already in place, Becht added, are outer rings of security comprising laity walking the premises and parking lots, welcome or greeting ministers at the front doors of parishes, and ushers — all of whom have been trained in identifying suspicious behavior and body language. These team members will continue receiving safety training.

The armed volunteers will be parishioners selected by the pastor of the church. Currently, pastors are tasked with identifying two or three leaders to head this ministry.

Mike Short, co-owner of Guardian Response, in a video sent to parish leaders recommended volunteers who are committed, organized, relational, and able to make wise decisions. “Law enforcement

personnel or people with prior military experience may be good fits for this type of leadership role within your parish, but it’s not a requirement.”

Becht emphasized that these teams will undergo an extensive, multi-step vetting process. Once selected, they will undergo training with Guardian Response, emphasizing de-escalation, self-defense, gun proficiency, and familiarity and coordination with local police.

Parishes that can hire active police officers for security at Masses and other major events are encouraged to do so and would work in conjunction with the parish’s armed protection team.

The first phase of the diocese’s security plan saw all parishes and schools undergo vulnerability assessments by Guardian Response. Out of that came suggestions for improving security, like putting crisis procedures in place, installing cameras and fencing, and more. Parishes were encouraged to revisit their emergency plans and contact their local law enforcement agencies for further recommendations.

Assessments by Guardian Response also resulted in parishes and schools taking down the “gun-free zone” signs “because the data says that the large majority of mass shootings in public places occur in gun-free zones,” Becht said.

The directive banning guns on church property and school campuses remains in effect. The notices, however, are now displayed in the bulletins rather than on the buildings, Short told the *NTC*. Permission to carry on church property is limited to active police officers and the vetted and trained members of the protection team ministry.

“This will allow the teams to properly screen those who should not be carrying a gun, while maintaining an armed presence in the case of an emergency,” Short explained. ✝



# The Virtuous Life

Positive interactions with assistant principal Rachel Gutsell help students live virtuously

By Jenara Kocks-Burgess

As a child walks into the front office of the elementary campus of Notre Dame Catholic School on a typical day with a note from her teacher, Secretary Susie Garcia calls out to Assistant Principal Rachel Gutsell, “We’ve got another one.”

“How did you receive your award?” Garcia asks the child.

When she responds too softly to be heard, Garcia reads the note, “You demonstrated the virtue of sincerity by saying kind words to your friends.”

“My friends shared their books with me,” she responds.

“When I accepted the role of assistant principal, I knew the importance of positively interacting with our students,” said Gutsell.

“Not only do students visit my office when they’ve made poor choices, but they also visit my office to celebrate those times that they demonstrate virtue in the classroom. And how better to celebrate than with a happy dance,” she adds with a smile and joyful laugh.

“Ready?” Gutsell asks the little girl. The girl shyly dances as Garcia and Gutsell rhythmically sing, “woo-woo” and move to the beat themselves. Then they both clap and congratulate the girl.

“Remember to take that certificate home to your parents,” Gutsell calls out as the student leaves the office.

When Gutsell started working as the assistant principal at the Wichita Falls school in July 2018, her biggest project was to revamp the school behavior plan to make sure it not only addressed poor behavior, but praised and encouraged the virtuous type as well.

“At the beginning of the school year,



Rachel Gutsell is assistant principal at Notre Dame Catholic School in Wichita Falls. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Rachel Gutsell, assistant principal at Notre Dame Catholic School in Wichita Falls, does a happy dance with Shelby Brokaw, Adara Ferguson, and Linus Blackwell after recognizing them for good work. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



the teachers and I decided upon common and consistent language regarding our expectations for students,” Gutsell explained. “We spend a great deal of time teaching students about the virtues. We want students to not only become good citizens, but wholly formed persons of God. We want to instill virtue in their hearts to ensure they live as witnesses to the faith outside of Notre Dame.”

To bring that to life for the students, the school’s mascot, the Notre Dame Knight, is referenced “as frequently as possible when discussing students’ behavior.” Teachers are also encouraged to write positive office referrals called Knightly Recognition Awards, just like the one the little girl received for speaking kind words about her friends.

“Hopefully, every child will receive multiple awards by the end of the year,” Gutsell said.

First-grade Teacher Amanda Taylor said her favorite aspect of how the knight is incorporated into their behavior plan is the school’s new “call to attention,” which Gutsell initiated this school year.

“The teacher says, ‘Notre Dame Knights,’ and the students say, ‘Living a virtuous life,’” Taylor explained.

Gutsell, who attended Catholic schools from elementary to high school in Colorado, said being able to talk to children about virtues, or “a holy habit that imitates God”

as she always explains them, and being able to pray with them is what brought her back to Catholic school. She started as a kindergarten teacher at Notre Dame in fall 2016.

The assistant principal recalled the challenges of teaching at two secular Title 1 schools, which receive financial assistance because of high numbers of low-income families.

“I’ll never forget one very difficult day ... A student of mine was struggling a great deal, and all I wanted to do was pray with her. I certainly prayed for her, but I was unable to pray *with* her. This was a moment of recollection for me, and I soon realized my desire to return to Catholic education.”

Now, she prays with students “all the time.”

“When a student visits my office due to a poor choice they’ve made, we discuss the virtue they need to grow in and we end the conversation in prayer,” Gutsell said. “Praying with our students is one of the most beautiful things we do at a Catholic school.”

Gutsell has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Northern Colorado and her Colorado Teaching Certificate for kindergarten through sixth grade with an emphasis on language arts.

“God called me to the vocation of teaching very early in life. Since the time I

was six years old and teaching my stuffed bears, I knew that I wanted to become an educator,” she said.

Gutsell graduated from Midwestern State University in December 2018 with her M.Ed. in Educational Leadership and received her Texas Principal Certificate. Growing up in Parker, Colorado, Gutsell attributes her success to her upbringing by devout Catholic parents who saw the value of providing her with a Catholic education.

“My time spent at Ave Maria Catholic School and Regis Jesuit High School provided me a strong foundation in the Catholic faith,” Gutsell said.

Elizabeth Futch, in her first year at Notre Dame as the third-grade teacher, said Gutsell truly wants the best for her colleagues and the students of the school.

“She is consistently smiling, loving, and present for our kids, which makes her a great role model for our students. She embodies the virtues that we teach every week,” she said.

Notre Dame Principal Michael Edghill called Gutsell a talented educator and a great asset to the school.

“When building an administrative team, you want smart people who possess the knowledge and skills to do the job well,” he said. “You also want people who have a passion, work ethic, and commitment to being excellent at what they do. Mrs. Gutsell has those traits in spades.” 🍀



# A Pastoral Approach

Diocesan tribunal continues to streamline annulment proceedings

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

The 200 to 300 people who apply for a marriage annulment in the Diocese of Fort Worth each year often approach the process with two fears, said Sara Paglialunga, JCD.

“Their first fear is that it’s going to cost money,” explained the doctor of canon law who oversees the diocesan tribunal office. “The second fear is that it is going to take forever.”

Both concerns are now eased. Keeping with marriage nullity reforms mandated in the 2015 document *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* (“The Lord Jesus, Gentle Judge”) by Pope Francis, the diocese revised its procedures to make annulments more compassionate, streamlined, and accessible.

“No money is paid at all, and the amount of time to receive a judgment is shorter and shorter,” Paglialunga assured. “We are applying everything Pope Francis asked us to apply.”

Prior to the recent changes, which began to be implemented in 2016, a canonical investigation into whether a marriage was valid — in the context of a sacrament — could take years. Pope Francis recommends a target goal of 16 months for the annulment process.

Hired last year to implement the mandate, Paglialunga — a rotal lawyer who holds the highest canonical degree offered by the Catholic Church — helped clear a backlog of cases. The tribunal now issues most judgments in 20 months and hopes to reduce the time period even more.

Major changes making the annulment process more pastoral include:

- Every case no longer needs two affirmative judgments for resolution. One decision in favor of nullity is sufficient and eliminates extra formalities.



One of only 100 rotal lawyers in the world, Dr. Sara Paglialunga makes sure the annulment process remains compassionate and streamlined. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

- Of the three tribunal judges ruling on a case, only one must be an ordained priest or deacon. In the past it was two.
- Rules determining a tribunal's jurisdiction to hear a case were simplified. A petitioner can file in the diocese where the marriage took place, where either party lives, or where the preponderance of evidence exists.
- A diocesan bishop is authorized to act as sole judge in certain cases.
- The previously required automatic appeal to the Metropolitan Court in San Antonio for confirmation of the local tribunal's decision has been removed. A person can still appeal if he or she wants to challenge the decision of the local tribunal.

The expedited process must meet certain criteria.

“Pope Francis says if a petitioner and respondent both agree about the declaration of nullity of the marriage, and both say the marriage was invalid from the beginning for the same reasons, the process is shorter and takes less time,” Paglialunga explained.

If during the shorter process it becomes apparent the bishop cannot grant a declaration of nullity because of insufficient evidence, the case is transferred to the full, formal process.

The canon law expert stressed that revisions do not change Church teaching regarding marriage or its indissolubility.

“This is about a sacrament, and a sacrament, like Baptism, is forever,” Paglialunga emphasized. “When we issue a sentence that says your marriage was invalid from the beginning, we’re saying there never was a sacrament.”

An affirmative ruling indicates a union lacked one or more necessary conditions for a true marriage.

And a declaration of nullity has nothing to do with children born to a

couple during a marriage. “Children do not become illegitimate because of an annulment,” she quickly pointed out. The Church teaches that an annulment has no effect on the legitimacy of children who were born of the union following the wedding. Likewise, parental obligations remain after a marriage is declared null.

What an annulment does provide is healing.

“This is not like a divorce where you just sign a paper,” Paglialunga clarified. “A person is going back to the Church and must be honest and talk about the problems in the marriage and what caused the nullity of the marriage.”

An annulment petition requires answering very personal questions about childhood, a spouse's childhood, and attitudes about marriage, divorce, and fidelity. Whether a person was mature enough to marry is explored.

“It's supposed to make you think,” she said. “Declaring a sacrament invalid requires very good reasons, and that's why we ask very personal questions.”

Some petitioners want to marry again. Others have no immediate plans to wed but hope for peace and closure.

“The process helps clarify what happened in a marriage and a judge may recommend talking to a priest or counselor,” Paglialunga continued. “It's very cathartic and healing. That's the aim of this process.”

People should use the annulment process to grow spiritually and personally.

“They can forgive themselves about what happened and move forward to another marriage that will be valid,” she suggested.

Following Pope Francis' reform of Church law regarding nullity procedures, some U.S. dioceses have seen an uptick in annulment applications. In the Diocese of Fort Worth, Paglialunga noticed less strain in the people contacting her office. The tribunal no longer receives scores of emails from frustrated petitioners asking about the status of a case.

“People are just happy to be receiving their sentence or they know from their advocate the tribunal is diligently working to provide them a sentence in a timely fashion,” she said. 🇺🇸

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT

### To Report Misconduct:

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

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

### To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

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

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

**For More Information:** To learn more about our abuse prevention policies and programs, please visit [fwdioc.org/safe-environment](http://fwdioc.org/safe-environment)







# Praying at the Foot of the Cross

Prayers for unborn babies outside an abortion clinic 35 years ago developed into a diocesan tradition: the Good Friday Rosary Vigil

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Jeanne Vecera was only 11 years old when she prayed outside an abortion clinic for the first time. Now 46 and the mother of five children, she still has memories of that early pro-life gathering. The novelty of a peaceful, public protest against abortion brought out local television cameras.

“I remember being on the news,” said the St. Patrick parishioner who held a candle during the evening prayer service. “We were standing along Pennsylvania Avenue and they filmed us saying the Rosary.”

Vecera described the crowd that turned out for the first Rosary Vigil for Life 35 years ago as a small but committed group. Her parents, Julie and Jimmy Vecera, brought their children to the event and were ardent pro-life supporters.

“My mother is 86 and still prays outside of the abortion clinic in south Fort Worth,” added Vecera, the youngest of seven children. “My father joined her when he retired.”

Influenced by her parents, the St. Andrew Catholic School mom always knew the truth about abortion and talks about the issue with her daughters.

“I was never one of those people who thought it’s okay for someone else but not for me,” she admitted. “My mom was right. Abortion affects your family, your faith, everything.”

## VIGIL CONVERTS HEARTS

Thirty supporters came to the first Rosary Vigil for Life, but now hundreds assemble each year to pray. Originally scheduled on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary in October and then the January 22 anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, the gathering eventually moved to Good Friday where it has become part of the Paschal Triduum observance for many families.

Praying for unborn babies outside an abortion clinic on the day of Christ’s crucifixion “is like standing at the foot of the cross,” explained Pat Pelletier, who began organizing the annual Rosary vigil in 1984 with her late husband, Chuck, a disabled Vietnam War veteran. That same year, the dedicated pro-life advocates opened the Mother and Unborn Baby Care center in Fort Worth and later offered a healing Mass for parents whose children died before Baptism due to miscarriage, stillbirth, or abortion.

“The Rosary vigil had an impact right from the beginning,” said Pat Pelletier, recalling one of the success stories her

husband liked to tell. Both sidewalk counselors, the husband-and-wife team regularly prayed outside an abortion clinic hoping to dissuade women from terminating a pregnancy. They also got to know the clinic’s staff.

“One employee was pregnant and every time she came to work, Chuck would ask how her baby was doing,” Pelletier recounted.

The question infuriated the employee. But, as the days went by, her attitude softened, and the expectant mom realized the man, sitting in a wheelchair outside the building with a rosary, was sincerely concerned about her wellbeing. After giving birth assisted by a pro-life doctor, the abortion worker had a change of heart.

“The day after our second Rosary vigil, she called to tell Chuck she quit,” his wife said, remembering the surprise they felt.

Her conversion was due, in large part, to “Chuck’s very compassionate and loving concern for her,” she added. “Another part of it was seeing priests, in their collars, praying with us. That made her stop and think about what she was doing.”

## WATCH THE VIDEO



In 2018, a crowd of nearly 700 lined the sidewalks outside Planned Parenthood. Watch the video at: [NorthTexasCatholic.org/video-gallery](https://www.northtexasatholic.org/video-gallery)

## BISHOP LEADS PRAYER

Clergy members regularly attend the Rosary vigil and often lead the crowd in prayer, including Bishops Joseph Delaney and Kevin Vann.

Now, Bishop Michael Olson recites the Rosary with hundreds of parishioners who

## ALL ARE WELCOME



### 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Bishop's Rosary Vigil for Life

- Friday, April 19, 12:30 p.m.
- Outside Planned Parenthood  
6464 John Ryan Drive  
Fort Worth, TX 76132



In this 2006 photo, Chuck Pelletier (right) joins Bishop Kevin Vann and others at the Planned Parenthood facility on 301 S. Henderson St.

fill the sidewalks near Planned Parenthood. Other diocesan and religious order priests, as well as seminarians, join him.

The Pelletiers' five children grew up going to the vigil and watched their parents help pregnant women in crisis.

"Their work in pro-life ministry shaped our family dramatically," eldest daughter Lisa Irlbeck said. "They instilled the idea that you should go out of your way to look for people who are in difficulty and make an effort to help them."

"The first and most important thing to do in pro-life work is to pray," she added.

Theresa Schauf began praying with others at the vigil when she moved to Fort Worth as a young bride in 2006. Now her children come with her and it's part of the family's Easter weekend traditions.

"It's a powerful witness to the sanctity of life while commemorating Christ's sacrifice on the cross," said the Diocesan Respect Life coordinator.

The faithful outside Planned Parenthood each year also pray for those profiting from the abortion industry.

"We ask for God's mercy on them and for their eyes to be opened to the truth," Schauf added.

In a 2008 interview with the *North Texas Catholic*, Chuck Pelletier explained, "Sidewalk counseling is all about presence, perseverance, and prayer. The Holy Spirit can't work through you if you're sitting at home." 🇹🇽



Bishop Michael Olson leads prayer during the Rosary Vigil for Life outside Planned Parenthood on John Ryan Drive in 2018. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Participants pray outside Planned Parenthood during the 2018 Rosary Vigil for Life. (NTC/Ben Torres)



# Capitol Assets



Nolan Catholic High School teacher Lauren Sweet prayed with students and advocates at the entrance to the Texas State Capitol. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

## Advocates, students gather in Austin to share Catholic viewpoint with legislators

By Susan Moses

**E**rin Vader and Tan Parker should have met in the halls of Nolan Catholic High School many years ago. After all, they graduated just a year apart. Instead, Vader introduced herself to Parker at his office in the state Capitol in Austin when she visited the state representative from Flower Mound on March 26 — Texas Catholic Faith in Action Advocacy Day.

Vader and about 2,000 Catholics from across Texas stepped under the massive pink granite dome with a single focus: to make certain that state legislators know the Catholic position on bills under consideration during the 86<sup>th</sup> legislative session.

The Texas Catholic Conference of

Bishops (TCCB), which has organized Advocacy Day for more than 10 years, set the goal of having each of the 31 state senators and 150 state representatives visited by Catholics from their home region. Beforehand, the TCCB reviewed the thousands of house and senate bills under consideration and prioritized several to discuss with the legislators regarding life, education, and restorative justice.

Vader, the diocesan coordinator for schools advancement and alumni relations, teamed with Catholic Charities Fort Worth's Kasandra Fernandez and Bob Walters, Knights of Columbus diocesan team leader for pro-life, to visit three legislators representing districts within the Diocese of Fort Worth. Other teams from the Diocese of Fort Worth plus the

14 other dioceses in Texas bustled through the long halls to meet with their legislators.

With just 140 days in the biennial legislative session, time is gold and allocated accordingly. Most meetings lasted just 15 minutes. The Catholic advocates hope that despite the short duration, their visit will make a big impact.

After meeting with Parker, Vader said she hopes her team's presence puts "healthy pressure" on the legislators. "I hope that he's reminded of what he is called to do as a Christian and reminded of the concerns of a good chunk of his base."

She continued, "If we want legislators to vote how we want them to, then we have to let them know we are paying attention."

## AN EARLY START

Meanwhile, nearly 100 student leaders from Nolan, who boarded Austin-bound buses at 5:30 a.m., participated in a mock hearing on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, which provides temporary deportation protection and work authorization for undocumented immigrants who entered the United States as children.

At midday, the students and advocates converged into a crowd of 2,000 for a rally on the steps of the Capitol, where each bishop from Texas introduced himself and encouraged the faithful to be witnesses for human life and dignity and to promote the common good.

At the rally, El Paso Bishop Mark Seitz said, “We are consistent in our love and respect for the dignity of life, especially of the most vulnerable. Catholic social teaching is based on that notion that human life and human dignity are inseparable. Every person, from the moment of conception until natural death, has that dignity.”

Speaking alongside the Texas bishops, Jennifer Carr Allmon, executive director of the TCCB, summarized several bills at a critical juncture in the legislative process, concluding, “As Catholics, we support life,

## WATCH THE VIDEO



There's more to this story. Check out the video and photo gallery of Advocacy Day at: [NorthTexasCatholic.org/video-gallery](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org/video-gallery)

families, immigrants, the poor, religious freedom, restorative justice, improving access to healthcare, education for all, and caring for God's creation.

“Today you are joining me in this necessary and critical role as advocates. . . . We contribute to the common good, not because everyone else is Catholic, but because that's what we do as Catholics,” she added.

Nolan sophomore Victoria Alford said seeing the unity at the rally among the bishops and lay Catholics hailing from El Paso to Tyler was a “testament to the greatness of our faith. The Church is a big community that you can't find anywhere else.”

Alford observed that her Catholic education taught “believers need to act on their faith. But today we got to go and experience that.”

## FAITH AND THE LAW

After the rally, the advocates resumed their legislative visits while Nolan students met with Bishop Michael Olson and State Representative Drew Springer from Muenster. Springer, whose three children attended Sacred Heart Catholic School in Muenster, explained a little about the legislative process, along with his philosophy and priorities since he was elected state representative in 2012.

“I compare [passing legislation] to baseball. I like to hit singles. I like to move the ball forward, make things better than they were before. And I don't let the perfect get in the way of doing good,” he explained to the students.

The legislator, who represents 22 counties in north and west Texas, continued. “So many times, people will say, ‘I want to end all abortions, period. If you do anything that just moves it [the legal right to abortion] from 20 weeks to 12 weeks, that's not good enough. You're a bad person because you didn't get it to zero.’

“I'll take what I can get, and what I think the courts will allow us to get, and what I think I can get from the legislature

**Continued on Page 18**



Catholic Charities Fort Worth's Angela Walters explained the bishops' positions on pending legislation with a member of Rep. Matt Kraus' staff. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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— how we can make things better instead of just staying with the status quo. That’s the way I philosophically try to legislate,” Rep. Springer summarized.

Bishop Olson reminded the students that they, like the legislators, have a civic duty. A few of the students are 18, and others will soon be, so he told them, “Vote your conscience. Be informed. You have a moral responsibility to vote, to take part in the common good of society.”

The students asked questions, centering on education and the intersection between faith and government. Rep. Springer surprised some students with the revelation that most legislators have a strong religious background. “I wish society had as much faith as we have on the House floor,” he said.

Springer concluded his 30-minute talk with the students by explaining how his faith influences his role in government.

“Faith is the absolutely the bedrock. Knowing where you come from, and knowing there is somebody bigger than

you and what you are trying to accomplish, keeps you focused on ‘What do I want it to be like in 10 years, 50 years, 500 years?’ It’s never about us. It’s got to be about the greater good.”

## A VOICE FOR OTHERS

At Catholic Charities Fort Worth, Fernandez works with the Padua Pilot, which offers intensive case management to help those living in poverty establish permanent financial self-sufficiency. Meeting with Rep. Parker and other legislators enabled her to share stories of her clients with those who enact policies that can have helpful or harmful repercussions for the poor.

Voicing their experiences, she hopes, will help the legislators “stay connected to the entirety of the people that they represent” and “look for ways to impact poverty by taking a long-term view, not just temporary help.”

Bishop Olson expressed similar thoughts on enacting policies to assist the marginalized. He said, “A rising tide lifts all boats, and that’s good news only

if you have a boat. There are some that are in situations that are so impoverished that people don’t have the boats to begin with. If you’re raising standards, people fall deeper into poverty. Catholic Charities Fort Worth, and some bills before us here, are precisely to enable people to be participants in society. It’s a great challenge.”

As Bob Walters, the pro-life team leader, made his rounds of the legislators, he felt the responsibility of being the voice for the 1.1 million Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Worth. “There’s a broad spectrum in our diocese — race, ethnicity, socioeconomics, age, gender. We are representing a lot of people.” In particular, he said, the unborn, those trapped in poverty, the imprisoned, and immigrants need someone to speak for them.

Being an advocate for the voiceless is part of our responsibility as Christians, said Vader, the schools advancement coordinator. “We need to get involved with the legislators as they make decisions that impact lives. We must make sure the Church’s point of view — Christ’s point of view — is at the forefront of their minds.” 🇺🇸

# Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Pric

Bishop Michael Olson addresses about 2,000 Catholics from across the state on the steps of the Texas Capitol on Advocacy Day March 26. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)





State Representative Drew Springer from Muenster met with about 100 Nolan Catholic School students and explained the legislative process, along with his philosophy and priorities. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

# Priorities for the 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session

In the 140 days of the legislative session, elected officials consider approximately 11,000 bills, roughly half of which will pass. The TCCB selected about 25 bills that advocates asked their legislators to support and co-sponsor, focusing on:

- **LIFE.** Prohibit abortion to the extent allowed under U.S. Supreme Court precedent, if *Roe v. Wade* is overruled in whole or in part. Penalize physicians who fail to render aid to babies born alive after a failed abortion; strengthen informed consent before an abortion.
- **EDUCATION.** Allow private schools to have access to state investigations into school staff and the do-not-hire registry. Expand misconduct reporting to include staff, not just certified teachers. Pass the comprehensive school finance bill to expand educational opportunities for all Texas children.
- **IMMIGRATION.** Improve care of unaccompanied migrant children; allow contact and visits with adult family members.
- **RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.** Reform the bail system to determine the amount based on whether an arrested person is a danger to the community or a flight risk, so the poor are not unduly penalized.
- **SOCIAL CONCERNS.** Strengthen anti-trafficking laws; adopt statewide payday and auto-title lending regulations; create a pilot program to foster long-term self-sufficiency through case management and a slow reduction of benefits.
- **RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.** Provide conscience protections to businesses and individuals to protect their free exercise of religion and speech.
- **CREATION.** Establish a disaster recovery task force; enhance drought and flood planning.

Details about these and many other bills, plus a link to contact your legislators, can be found at [TxCatholic.org](http://TxCatholic.org).



# RICH IN MERCY

Healing and forgiveness are there for the taking — the Divine Mercy devotion and Reconciliation are powerful means to obtain it

By **Mary Lou Seewoester**

**W**hen you enter the confessional at Our Mother of Mercy Parish in Fort Worth, the first thing you see is an enormous painting of Jesus in a white garment with red and white rays emanating outward: the Divine Mercy image.

Father Bart Jasilek, SVD, pastor of Our Mother of Mercy, believes there is a profound connection between Divine Mercy and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

“Confession is a beautiful sacrament of healing, and Divine Mercy is the messenger of that forgiveness,” he said. “God’s mercy is present in every sacrament, but especially in the sacrament of forgiveness. That’s what God did for us on the cross. That mercy is just shouting out for you. ‘Come and take it! I have it for free, for you!’”

Fr. Jasilek, a native of Poland, introduced Divine Mercy devotions to his parish in 2016, during the Jubilee Year of Mercy, his first year as pastor there. Since then, parishioners have continued the devotion by praying along with a recording of the Divine Mercy Chaplet before all weekend and weekday Masses while Fr. Jasilek hears confessions. On Fridays, a full

day of Adoration concludes with the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Benediction.

“If I was sent here during the Year of Mercy, to a parish named Our Mother of Mercy, and I am from Poland, where St. Faustina was the messenger of Divine Mercy, then it must be God’s will,” he said.

## A RICH HISTORY

The message and devotion to Jesus as the Divine Mercy is based on the writings of St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun, who in the 1930s began to receive extraordinary revelations from Jesus. Our Lord asked her to record the experiences in a diary, which ended up numbering 600 pages. Her diary sparked a great movement and focus on the abundant mercy of Jesus Christ that continues to this day.

Important to the devotion is the image of the Divine Mercy. St. Faustina first saw the Divine Mercy image in 1931 while praying in her cell at the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy Convent in Plock, Poland.

According to her diary, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, the Lord directed her to “paint an image according to the pattern you

see, with the signature: ‘Jesus, I Trust in You’” (*Diary*, 47-48).

## YOU'RE INVITED



On Divine Mercy Sunday (April 28) a special blessed image of Jesus, the

Lord of Divine Mercy, and a first-class relic of St. Faustina will be available for veneration at St. Peter Parish in Lindsay, 424 W. Main Street.

The service begins at 3 p.m., with confessions being heard from 2 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.



The Divine Mercy image at the University Catholic Community at the University of Texas at Arlington. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

The diary continues: “The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood, which is the life of souls. ... These two rays issued forth from the very depths of my tender mercy when my agonized Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross” (*Diary*, 299).

In 1935, St. Faustina received the words for the Divine Mercy Chaplet when a vision of an angel, sent to chastise a particular city, led her to pray for mercy. At first, her prayers were powerless, but then she found herself interiorly pleading with God in these words:

*“Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world; for the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us”* (*Diary*, 475).

The following day she received another interior message instructing her to add “and on the whole world” to the end of the prayer (*Diary* 476).

These became the words of the Divine Mercy Chaplet, which can be prayed, sung, or chanted using a rosary.

#### **DIVINE MERCY IN THE PEWS**

Father Jim Gigliotti, TOR, pastor of St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth, also has witnessed the grace of Divine Mercy in the confessional, particularly when people fear they can't be forgiven.

“Jesus says in the Divine Mercy Diary, there is no sin that is so scarlet that if the soul is contrite, they cannot be forgiven,” Fr. Gigliotti said. “He said to St. Faustina, ‘Tell the soul who approaches Me in the Tribunal of Mercy — that's His word for the confessional — ‘that

**Continued on Page 22**



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they are to imagine their sins falling like drops of rain and disappearing in an ocean of My mercy.”

Fr. Gigliotti stressed devotion to Divine Mercy also transforms lapsed Catholics and calms and comforts the sick and dying.

“I saw that when I introduced people to the Divine Mercy devotion, it brought a great deal of healing, relief, and comfort to them,” the pastor explained. “It changed their lives. It changed their perspectives and brought them closer to the Lord. It made them hungry once more and appreciative of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation.”

He recalled that one day while serving at a parish in Florida, he scanned the group of about 100 people at daily Mass and realized about 65 of them had been lapsed Catholics who returned to the Church because of Divine Mercy.

Vince Bonillo, a St. Andrew parishioner, was one such Catholic until he discovered the Divine Mercy Chaplet last fall at a Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) weekend.

“I had stopped praying and going to Mass,” he said. But then, his wife asked him to attend the CRHP weekend.

“God showed me grace and forgiveness... I learned so much about how great and forgiving God is. It has helped me become a stronger Catholic,” he said.

Kate Sweeney, a parishioner of St. Catherine of Siena in Carrollton, discovered Divine Mercy in 2013 while attending to her mother who was in hospice. During a visit from two of her cousins, they invited her to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

“We prayed it multiple

## LEARN MORE



Read *St. Faustina's Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul*, the firsthand account of the mystical — and mercy filled — experiences of the Polish nun.



Watch *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told* by Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC, who reveals the profound connection between Divine Mercy and Marian consecration.



Read *Dives in Misericordia (Rich in Mercy)*, the second encyclical by St. Pope John Paul II. It's a modern examination of the role of God's mercy and humanity's need for it.

times a day, but especially at 3 p.m.,” Sweeney said. When her mother passed away, she was praying the chaplet at her bedside. Though her mother had never mentioned Divine Mercy, Sweeney later found a copy of the Divine Mercy prayers with her mother's rosary.

Fr. Gigliotti explained why the Divine Mercy Chaplet is a powerful prayer for those who are dying: “Jesus says in the *Diary* that He Himself goes and presents the soul to the Father through the mercy of the cross. He Himself comes to the soul as they're dying,” he said.

Shortly after her mother's death, Sweeney joined a group of St. Catherine parishioners who pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 3 p.m. every Sunday in the parish chapel.

## A WEALTH OF GRACES

Fr. Gigliotti said St. Faustina's diary includes a request for the Church to pray



Mercy is never far away at Our Mother of Mercy Parish. The Divine Mercy image has two places of honor: next to the altar and in the confessional. Father Bartlomiej Jasielek (pictured), pastor, also likes to remind the faithful that God's mercy is extended through confession. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

a Divine Mercy Novena from Good Friday to the Sunday after Easter, now known as Divine Mercy Sunday. St. Pope John Paul II made Divine Mercy Sunday part of the official liturgical calendar in 2000 when he canonized St. Faustina.

He said Divine Mercy Sunday includes “a plenary indulgence — complete remission of temporal punishment due to sin.”

According to a 2002 apostolic decree, conditions for the Divine Mercy indulgence include sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion, and praying for the intentions of the pope, as well as participating in Divine Mercy prayers and devotions.

Fr. Gigliotti has offered the Divine Mercy Novena and Divine Mercy Sunday services in every parish he has served since he was introduced to it in 1978, including during his 20 years as pastor of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington.

Bonnie Irvine, a St. Catherine of Siena parishioner, said she participates in Divine Mercy devotions because “we're always asking God for something but don't often ask for His forgiveness. And it's deeper than just a prayer of petition. We're not just praying for ourselves. We're praying for everyone else too.”

“It's in the words of the prayer,” she said. “Have mercy on us and on the whole world.” 🇺🇸

# Keys to Stewardship

Knowing your gifts is the first step to finding your fit in God's community

Bishop Michael Olson delivers the keynote address at the Day of Renewal. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



By Matthew Smith

Members from 15 parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth reflected on several facets of stewardship during the fourth annual Diocesan Stewardship Day of Renewal held March 30 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller. Bishop Michael Olson and Archdiocese of Indianapolis Director of Catechesis Ken Ogorek led the discussions, which examined stewardship from both the personal and community levels.

Bishop Olson, while celebrating the Mass that opened the day's activities, contrasted the approach to God as taken by a Pharisee and a tax collector in *Luke 18:9-14*. The Pharisee boasts and holds himself above others while the tax collector offers a simple prayer of humility as he seeks mercy for his sinfulness.

"The Lord doesn't desire distance from us," Bishop Olson said. "Rather, He desires that we each draw closer to Him. Our acts of stewardship are not meant to keep God at a distance, nor are they meant for us to manipulate God to do what we want Him to do."

Those we admire we tend to do so from a distance, Bishop Olson said.

"The Lord desires followers, not admirers," Bishop Olson said. "Why we're here today is to understand the lens we use to view the world and how it can be used to strengthen our discipleship of the Lord. Also, what that means to the Church and how stewardship is looked at as part of our membership and discipleship."

Diocesan Director of Stewardship Diana Liska urged attendees to make the most of the day "as a day of spiritual renewal and fellowship, as well as a reminder that we're not alone in this journey."

Ogorek's first talk, "Growing Closer to God," touched upon the personal aspects of stewardship and discipleship and discerning one's place in the quilt of community.

"Days like this are great opportunities to revisit the basics to remind ourselves of things we probably already know," Ogorek said. "I don't know that I'll say one new thing today. But at times there's value in revisiting some of the basic things we lose track of because we're busy."

Help in discerning matters of stewardship and other spiritual questions is available through the Holy Spirit, Ogorek said.

"If you take anything from today, I hope it's to grow a bit more aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives and the power He has to renew us," Ogorek said. "It's never a question of the Holy Spirit not being there or having the ability and desire to do these things for us. I know in my case it's just a matter of I need to be

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Ken Ogorek, Director of Catechesis for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)







Agatha Agyemang, left, and Nichole Dadzie, sing and dance during a song by the Ghanaian choir during Sunday Mass at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, March 17. (NTC/Ben Torres)

# A JOYFUL SOUND

How liturgical music unites us  
and points us toward the divine

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

**S**inging is a gift that can express joy, trust, repentance, and love. It elevates the soul, making it “more sensitive to the voice of the Spirit,” Pope Francis told the Alumni of Heaven Choir Association during the group’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration last year. “Music and singing are capable of transmitting the beauty and strength of Christian love.”

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, diverse, dedicated parish choirs express the Good News in song and enhance the liturgy for Catholics across North Texas. The harmony of voices helps parishioners experience a holy moment in times of celebration, grief, and contemplation.

## **SUNG PRAYER SPEAKS TO THE SOUL**

“Most of the time, you don’t know what people come to Mass with, regarding their emotions and mindset. We hope to uplift them in whatever situation they are in,” explained Freda Breed, the director of music and liturgy at St. Maria Goretti Parish. “Sung prayer is just close to the heart. It’s a different avenue that speaks to the souls that gather to celebrate.”

The traditional, 38-member *Choro di pace* (Choir of Peace) is one of three choirs leading liturgies at the Arlington faith community. Dressed in red robes except during Advent and Lent, the eclectic mix of vocalists move from the sacristy to the choir loft in back of the church at the start of the 9 a.m. Mass, “so their voices are among the rest of the people during the gathering hymn,” the director continued. Wearing robes creates a sense of both outward and inward uniformity.

“We’re always working toward unity of sound,” Breed pointed out. “Dressing alike represents how important that is. There’s a unity in their sound, mission, and ministry. And there’s a unity in their faith.”

Hours of rehearsal are spent learning a repertoire of SATB (soprano/alto/tenor/bass) compositions from Gregorian chant to contemporary hymns, along with the theology behind the music chosen for a particular Sunday.

“We explore how a certain song reflects part of the liturgy,” she said, describing the faith formation aspect of the ministry. “The Psalms are reiterated

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in the songs we do.”

Parishioners sometimes approach the choir director to praise the choir’s artistry.

“If the music brings them joy, lifts them out of a dark place, or provides comfort, then I think our ministry is well received.”

### SPANISH CHOIR GROWS WITH PARISH

Incredible voices, skilled instrumentalists, and musical compositions from different Hispanic countries make the Spanish choir at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Grapevine a vibrant one, said Denise Brooks, the parish’s longtime director of music and liturgy.

“The repertoire is very inclusive and the quality of the music itself is excellent,” she enthused. “It is uplifting, encourages active participation, and is open to different types of Hispanic language.”

Ruth Rodriguez Yammine grew up in the parish and started the choir in the early 1980s as an 18-year-old with help from her talented family.

“I learned a lot about liturgy,” Yammine remembered, recalling the early days of the ministry. “We would sing traditional songs familiar to everybody and things we knew. It was a labor of love because we all loved to sing and used songs our parents taught us.”

As proximity to DFW International Airport boosted the parish membership, more people asked to join the ministry and the choir changed and grew. Today, a 10-person group, accompanied by musicians on bass, congas, guitar, and piano, leads the congregation during the Sunday 1 p.m. Spanish Mass.

“We now use new, more challenging music that’s still friendly to the ear and catchy for the congregation,” said Yammine, who has served as choir director 37 years. “And we do a lot of styles — not just Mexican but Puerto Rican, merengue, Colombian, and Honduran. That makes it easier for people to participate.”

Singing along with the Spanish choir deepens the parishioners’ involvement in the liturgy. Yammine chooses music that relates to the Gospel and readings “to reiterate the message and prompt

reflection,” she emphasized.

“We just lead. The [congregants] are here to help us,” she asserted. “The voices that respond are amazing! When you hear the congregation singing, that’s when you know you’ve done your job.”

### GOSPEL MUSIC INSPIRES WORSHIP

In southeast Fort Worth, the rousing music and arrangements featured in the Mass of New Beginnings empower the people of God to pray at Our Mother of Mercy (OMM) Parish. Composed by W. Clifford Petty, the gospel/jazz compositions create an experience of liturgical praise and worship welcomed by members of the predominantly African-American faith community.

“We’ve been using the Mass of New Beginnings for the past couple of years because parishioners really like it,” said Zenovia Collins, the choir’s pianist and coordinator. “We also perform it at the annual MLK (Martin Luther King, Jr.) Mass.”

Christian lyrics and an easy, lively

**Continued on Page 28**







## PHOTO GALLERY



To view more photos, visit [NorthTexasCatholic.org](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org) and click on 'Photo Gallery.'

**LEFT:** Choir members sing during the 9 a.m. Mass at St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington on Sunday, March 3. (NTC/ Kevin Bartram)

**BOTTOM LEFT:** Our Mother of Mercy choir director Zenovia Collins plays a lively song at the end of the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Mass in January. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Choir director Ruth Yammine conducts the St. Francis of Assisi choir during Sunday Mass April 7 in Grapevine. (NTC/Ben Torres)





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tempo entice people to participate in the liturgy.

“For new members visiting the church, the music influences them to return,” the choir director explained. “It’s upbeat and everyone in the church sings.”

During the Christmas season, the choir performs traditional African-American carols like “Mary Had a Baby” and “Prepare Ye the Way” — a hymn by jazz composer and former OMM music minister Terry Hutchinson. The 15 vocalists and musicians that form OMM’s choir gather each week at the 10 a.m. Mass except for the fourth Sunday of the month, which is reserved for the children’s choral group.

Collins appreciates the bonds of trust and friendship that have grown between choir members over the years. “They’re a dedicated, friendly bunch of people.”

Hearing the sound of gospel music at Our Mother of Mercy is an experience everyone should have, Collins said effusively.

“It’s very inclusive and rhythmic,” she added. “We do different kinds of songs so everyone will hear something they’ll like.”

### A GIFT OF VOICE AND SONG

Sixty families at St. Michael Parish have ties to Tonga but many others have come to appreciate the island nation’s music and traditions, thanks to a 5 p.m. Mass celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. A choir leads the congregation in Tonganese melodies and songs composed by the late Sir Sofele Kakala. Pope John Paul II named the renowned choirmaster to the Papal Knighthood of St. Gregory in 1986 for this service to the Catholic Church.

“We sing *a cappella*. There are no instruments,” explained Deacon Sangote Ulupano who serves as a coordinator between the Tongan community and the parish. “It enhances the liturgy a lot for them because the songs are in a familiar language. The Tongan choir is a gift of voice and song.”

Formed in the early 1980s, the choir has 30 members and adheres to a four-part harmony. On Christmas and Easter, the group dons native apparel including the *ta’ovala* — a mat worn around the waist to show respect to God and authority.

“When people hear them sing, they are just blown away because their sound



The Suoi Thieng choir from Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington performs during a Sunday Mass March 24. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Cassie Martinez and other choir members sing during Mass at St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth March 3. (NTC/Jayne Donahue)





## WATCH THE VIDEO



Listen to the powerful melodies of the Tongan choir at St. Michael Parish: [NorthTexasCatholic.org/video-gallery](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org/video-gallery)

is amazing,” said Joanne Werner, St. Michael’s director of liturgy and music. “They sing full throttle, unaccompanied.”

Because choir members don’t read western musical notations, they created their own musical notations for rhythms and pitches. A lot of parishioners call the church office to find out when the Tongans are singing.

“They don’t need any instrumentation because their voices are their instruments,” Werner observed. “People are moved by what they hear.”

### SONGS, TRADITIONS BOND GHANAISANS

Visitors to the 1 p.m. Sunday Mass celebrated by the Ghanaian Catholic community at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, clap along to the lively, spirited music resounding in the chapel during the

offertory. The choir, outfitted in maroon robes edged in a vibrant kente strip, sways to the beat of a tambourine as it leads the congregation down the aisle toward the collection basket.

“God is good. God is kind. God is wonderful. Those are the words to the music you hear that brings us together,” said a parishioner. “Whatever you are going through in life, it teaches you something.”

The Ghanaian Catholic community has been a vital part of St. Joseph parish for 40 years. The Catholic Church is strong in Ghana, and coming together to sing native songs is central to fellowship for parishioners, according to choir member Philip Baiden.

“Everyone feels at home,” he pointed out. “Ghanaians are excited they can come and listen to songs and follow worship like we did in Ghana. It brings people to church

so it’s a form of evangelization.”

Although Ghana is a multilingual country, *Tivi* is the language used to celebrate Mass. Waving a white handkerchief during the Sanctus is one of the African customs enriching the liturgy.

“We’re exalting God,” said choir director Ben Ababioh explaining the tradition. “The white handkerchiefs symbolize the greatness of God.”

Sixteen singers and musicians are mainstays of the choir but the ensemble can grow to 35 during the summer months, he added. Members of the Ghanaian choir join the parish’s Bakhita African choir for a quarterly Mass for Africa. The special liturgy prays for those suffering from poverty, war, and hunger on the African continent and draws worshippers from around the Metroplex.

### INTRINSICALLY PRAYERFUL, MEDITATIVE

Considered the first proper liturgical music of the Roman Catholic Church, Gregorian chant dates back to the first millennium. Today, the pairing of simple, monophonic tones with sacred text is an art form.

Gregorian chant is intrinsically prayerful, “so it helps the congregation get into a reflective mood,” said Ferdinand Velasco, a choir member at St. Benedict Parish where liturgies are celebrated in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite (Latin Mass). “What we are actually chanting are prayers of the Mass. It’s what is prescribed in the rubrics of the liturgy.”

Named after a pope, St. Gregory the Great, the melodic, almost mysterious sounds were a staple at Catholic Masses

**Continued on Page 30**



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until the Second Vatican Council when the Latin Mass was changed to the vernacular of each country. Pope Benedict XVI ratified provisions for the regular celebration of the Latin Mass in July 2007.

Accompanied by an organ, except during Lent when Gregorian chant is sung *a cappella*, St. Benedict's choir consists of four men with several women lending their voices to selected hymns.

Intrigued by its history, long melodic lines, and prayerful tone, Catholics are naturally drawn to Gregorian chant, said choir member Chris Winn. Musically inclined since his days in the Notre Dame High School band, the Wichita Falls native adds bass vocals to the choir.

"It's very meditative," he added. "In addition to a distinct liturgical function, Gregorian chant has a completely different cadence from modern music."

The beauty of Gregorian chant lies in its simplicity.

"Both Masses at St. Benedict are crowded," said Malinda Crumley, one of the parish's female vocalists. "People like the music because it is solemn, peaceful, and reverent. Our first Christmas here was the most beautiful Mass I have ever attended."

## GLORIFYING GOD WITH MUSIC

Bach Phan is a skilled composer, pianist, and guitarist, but he compares himself to a gardener when talking about his work with three adult, one teen, and two children's choirs at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington.

"Everybody's voice is like a different kind of flower in

the garden of sacred music," he mused. "They are all unique and a gift from God. My job is to create a beautiful vase [of blooms]."

Deeply rooted in the culture, Vietnamese music often uses a pentatonic (five-tone) scale creating a distinct, ethnic sound.

"But it varies," explained the parish's music minister. "We also use Gregorian chant and are influenced by more popular melodies. It can be ethnic, folksy, or simple, and represents the people well."

The recessionary hymn is always a Marian song and reflects the strong devotion the Vietnamese have to the Blessed Mother.

All the choirs at Vietnamese Martyrs come together for three special occasions each year — Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving festivities celebrating the parish. Women dress in the Vietnamese national garment *ao dai* and the troupe sings chorale music by two of Phan's favorite composers: the late Father Linh Duy Ngo and Hai Linh.

"Their compositions are geared toward the western SATB style but keep their unique, ethnic flavor," Phan said.

Every August, the music minister leads a large contingent of parishioners from Vietnamese Martyrs to Marian Days in Carthage, Mo., where his adult and children's choirs perform for an international audience numbering as many as 100,000 people.

"Everyone involved in the sacred music program at our church is a volunteer," he enthused. "That's our tradition. We do it to glorify our Lord. In return, He gives us blessings." ✝



Attendance at the annual Diocesan Stewardship Day of Renewal has grown each of the last four years. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

### Keys to Stewardship From Page 23

more aware of that and open to it.”

Ogorek pointed out how time spent with a loved one — be it quiet time, thanksgiving, or conversation — aligns to the various methods of prayer to God and how those methods bring us closer to God and increase our zeal for stewardship and discipleship.

“The important thing to remember is that even though God doesn’t send post-it notes, He’s constantly reaching out to us,” Ogorek said. “We have to pay attention and be persistent.”

Ogorek spoke of the role charisms play in elevating stewardship to the community level.

“The Holy Spirit gives everyone at least one personalized gift that they are to use in serving others,” Ogorek said. “Being aware of your charisms helps you figure out, by God’s grace, where you fit in this puzzle of family life, parish life, and the broader community.”

Ogorek concluded by stressing that teamwork is key to successful stewardship.

“Another person is never a means to an end,” he said. “We don’t use people to accomplish something, even if we’re trying to accomplish something good. People are always ends in themselves to be loved and collaborated with.”

St. Michael Parish of Bedford Stewardship Committee Chairman Tracy Gomes said he’s attended all four renewal days.

“It was great to see the turnout, and this was larger than the others I’ve attended,” Gomes said. “I thought the theme of drawing closer to God and collaborating with others was great too.”

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioner Roberta Walker, who is involved in several ministries, gave the day high marks.

“This is my first time to attend and I loved it,” Walker said. “I thought the topics were appropriate for the Lenten season but also for building community stewardship throughout the year.”

The series, Bishop Olson said, has enriched the diocese.

“It’s enabled us to become a little more focused in our direction and priorities,” Bishop Olson said. “I appreciated what [Ogorek] had to say, especially in the development of spirituality. We have to have a self-awareness before we can give of ourselves.” 📍

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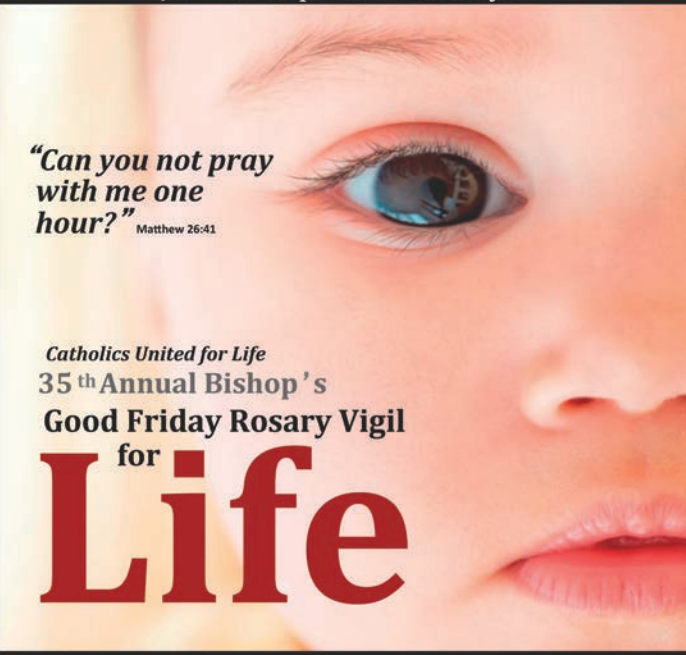
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# The CASE for LIFE



## PART 3

My journey to uncover the inherent value of unborn human life

By Juan Guajardo

**M**acaria carried a lot of guilt and suffering — an oppressive amount — until a fateful day when she took her then three-year-old son to Mass. She would often seek out the back pew, or better yet the narthex of the church. Although she sought God, her emotional strife wouldn't permit her to get any closer.

That day as they stood in the narthex, her son grabbed a brochure, one that advertised Rachel Ministries, a Catholic outreach to help heal post-abortive women and men. Without her knowing, the young boy snuck it into her purse. After they went home, she reached into her bag and found the brochure. Her son told her, "It's for you, *Mami*."

She summoned up the courage, dialed the Rachel Ministries number, and went on her first Rachel's Vineyard retreat. With that, she began a healing journey that brought her the peace she couldn't find after going through multiple abortions.

Seven years after the fact, she told me, "God knows what mission or call each person has and, for me, that has become defending something sacred: life. How have my children been

blessings? They've been my salvation. If [my son] hadn't given me that brochure, I wouldn't be here."

I first met Macaria in 2009. My interview with her was the first time I'd experienced abortion as something close and very real. No longer did it feel like a distant statistic or some story in the news.

During our almost two-hour meeting, she opened a window for me to view the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain she'd carried for many years as a result of her abortions. Her testimony hit me like an asteroid. I shuddered to think how much harder it hit her.

Yet, the woman in her late 30s who sat before me carried herself with dignity and her brown eyes twinkled with hope as she spoke about God's mercy and love and how she experienced that for herself.

Here is where we resume the Case for Life. By now, we've discussed the scientific evidence which verified that human life begins at the moment of conception. We've analyzed the rebuttal evidence which stated that even the human embryo — as foreign as he or she may seem to us — should be considered a person. Now, we consider the eyewitness testimony. In a court of law, juries tend to pay a great deal of

attention to eyewitness testimony — and for good reason. When uncontaminated and properly tested, eyewitness testimony is highly reliable.<sup>1</sup>

And while we can draw from a wide range of eyewitness testimony regarding abortion (the full text of the Gosnell Grand Jury report, or more recently the Center for Medical Progress' investigative footage), we focus here on the most directly impacted — outside of the unborn child — the women.

Their testimony, for me, proved invaluable in deciding: Is a fetus or embryo morally equivalent to a newborn infant, and therefore should the unborn child's life be defended from the moment of conception?

### THE EYEWITNESSES

While Macaria's witness shocked me in terms of the pain she endured years after her abortions, I had run into a dilemma. What I read in the news didn't seem to match her account. Story after story seemed to present abortion as a "health decision" with no significant detrimental effects.

Perhaps you've heard of studies claiming that post-abortive women

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experience no negative psychological or emotional problems after the “procedure.” That’s what I was seeing.

But as I looked closer in the years following my interview with Macaria, I found that many of the studies were dismissed for problematic methodologies. A study that would have been relevant had Surgeon General C. Everett Koop followed through with it, was instead a non-starter, with Koop passing the buck.<sup>2</sup> In 2008, a task force report by the American Psychological Association popped up, concluding “there is no credible evidence that a single elective abortion of an unwanted pregnancy in and of itself causes mental health problems for adult women.” It was the big fish in the small but growing pond of expert literature and findings.

But that 2008 APA report was heavily criticized by both pro-life and pro-abortion advocates for relying solely on “researchers holding strong pro-choice views” to interpret scientific evidence pertaining to mental health and abortion.<sup>3</sup> Other critics pointed out its selective use of a single foreign study and the deliberate exclusion of other important studies which contradicted the APA agenda.<sup>4</sup> The APA bias toward abortion has been documented in the 2005 book *Destructive Trends in Mental Health: The Well Intentioned Path to Harm* by Rogers H. Wright and Nicholas A. Cummings, and by researchers like Priscilla K. Coleman, Warren Throckmorton, and Professor Rachel McNair, an APA member on the Division 48 board.

Unfortunately, studies like the APA’s aren’t difficult to find, as David C. Reardon pointed out in his October 2018 study, “The Abortion and Mental Health Controversy.” They’re a dime a dozen because similarly to global warming proponents and minimalists, there is division and bias amongst researchers when it comes to abortion. So they report the findings in either a way that minimizes or emphasizes the “negative outcomes associated with abortion.” On top of that, there are semantic issues (poorly defined terms) and challenges with research (many abortions take place in free-standing



The damage abortion wreaks on the souls of post-abortive women and men is a truth the Catholic Church has warned about for hundreds of years. The Church doesn't stop there though, various Catholic ministries exist to help mothers in crisis pregnancies and provide continual support.

clinics where follow-up is difficult, many women self-censor, many others drop out of a study). Then there’s the fact that randomized studies are impossible (and quite illegal and immoral). Furthermore, experts agree that many women may not immediately show grief, regret, or pain, which makes it even trickier for researchers to gauge.<sup>5</sup>

Broadly speaking, Reardon, who has studied the issue and closely analyzed multiple studies across a 26-year span, says there is at least some consensus from both sides of the aisle, so to speak. That is this: “Despite these problems, the trend in findings is very clear. Women who abort are at higher risk of many mental health problems.”

Collectively, the literature across decades also points to this: “There are no findings of mental health benefits associated with abortion.”

Of course, there’s no need to tell that to women like Macaria, or the several thousand who’ve shared their testimony on awareness websites like Silent No More and Hope After Abortion and who have

spoken on Capitol Hill. The mere existence of post-abortive ministries such as Rachel Ministries, Heartbeat International, and Care Net backs up the common sense finding that Reardon’s analysis reached.

Macaria was someone who had strained relationships with her family and loved ones, contemplated suicide,

went through anxiety and depression, suffered flashbacks and nightmares (especially on the anniversaries of her abortions), and suffered multiple miscarriages as a result of the uterine scarring left by abortion.

And it wasn’t just her.

Betsy Kopor, program director for Rachel Ministries in the Diocese of Fort Worth, has worked with post-abortive women and men for 20 years. She estimates working with 7,000 clients seeking healing after abortion.

In her experience, “abortion is a traumatic wound and people react differently.” She testifies to the existence of “post-abortion syndrome” — a catch-all term that includes symptoms common to many post-abortive women: regret, guilt,

### ABORTION HEALING



If you’re struggling with the wounds of abortion, Rachel Ministries can help. Visit [RachelTX.org](https://www.RachelTX.org) or call 817-923-4757. It’s confidential and non-judgmental.



(CNS Photo/Dave Hibcock/The Catholic Spirit)

depression, shame, anxiety, suicidal ideations, and PTSD. “And it’s like a continuum from they can’t even function to they can function okay. But it bothers them and they push it down.”

Some coping mechanisms include avoiding church, growing distant from God, but also going out of their way to avoid seeing the clinic where they had their abortion. “Some women can’t stand to see babies or pregnant women,” Kopor said.

She should know. Kopor herself went through an abortion and the hell it wrought before finding the healing of Rachel Ministries and making it her life’s work to help other women recover from abortion and, hopefully, to avoid it in the first place.

“I see women that are hurting after abortion, I see the healing too, so I know it’s real,” Kopor explained.

The faces she works with in counseling and on retreats reflect the outcomes recorded by one of the few qualitative studies done on post-abortive women, published in 2017. Rather than attempting to force responses into a multiple-choice format, this study by Professor Priscilla Coleman differed in the open-ended approach it took.<sup>6</sup> Asked the most significant positive outcomes that had come from the decision to abort, a third of women responded along these lines: “None, there are no positives. My life is no better, it is much worse. I carry the pain of a child lost forever.”

Their testimony drove home what’s at stake in an abortion: Nothing less than a human child.

How could it be otherwise?

If it was just tissue, or a potential person, as abortion advocates declare, why were the consequences so devastating for a woman? If we granted their euphemisms saying the woman had just had “a procedure” to remove a “mass of tissue,” why was the reaction so extreme? The outcome I had seen wasn’t proportionate to the mere action of removing a “product of conception.” Repression, intellectualization, and rationalization wouldn’t be common “defense” mechanisms for these men and women if what was at stake was “a pile of cells.”

As Archbishop Fulton Sheen once wrote, “The conscience tells us when we do wrong so we feel as if we’d broken a bone on the inside....Thanks to the power of self-reflection, we can see ourselves, particularly at night.” To downplay the pain of these women and countless more by obfuscating the reality of abortion would be a serious disservice to them and to those encountering that decision in the future. The perhaps well-intentioned lie abortion advocates try to sell is not a true cure for their pain. The true cure lies with God, Kopor explained. Of course, there’s no need for fellow Christians to cast

stones either. In the words of Macaria, “There are no stones left. I already threw them all at myself.”

## THE HEALING

That’s where people like Kopor and Macaria come in with merciful embraces, a shoulder to lean on, and a gentle nudge toward the Divine Physician. “I’m not a theologian, but I can help somebody meet Christ for the healing,” Kopor said.

Since experiencing God’s healing mercy at a Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat 17 years ago, Macaria hasn’t stopped volunteering at the ministry, helping bring the Spanish-language component to the Diocese of Fort Worth 10 years ago.

“It completely turned my life around,” she said of the retreat. She acknowledges her abortions were “incredibly painful, erroneous, and complicated” decisions. “But a merciful and good God exists and I’m going to receive His healing.”

Not just hosting weekend retreats in English and Spanish, Rachel Ministries also provides resources like trained counselors, all in a confidential, non-judgmental setting.

## THE VERDICT

After gathering evidence from both sides over a period of years, I had seen and learned a lot. The dozens and dozens of pages of compiled evidence shouted from the rooftops: Abortion isn’t a choice; it’s the taking of a human life. How had I not seen it before? Perhaps part of the blame lies in “political correctness” or in the massive and well-funded efforts by the abortion industry to obfuscate the reality of human life at its early stages and paint it as something else, something misleading. I don’t bring these up as excuses, but rather to point out the danger faced by inconvenient truths in our “me-first” society. I could go on, but the deceptions crafted by the abortion industry have been touched on in detail elsewhere. Just ask Abby Johnson, whose story of Planned Parenthood director turned pro-life advocate premiered on the big screen in March.

At any rate, I had found the truth. This, of course, was a truth that the Church had preached all along: “The first right of the human person is his life. He has other goods and some are more precious, but this one is fundamental — the condition of all the others. Hence it must be protected above all others.”<sup>7</sup> Human life is inviolable because it comes from God and belongs to God. God is its beginning and its sole end (*CCC 2258*).

As different as an embryo or fetus seems — he or she is our neighbor. We are their keeper. It’s a truth I now like to share every chance I get. 🇺🇸

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Fr. Moon celebrates a weekly all-school Mass at Nolan Catholic High School in addition to daily Mass to begin the morning.  
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

# *The Light of the Moon*

Father Maurice Moon swings for the fences, relying on God’s grace to encourage fervent faith at Nolan Catholic High School

**By Susan Moses**

**F**ather Maurice Moon, the chaplain of Nolan Catholic High School, keeps two items on his desk within easy reach: his stole for hearing confessions and his baseball glove for team practice.

The stole helps him accomplish priority

number one — the salvation of souls. “If I can get people to go to confession regularly, to have devotion to the Eucharist, to have a daily prayer life, that’s going to help a lot in that end goal,” he said.

And the baseball glove helps, too. He’s found “kids sitting in the classroom are a little depressed and unresponsive. But, when kids run around, they have their heart

rate going and they’re just more talkative. It’s a great time to talk with them and see how things are going. We have really good conversations.”

Fr. Moon’s appointment at the Fort Worth school began in July 2018, shortly after his May 19 ordination. The assignment was unexpected, but welcome.

“Usually, priests are assigned to a parish

for a year or two as an associate pastor or parochial vicar, so it was big to learn I was coming here right off the bat.

“I had a strong desire to help these kids come to know Jesus and His love and remain a Catholic after high school. I was worried that I would not do a good job,” said the priest, remembering his first thoughts on being Nolan’s chaplain. “There’s a lot of responsibility, but I just trust in God’s grace, and God’s grace has done a lot through me. I’m really grateful for that.”

Fr. Moon has built on the good foundation established by Father Matthew Tatyrek, who served as Nolan’s chaplain during the 2017-18 school year.

Students, staff, and parents have ample access to the sacraments — daily Mass at 7 a.m., a weekly all-school Mass, First Friday Masses followed by Eucharistic Adoration, and twice-weekly scheduled Reconciliation. Plus, Fr. Moon maintains his door is always open for the penitential sacrament.

“It’s a great opportunity to restore that friendship [with God] again, and to receive the graces to get stronger against those temptations that might come up in the future. We receive great healing in the sacrament and I encourage the kids to come frequently,” the priest said.

He installed a drape for those who prefer to confess anonymously, explaining, “It gives kids confidence. They are already a little uncomfortable about having to confess their sins. Why not make it easier?”

Olga Watson, director of campus ministry, has seen a line of kids stretch down the hall for Reconciliation on First Friday. “The students like being around him and like him as a confessor. They encourage their friends to go,” she explained.

Fr. Moon fondly remembers a First Friday where he heard confessions for 6.5 hours straight.

Reconciliation is critical to Fr. Moon’s second priority: helping students discern their calling.

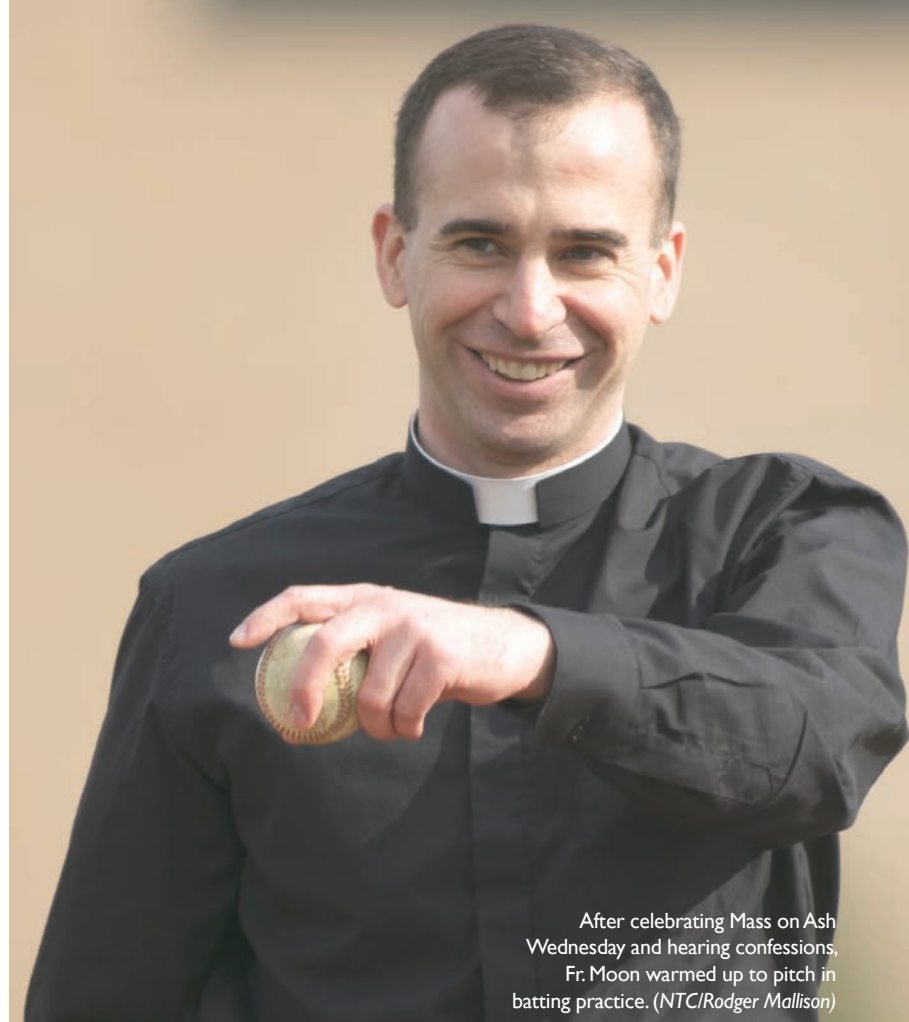
He said, “If you’re in a state of grace, praying every day, and having that relationship with God, it just becomes easier to know your calling.” Retreats, visits with seminarians, and consistent prayer help students consider a religious vocation.

When Fr. Moon’s not absolving teens, he might be hitting grounders to them, dropping by rehearsal, or leading his discipleship group or philosophy club.

Fr. Moon admitted it can be a challenge to determine “Where am I most needed? Am I in the exact spot God wants me to be? There are so many different things I can get plugged into.”

But his “all-access pass” approach to being the chaplain helps the priest build relationships with the students.

Watson has observed that the students are



After celebrating Mass on Ash Wednesday and hearing confessions, Fr. Moon warmed up to pitch in batting practice. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

“comfortable with him being around. They talk to him just like a normal person,” said the campus ministry director and mother to three students at the school.

According to Watson, the students’ trust in Fr. Moon has made them receptive to his invitations, from becoming an altar server to playing pick-up basketball.

Fr. Moon admitted that he has been a little surprised by how receptive students are, despite the normal difficulties of the teenage years and the values of society. “They want to have conversations and figure out ways to help their spiritual life and to grow in love of Christ.

“God is working in people’s lives, especially the youth. No matter all the craziness in the Church right now, no matter all the crazy messages in the world, people will still hear Christ’s voice and be inspired by Him and want to live a life for Him,” said the 33-year-old.

The sports-loving priest helped

train the fall baseball team. Baseball coach and business teacher Joe Weik noticed his impact. Prayer said before and after practice grew more mindful, and “the boys began to play for each other, instead of just playing for themselves,” said the coach, who graduated from Nolan in 2006.

Plus, the coach recalled, the left-handed priest would occasionally take batting practice and swing for the fence. “So I’d tell the boys, ‘Take a big swing like Fr. Moon!’”

With the school year drawing to a close, Fr. Moon reflected on his “joy-filled and busy” year at Nolan. He credited advice from Fr. Tatyrek, Nolan administrators, and Bishop Olson has helped him move toward his mission — “to help this school be Catholic, and be fervently Catholic.” 🇺🇸

#### PHOTO GALLERY



To view more photos, visit [NorthTexasCatholic.org](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org) and click on ‘Photo Gallery.’





# A Light Has Dawned

Columnist Callie Nowlin walks us through the 'mother of all vigils'

**I**n Lent we remember a time when all creation awaited the working out of the salvation of the Lord. We endeavor to walk faithfully with the Lord, awaiting the manifestation of Christ's work accomplished in the dark of that blessed Easter night. Many prophets and righteous people longed to see the Easter celebration. As they journeyed, weighed down by the burden that sin brings, they yearned in their hearts, "How long, O Lord?" (*Psalm 13:1*).

We as a people of God remember this as we pilgrimage through the darkness of Lent and gather together to celebrate the triumph of Christ risen from the dead. The wonderful triumph of Christ over sin is dramatically shown each Easter Vigil as the priest and a few faithful gather in the dark dispersed by the Easter fire — which in ancient times would have been lit late into the evening, even close to midnight. This surrounding physical darkness reminds us of the oppression of sin, and the flame declares that Christ vanquishes the power of the darkness of sin.

All the while, the faithful are gathered in the church waiting with hope and silently praying for the breaking dawn of the Light of Christ at Easter. And this candle bearing the

Light of Christ is what the deacon carries triumphantly from the Easter fire, processing toward the altar. From this candle, the flame is passed from person to person, and as the flame flickers and spreads, it scatters the darkness in the sacred building. In this first light of Easter morning, the deacon sings triumphantly, announcing with great solemnity that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and calling everyone to praise the Lord of Hosts. While the faithful are still holding their candles, we pray with him that this holy building shake with joy.

With this Easter Proclamation completed, the solemn reading of the Word of God begins with up to seven readings from the Old Testament. The light of the proclamation of Jesus Christ and His triumph over sin and death illuminate these readings. These readings recall that throughout salvation history, beginning at creation, God has led up to and pointed to this point in history. The following two readings from the New Testament include a final reminder of the seriousness of Baptism; those having been baptized are expected to live as one dead to sin and alive in Christ. The Gospel acclamation of Easter Sunday ends

Continued on Page 40

## THE STEPS

Start by using the steps below to reflect on the corresponding Scripture verses. Then read Callie's meditations, reflecting on them slowly.



### LECTIO

First read the passage, noting phrases that move your heart.



### MEDITATIO

Secondly, ponder these words and ask God in prayer, "What do you desire that I hear in this?"



### ORATIO

Third, speak back to the Lord as your heart is moved.



### CONTEMPLATIO

Finally, be still trusting in His presence. Simply rest in the Word of God.



From Page 39

with Mary Magdalene who is alone at the empty tomb of Jesus.

After the homily, the catechumens, unbaptized, are then called forward to profess their faith in Christ and to renounce Satan. These who have journeyed long and eagerly to Christ at last take their final steps to the font of Baptism and oil of Confirmation (chrism). Then as a newly united family, one Church, we stand to renew our own baptismal promises. In doing so, we stand in gratitude to worship God and to pray for our newest brethren in Baptism.

The night culminates with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Since Holy Thursday there has been no Mass. On Good Friday we remembered the pain of His passion and death. This is the first Easter Eucharist and one filled with the joy of the resurrection. Christ is present. The Lord has truly risen. God has truly come to abide in His faithful.

But as marvelous as this is, this is just the daybreak of a new Easter season. These newly initiated Catholics — through the sacraments — have been enfolded into the very paschal mystery of Christ! Now is the time we, as one, celebrate and unpack the wonderful Easter mysteries.

In the light of Easter, we allow Jesus again to change our lives and our hearts. In the following series I invite you to meditate deeply with me on two readings from the Vigil and the Gospel reading for Easter morning. 🇺🇸



**Callie Nowlin, MTS**, is a convert turned Director of Religious Education, catechist, and blogger with a passion for Scripture and helping others on their journey toward Christ.

## Both Victim and Priest

Second Reading for April 20, 2019  
Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter



*Genesis 22:1-18*

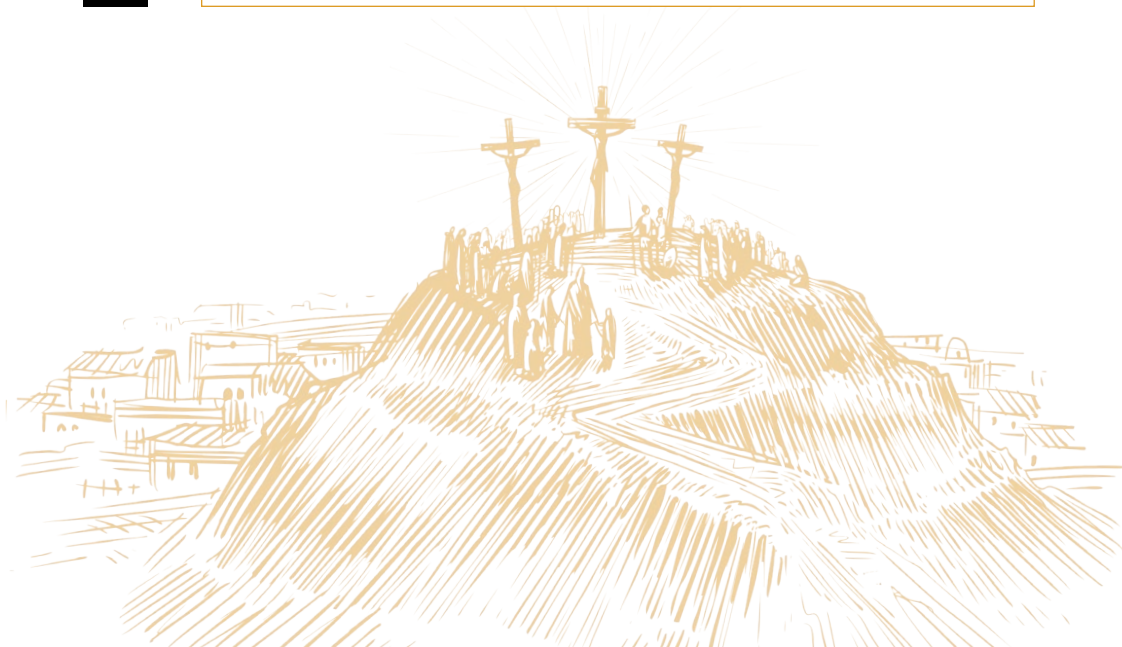
As one of the first readings of the vigil, the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac is recalled, which in many ways both foretells and is perfected by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

In his old age, Abraham was promised a son not only to continue his family name but that through him he would become the father of nations. To the ancient mind, and especially in these circumstances, to give up his son would have meant to be asked to give up this promise. To lose his son would have been to lose himself.

Ancient people for better or worse intuitively understood that the only authentic sacrifice to God, to whom we owe our life, would have to be precious enough to represent our entire lives. But God does not want the spillage of the blood of Isaac. He wants our faith, gratitude, and obedience, which is why He provides a substitute of a ram to stand in Isaac's place, to symbolize that which is so precious as to represent our very selves. Though


Abraham offered his mortal son up to God, the Lord held back the hand of Abraham for He knew a far better sacrifice was to come. God knew that one day He would give up His only begotten and immortal Son as a sacrifice for all of us.

Both Isaac and Jesus willingly were bound for the sacrifice. And they both carried the wood for the sacrifice up Mount Moriah, which would be later known as the location of the temple in Jerusalem (*cf. 2 Chronicles 3:1*). As such, in making the distinct act of preparing for the sacrifice, they both act as victim and priest. However, unlike Isaac, Jesus approached freely and with full knowledge of what the sacrifice would require of Him. Also, unlike Isaac, Jesus did in fact brave the pangs of death and accomplished the sacrifice. God returned Isaac to Abraham in fulfillment of the promise of God, whereas Jesus resurrected from the dead and in so doing stands eternally as our High Priest. 🇺🇸



## I Will Take You From the Nations

Seventh Reading for April 20, 2019  
Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter

 *Ezekiel 36:16-17; 18-28*

The Liturgy of the Word is now ending, and the catechumens come ever closer to the sacrament of Baptism, closer to the long-awaited Christ. The last of the Old Testament readings of the Easter Vigil is a prophecy of the coming Christ, in which we hear a clear reminder that we were born and lived far from God, in a land of sin.

Through the sacrament of Baptism, the catechumens will soon be welcomed into the family of God, which means a complete turning away from those foreign lands and all their idols. However, this change is not a mere relocation but a movement and call to radical fidelity. “You will be my people, and I will be your God.” The impending sacraments come with the expectation that afterwards the newly initiated will live faithful to the One True God and be recognizable as His people.

In our life when we are asked questions, there is an expectation that we speak truthfully. We instinctively know that we should let our “yes mean yes” and our “no mean no” (*cf. Matthew 5:37*). How sincere are we when we’re asked questions before God in the liturgy? Every week we declare the Creed proclaiming our belief in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in His One Church on earth. At the Easter Vigil, these newly baptized will say this same Creed, this same profession of faith, for the first time in union with us and as an expression of their baptismal faith. Since in the liturgy and the sacraments we are approaching God, we should do so with sincerity of heart. Let us approach with humble gratitude the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — who out of His love for us did not abandon us among the nations, but rather calls us out of darkness that we may worship Him in spirit and truth. ✚

## While it Was Still Dark

Gospel Reading for April 21, 2019  
Gospel for Easter Sunday

 *John 20: 1-9*

This reading is the first proclamation of the Gospel after the Easter Vigil, and on this Easter morning we recall the first witnesses to the empty tomb and the resurrection.

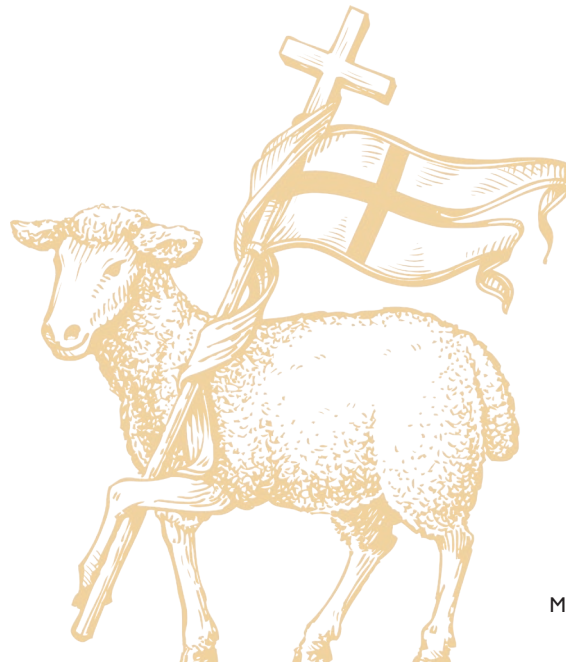
Mary Magdalene was among the few disciples who stayed at the Blessed Virgin’s side on Good Friday. There she saw the very suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. Thus in the darkness of the pre-dawn morning she sought to steal away silently to mourn at the grave of Jesus.

While the darkness of Holy Saturday still loomed, she quietly came to the tomb of Jesus. In this combination of despair and grief, surely she was bewildered when she saw the large stone had been removed from Jesus’ grave. In the face of confusion and anguish she ran to Peter and the apostle John for help. How beautiful it is that she ran to those who had been entrusted with stewardship of the mysteries of Christ.

While it was still dark, still heartbroken and laden with grief, she ran to the side of Jesus. Soon, John and Peter join her to witness and give testimony to the empty tomb, but at this point they had no answer, as they had not yet encountered the resurrected Christ. Only with the light of Christ in the resurrection does the suffering and grief of the Passion of Christ and the darkness of sin make sense.

In the darkness of Holy Saturday, in the silence of the unknown, in the heaviness of grief, Mary Magdalene entrusted herself to Christ. This is where the reading ends, but the Easter Octave has just begun.

It is true, even before the dawn has broken, Jesus is truly risen from the dead. But it would not be until after these disciples leave, allowing her to grieve in solitude, that she would encounter the risen Jesus, the reason for our joy. ✚







# Blessings Abound

## A FAMILY WHO SERVES:

All five of the Sablan sons have served as altar servers, lectors, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

The parents explained, “We have encouraged our sons at an early age to know, love, and serve our God by serving our community through ministry. God is and always will be our priority, and by placing God first before our needs, everything else falls into place.”

**TEACH THE FAITH:** Married 31 years, the couple served as catechists in their parish and at home. “Marriage calls us to be the first catechists in our children’s life as we have passed our faith to each of our sons from their First Holy Communion to their Confirmation.”

**ON MARRIAGE AND FAITH:** Eileen said, “I am so blessed to be married to a man who loves our Creator and Redeemer as much as I do. Moreover, I am blessed to have my faith guide me in adhering to the covenant and vows I made, bearing our cross together for life.”

**THE JOY OF FAMILY:** With five sons, ages 27 to 16, “blessings abound.” The third-degree Knight of Columbus said, “Eileen and I are so proud to be procreators in God’s plan. Now that we’re grandparents, we yearn to see our grandchildren grow and celebrate our faith.”



**THEY ARE:** Al and Eileen Sablan, with their two youngest sons, Micah (left), 18, and Noah, 16, at their home parish, St. Peter the Apostle in Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Catholic Charities Fort Worth's Shannon Rosedale visited a legislative aide in the office of State Rep. Stephanie Klick to discuss a CCFW pilot program for economic self-sufficiency. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

## Pilot to Protect Poor from Benefit Cliff

“Sarah” wanted to work and to provide for her four children. A cleaning job, at \$9.50 per hour, seemed to offer the perfect opportunity until she learned her employment meant an immediate loss of \$578 in the monthly public assistance that helped her feed and house her family.

“Jessica” and her husband rejoiced over her new evening job as a warehouse worker, until they lost the \$500 monthly food benefits at the same time Jessica’s husband experienced a temporary layoff at his job as a construction worker.

On March 5, Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) team members brought these stories and other discouraging realities faced by members of the working poor to Austin. CCFW staff members Shannon Rosedale and Cindy Casey joined Jennifer Allmon, executive director of the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops, in testifying in support of House Bill (HB)

1483 before the House Human Services Committee.

The bill, which was introduced by Republican State Rep. James Frank of Wichita Falls, is described as a pilot program for self-sufficiency, in which intensive case management and strategic financial assistance can be used to help lift individuals and families out of poverty by eliminating what is known as the “benefit cliff.” With the help of their case manager’s coaching, clients can steadily persevere in building stability through savings, even as incremental reductions in public benefits allow them to gradually move into financial self-sufficiency.

CCFW officials define such self-sufficiency as the ability to cover household expenses while eliminating consumer debt, earning a living wage, building savings, and living without public assistance benefits.

For those who testified, HB 1483 represents what Rosedale calls “a whole

process.” CCFW staffers worked with the bill’s coauthors — Republican State Reps. Craig Goldman and Rick Miller, and Democratic State Rep. Toni Rose and their teams — to help research and draft the bill.

“Our testimony was definitely well received,” said Rosedale. “It was really satisfying to share our clients’ stories, to take their voices and help [legislators] to see, ‘this is how public policy is impacting your constituents, our clients. You need to hear this, because helping people to become self-sufficient is something that can help all Texans, not just those of us in Fort Worth, but across the state.’ We want to see this done, getting private and public entities to work together to end poverty.”

To learn more about CCFW’s legislative efforts or to volunteer as an advocate, visit [CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org](http://CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org) or contact Shannon Rosedale at [srosedale@ccdofw.org](mailto:srosedale@ccdofw.org) or by telephone at **817-289-0455**. 🇹🇽





# Powered by Prayer

**HE IS:** Father Albert Kanjirathumkal, HGN, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Henrietta, St. Jerome Parish in Bowie, St. Joseph Parish in Nocona, and St. William Parish in Montague.

He served at Sacred Heart Parish in Seymour and St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Megargel for more than six years.

**GROWING UP:** Albert was raised with two brothers on a farm in Kerala, India — known as “God’s Own Country.” He grew up knowing “wherever you are, each day, you should be home by 7 p.m.” for the family Rosary, Scripture reading, and hymn singing. His grandfather began the practice, his parents maintained it, and the next generation, including Fr. Albert, continues it.

**THE CALL:** His mother encouraged Albert to enter seminary after 10<sup>th</sup> grade. About midway through his 11-year formation, he grew more certain in his call to the priesthood. He was ordained January 16, 2008.

**MISSIONARY SPIRIT:** “I longed for mission work because my parents, even though they didn’t have anything, they always went out of their way to help others.”

**BEST PARTS OF BEING A PRIEST:** “I enjoy every bit. Celebrating the sacraments, being with parishioners, visiting with their families.”


Besides celebrating Mass, he has a special fondness for the sacrament of Matrimony. “Over six or nine months, I get to be with the couples, talk with them, guide them.”

Some favorite memories include celebrating the nuptial Masses for his brothers and blessing his parents’ marriage on their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary earlier this year.

**SMALL PLEASURES:** Fr. Albert loves working in small, rural parishes because “I get to know everyone, every family, every member in detail. I don’t know how to describe the joy I get by serving, especially in a rural parish. I’m so happy.”

**POWER HOURS:** He begins his day with prayer, “then will my day be easier.

If I’m late and I don’t do it, then my whole day will go upside down.” He also prays at night. “My parents taught us there’s no compromise in prayer. That’s what keeps me strong.”

**QUID PRO QUO:** His father taught, “You get what you give,” which inspired Fr. Albert. “I give of my time and — through the sacraments — the love and mercy and forgiveness of God.” And he gets? A parish that “supports each other and becomes one caring community.”



NTC/Juan Guajardo



# Perspective of Faith

**M**ichelangelo's *Pietà* is one of the most poignant images of our faith. The image of the Blessed Virgin Mary holding Jesus Christ after His crucifixion moves even the hardest heart. The *Pietà* is worthy of our contemplation, for it has a lot to say to those who are thinking about following Jesus Christ as a priest or religious sister.

The *Pietà* captures a moment that, at first glance, is not very hopeful. The Blessed Virgin Mary is holding her Son who has died. He has given His life on the cross and is now held by His mother. The scene is one of real contrast. On the one hand, Jesus Christ is dead. On the other hand, Mary has complete faith and trust in His promise that He will rise on the third day. It is a collision of doubt and faith.

From the perspective of doubt, the scene is one of utter tragedy and failure. Jesus Christ promised eternal life, but was arrested, tortured, and crucified. Now, having been taken down from the cross, Jesus is laid in the arms of His mother. He is dead and the world will say that hope has died along with Him. The world will look at the image and see unfulfilled promises and futility. The world will say that regardless of His promise, His is a path of failure and death.



Fr. Jonathan Wallis

There is, however, the perspective of faith in the Lord. Faith is embodied in the Blessed Virgin Mary. She holds her Son who has given His life for our sake. She believes His promise that He will rise on the third day. She holds the body of her Son, knowing that death has been conquered and now she must wait until the day of His resurrection.

We believe that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. We believe that He established the Church and the sacraments and is present and alive. We also know that there are many temptations to doubt and to mistakenly believe that Christ's work in the world is ineffective.

The struggle of faith in the face of doubt is central to our life as Christians. We believe that life conquers death, even when the opposite seems to be the case. Easter gives us the opportunity to realize once again that the resurrection is all that really matters. We are called to love and serve Christ in this life and to live with Him for eternity.

The *Pietà* captures the real struggle of faith and doubt that we all experience, but is especially visible when a young man begins asking if Jesus Christ is calling him to become a priest. It is likewise visible when a young woman asks if Jesus Christ is calling her to the religious life.

Entering the seminary or convent requires a leap of faith. Saying "yes" to Jesus Christ does not mean that everything will be easy and all trials will vanish. Saying "yes" to Jesus Christ means that we proclaim Him risen from the dead and that we wish to dedicate our lives to His service.

In this Easter season, if you are a young man or woman, I ask you to be open to the call of Jesus Christ. If you think He might be calling you to the priesthood or religious life, please follow the call courageously. If you know a young man or woman considering the call to the priesthood or religious life, please encourage them by your faithfulness and prayers.

The Blessed Virgin Mary held the body of her Son on Good Friday and with great faith looked forward to His resurrection. In this Easter season, may we be blessed with the same faith and be faithful witnesses to Him in all things. ✝

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Ordained to the priesthood in 2007, Father Jonathan Wallis, STL, serves as Dean of Men and Director of Seminarian Formation at St. Joseph Seminary College in Covington, Louisiana, where 16 men from the diocese are enrolled in the four-year college seminary program.





# God's Gentle Grace

**F**riends, we did it! We survived Lent 2019! Woo! How do you feel? Like you ran a marathon? Like you barely limped through a marathon? Or like you felt you were about to start a marathon, got really scared at the prospect of it, and just decided to quit while you're ahead?

Sometimes Lent can feel like that.

We begin bright-eyed and hopeful on Ash Wednesday, fully prepared to give up certain habits, to take on other ones, and to exercise our spiritual muscles for a full 40 days. I don't know about you, but about a week in, I'm usually failing at my Lenten sacrifices, or I'm so miserable the people around me wonder if I'm even Christian.

We've all been there. At the start of this Lent, instead of looking at my disordered attachments and making grandiose plans to sever all those that don't lead to Jesus, I simply asked God, "What do you want me to do?"

His reply was very simple.

"Ali, I want you to go to bed at 9:30 p.m. every night."

That's it? What about giving up drive-thru coffee?

"9:30 p.m. each night."

Okay, but since I'll be going to bed early each night, maybe I can wake up early and say a daily Rosary?

"9:30 p.m. each night."

I was frustrated. Did God think that was all I could handle? Then, in a very clear

voice in my heart, He replied, "I know you have other attachments and habitual sins, but you're not ready to give those up yet. Start with going to bed at 9:30 p.m. each night and we'll go from there."

Y'all, my mind was blown.

Every Lent I've made these huge plans to forge my way to holiness, to make leaps and bounds toward sanctity. And every year without fail, I somehow stumble in a spectacular manner and fall down face first.



Ali Hoffman

It's humbling, but I don't think that's what the Lord had in mind for me this year.

When we talk of holiness or becoming a saint, it's easy to think, "x, y, and z is what I have to do, so I'm going to just push through and get it done" without realizing our Lord is a gentle God. He doesn't force, push, or twist our arm into becoming saints. He invites us into a relationship with Him and in that relationship, grace gently and methodically works on our hearts and wills to be transformed into His own with our cooperation.

We force bad habits out of our life through sheer willpower without realizing that when we stop and ask the Lord what He desires of us, He gives us the grace to not only transform the habit, but transform the heart.

In *Ezekiel*, God talks about this heart transformation. "I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts" (36:26). God doesn't say, "By the strength of your own

determination will you receive the necessary transformation that I have desired for you." No. He says, "I will give you."

Because we live in a society that says to constantly be "on the grind," we believe this applies to our spiritual life as well. Don't get me wrong, I believe we should be vigilant in our spiritual life and always be on guard for the tactics of the evil one. But I also believe we think that achieving sainthood is completely up to us. We forget the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit that animates and transforms us into the saints God created us to be.

Friends, God is so gentle and knows what He's about. He knows when your heart is accessible to sanctifying grace better than you do. Constantly turn to Him in prayer, asking for greater faith and a disposition to receive His grace, and see how radically your life will be transformed. This doesn't have to stop after Lent but should continue for the rest of your life!

There is great joy and hope in understanding that God knows your heart, sees your attachments, and calls you into a greater and deeper life with Him. Trust that He is shaping you into the saint He has called you to be. 🇺🇸

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

# Avoiding the Pornography Trap

The Safe Environment program of the Diocese of Fort Worth is, rightfully, focused on protecting children and the vulnerable from sexual abuse. One means is the *Protecting God's Children*® program, which increases awareness about adult predators who interact with children online to manipulate, groom, and ultimately victimize them through sexual exploitation or sexual abuse.

We know that sexual predators often attempt to groom children by showing them pornography, thereby desensitizing them. But this exposure to pornography does not only come from adult predators. Another, much more prevalent source, where a far greater number of children are exposed to “adult” pornography, most of which is “hardcore,” is the internet.

According to the Crimes Against Children Research Center of the University of New Hampshire, the percentage of children ages 10 to 17 who said they had an unwanted exposure to sexual material within the past year rose from 25 percent in 2000 to 34 percent in 2005.

Recent data indicates that 90 percent of young men and 60 percent of young women have been exposed to pornography (much of which involves violence and overtly explicit imagery) by the age of 18. Of those 90 percent, the average age of exposure to pornography was between 8 and 11 years old. According to some sources, 80 percent of this exposure — which isn't always voluntary

— happens in the perceived safety of their homes.

The impact of viewing pornography on children is significant and damaging to child development. It can lead to sexual addiction, unplanned pregnancies, increased risk of being victims or perpetrators of sexual violence, a devaluation towards human life, and objectification of others.



Richard Mathews

## HOW CAN A PARENT KNOW?

According to **ProtectYoungMinds.org**, parents often overlook these signs that a child may be viewing pornography:

1. Spending extensive amounts of time online, especially at night — and particularly “after bedtime.”
2. Regularly taking a device into the bathroom or other rooms with inherent privacy (e.g., with locked doors).
3. Quickly changing the screen when you enter the room.
4. Sudden changes in behavior — particularly the use of vulgar and demeaning language towards the opposite gender.
5. Withdrawing from regular social activities — no longer being happy or finding enjoyment or excitement in hobbies, sports, or playing.
6. Being sad, moody, or depressed.

## WHAT IS A PARENT TO DO?

1. Don't be afraid to look over your

child's shoulder to see what he or she is viewing.

2. Use filters and/or monitors on all electronic devices that children could use to access the internet.
3. Talk to your children about how pornography harms people of all ages.

## HOW DO I TALK TO MY CHILD?

**BreakTheCycle.org** recommends parents have a two-way conversation that does not involve judgment or blame. Acknowledge that the subject is difficult but necessary to discuss and that pornography is not representative of true love and healthy relationships.

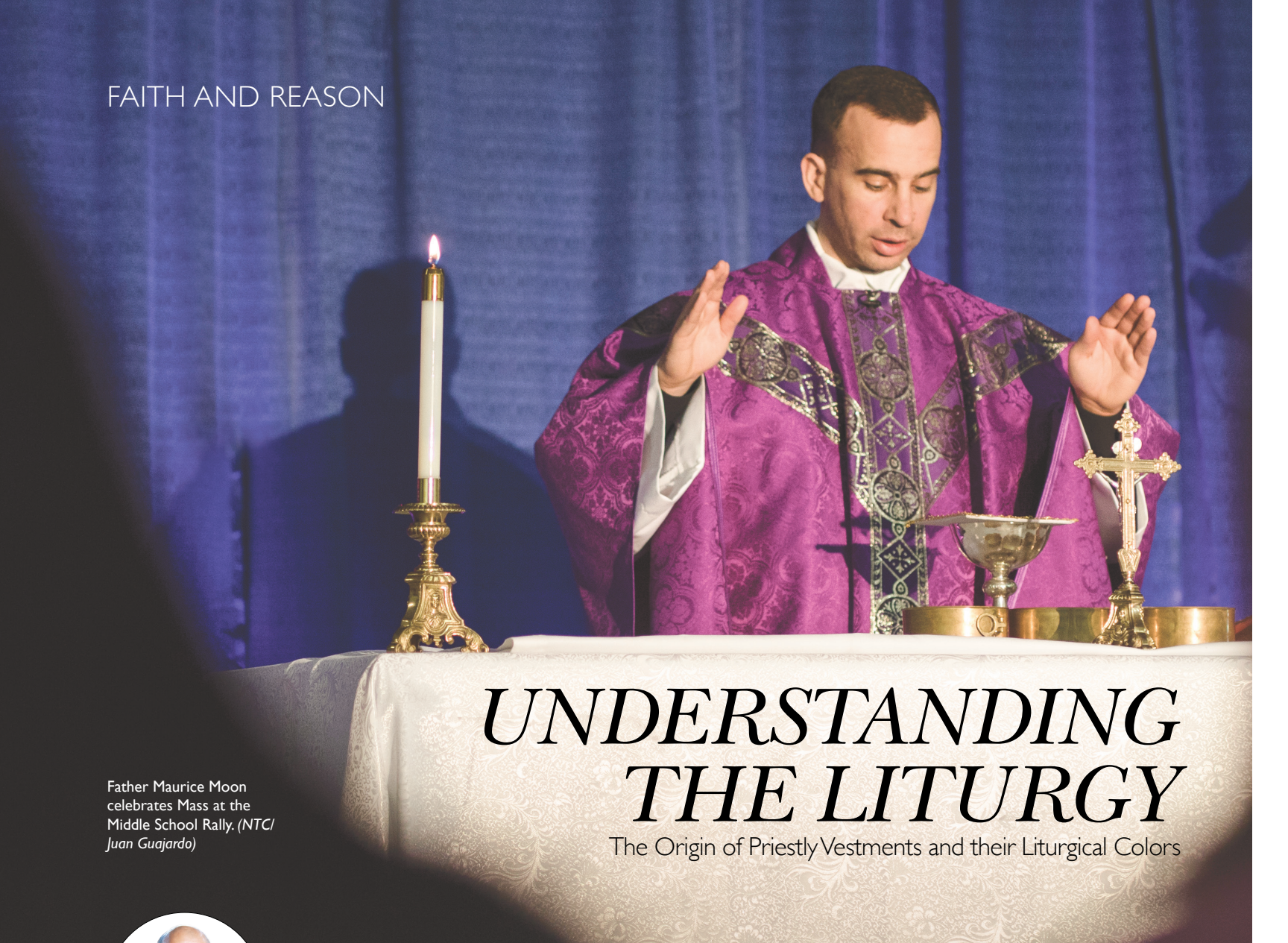
In his article, “Pornography's Effects on Adults and Children,” Victor B. Cline stated people are affected by what they see. The licensed clinical psychologist has observed that most “sexual deviations are learned behaviors, typically through inadvertent or accidental conditioning.”

Awareness, vigilance, and action are necessary; particularly for parents, since most sexual and pornographic addictions begin in middle childhood or adolescence — “most of the time without the parents' awareness” or due to children having an insufficient understanding of the risks involved. 🇺🇸

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Richard Mathews is Director of Safe Environment for the Diocese of Fort Worth. A former prosecuting attorney, he also served as the General Counsel for the Boy Scouts of America and for Trail Life USA.





# UNDERSTANDING THE LITURGY

The Origin of Priestly Vestments and their Liturgical Colors

Father Maurice Moon celebrates Mass at the Middle School Rally. (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)



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

At times one forgets that as children created in the image and likeness of God, our physical existence reflects the beauty of who God is and how we are called to worship Him. Attuned to this point, the way we position ourselves to profess the Blessed Trinity takes on greater significance when we recognize and acknowledge that God should be adored and revered in a holy and acceptable way.

We see this practice on display with specific men consecrated to assist us in worshipping and praying to our Lord in a holy way. These men consecrated as

priests, i.e. servants of Christ and His Gospel, wear distinctive liturgical attire representing their sacred duty to provide the faithful with the opportunity to profess Christ and celebrate his ultimate sacrifice through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Their priestly vestments signify a sense of sacredness, order, and sanctity because priestly vestment are aimed to adore Christ. Whether the color of the chasuble is green for ordinary time, or violet for Lent or Advent, the vestments are specifically aimed to assist the Priest who acts in the person of Christ to reflect Him especially in the celebration and our participation in the Mass.

The origins of priestly vestments can be found in the book of *Exodus* (28:2-3):

“Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor. Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest.” The Roman Cassock for instance serves as the appropriate ecclesiastical or Church garb for all clerics and is typically black to signify simplicity and penance.

The premise of priestly vestments was to assure that a priest was first and foremost a servant of the Gospel meaning his duty was to serve the Church. His liturgical vestments are an extension of his duty and ministry to the Church and reflective of the call to serve in the name of Christ.





### What are the garments a priest wears and what are they called?

The cincture is a rope that ties together everything the priest wears — including the chasuble, the alb, and the stole — so it’s not flying all over when the priest is celebrating Mass. It symbolizes spiritual watchfulness.

The alb is a garment of authority, signifying purity. A priest would most likely wear it underneath the chasuble when he celebrates Mass. An acolyte or separate minister assisting at the Mass might also wear this white garment.

The outer garment, the chasuble, is specific to the priest, who was given the ability through the gift of his priesthood to consecrate the elements of bread and wine at the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

The Roman collar is an adaptation from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century, attributed to Pope Urban, to give a sense of authority and reverence. The collar was typically also associated with the black cassock as well.



### What is the meaning of the stole?

The stole is a long strip of fabric worn by deacons, priests, and bishops as a sign of Holy Orders. The deacon wears the stole diagonally on his left shoulder, and the priest wears it around his neck over both shoulders.



### What are the origins of the priesthood vestments?

They can be attributed to *Exodus 28* in particular. This particular chapter really gives an impression of the priesthood vestments and that they should be strictly reserved to worshipping God. And so these vestments are connected to the Holy of Holies or the Holy Temple, the Ark of the

Covenant, or the Tabernacle. So whoever is the minister or part of the Levitical priesthood would wear this particular vestment as a preparation for the celebration of the worship of God in the Holy Tabernacle sacrifice.



### Why do priests wear black?

Black signifies austerity and discipline, it signifies purity, and it signifies humility. The color black was attributed between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century as part of the original cassock and Roman collar that priests would wear. The Church wanted a distinction for the priest to stand out and to understand their servanthood with respect to being a priest.



### What do different liturgical colors signify?

Development of these colors spans from the beginning of the Church in the first century, all the way through the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For example, white, typically associated with a priest’s alb, is meant to symbolize purification or making a sacrifice.

Green typically refers to the ordinary time of the Church, beginning prior to the fourth century and developed all the way through the 12<sup>th</sup> century to describe “normal time” in the Church.

Red is very significant because it signifies martyrdom. The color red is used within the Church for specific feast days; for example, Good Friday, Pentecost, and Corpus Christi. It’s a representation of Christ who died on the cross and His martyrdom that occurred at the three o’clock hour. Red is also

used throughout the liturgical year when we have a particular feast day of a saint who died a martyr.

The color black signifies death. It is not uncommon to see black vestments worn by a priest during a funeral Mass or to signify someone who has passed on from this world to the next.

Purple or violet signifies penance. This color received some of its identity around the fourth century and was attributed loosely to St. Augustine and the whole process of the catechumenate, or those who came into the Church. It signifies a willingness to let go of worldly desires and embrace Christ. So typically you have this color during Advent and during Lent because both these seasons center on preparation, anticipation, humility, and sacrifice.

Another color we typically see at different times of the year is rose, which signifies joyful anticipation. Priests wear rose chasubles and stoles on the third Sunday of Advent, as we anticipate the birth of our Lord, and the fourth Sunday of Lent, because we know that Easter is coming.



### What does the color gold signify?

The color gold is very significant because it’s attributed to a king. So you would typically see the color gold worn during the feast of Christ the King, or on a significant feast, say the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter that we just celebrated in February. And during the Easter season as well, where you’d see white and gold linens because we say “Alleluia” to our Lord, He is risen, He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. 🇺🇸





Andrea y Miguel Benitez, a la izquierda, con sus padrinos David Rodríguez y Elda Gonzalez Rodríguez, en la Parroquia de San Bartolomé en Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)

# GUÍAS FIELES

Un vistazo a algunos padrinos excepcionales que brindan oración, ejemplos poderosos y ayuda práctica en el camino de la fe

Por Susan Moses

Rebecca Kaiser se sentía muy nostálgica en agosto del 2017 en su escuela intermedia. Como estudiante nueva, no conocía a nadie en toda la escuela. Además, cada día después de la escuela tenía que tomar la serpenteante ruta del autobús escolar, lo que significaba que la estudiante de sexto grado viajaba 90 minutos para cubrir una distancia de sólo 7.3 millas para llegar hasta su casa.

Después de la Misa del domingo en la Parroquia de San Bartolomé, su padrino, Mark Metroka, le preguntó a Rebecca cómo le había ido en su primera semana en la nueva escuela. Al enterarse del largo viaje en autobús, se ofreció a llevarla a su casa cuatro días a la semana, ya que su oficina le quedaba cerca.

El papel del padrino o madrina de bautizo o confirmación en la vida de su ahijado o ahijada puede parecer un poco nebuloso. Además de ser testigo del sacramento, los padrinos “deben ser creyentes firmes, capaces y listos para ayudar al recién bautizado, niño o adulto, en el camino de la vida cristiana”, según lo declara el *Catecismo de*

Rebecca Kaiser, de 13 años, con su padrino Mark Metroka, en la Parroquia de San Bartolomé en Fort Worth. Metroka lleva la corbata de rata que Kaiser le dio en agradecimiento por darle un paseo a casa de la escuela cada día. (NTC/Ben Torres)

la Iglesia Católica. Al echar un vistazo a algunos padrinos y madrinas locales que se destacan claramente en el cumplimiento de este requisito general, se revelan algunos rasgos comunes.

#### DETENGAN EL AUTOBÚS

El viaje en automóvil de 20 minutos que Metroka y Rebecca compartieron se convirtió en algo que ambos disfrutaban y esperaban entusiasmados.

Rebecca comentó que las conversaciones al final del día le ayudaban a mantener una perspectiva realista. Hablaban de “todo tipo de cosas”: la escuela, el trabajo, los hermanos de ella, los hijos de él, los libros, el arte, la música y sus ratas mascotas.

Ella agregó: “Él me daba consejos para ayudarme a entender la perspectiva de los chicos”; eran especialmente útiles ante los desafíos que presenta el navegar por el campo de minas social de la adolescencia.

Desde la perspectiva de Metroka, “Disfrutaba poder escuchar a Rebecca desahogarse sobre los problemas del sexto grado. Pude ofrecerle apoyo, consejos prácticos y ánimo moral”.

Su mejor consejo: “No te preocupes por las personas que no te entienden y permanece fiel a quien tú eres”. Él alentó a Rebecca a servir como monaguillo en la misa al igual que su hija, que era cinco años mayor que Rebecca.

Aunque la familia Metroka y la familia Kaiser siempre compartían juntas los cumpleaños y reuniones sociales, el tiempo compartido en el carro para llevarla a su casa era “muy diferente a otros momentos que habíamos



compartido. Esta oportunidad fortaleció el vínculo con mi padrino”, dijo Rebecca.

Cuando llegó el mes de agosto del 2018, Metroka estaba listo para reanudar el transporte de su pasajero especial. Admitió sentirse un poco desilusionado cuando supo que ella encontró un compañero de viaje compartido en el vecindario. No obstante, cada domingo después de la Misa, le pregunta todavía sobre sus ratas mascotas, sus autores favoritos y los niños que a menudo muestran su afecto molestándola.

#### APOYO CONSTANTE

Patsy Pelton eligió a Mary Martin para ser la madrina de su hijo Kenny,

pero ella no sabía que Martin sería realmente un apoyo espiritual para ambos.

Hace 26 años, cuando Pelton eligió a su amiga del coro de la Parroquia de San Andrés, “recé para que la madrina de Kenny fuera un buen ejemplo para él. Sabía que, si algo me pasaba, podría confiar en Mary para asegurarme de que Kenny fuera criado en la fe”, dijo Pelton.

Martin y la familia de Pelton compartieron juntas tanto vacaciones como diversas celebraciones, incluido un postre especial cada año en el día de aniversario del bautismo de Kenny. Su

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El padrino Oliver Dávila (izquierda) presenció el bautismo de su sobrino Jacob, de 6 años de edad. El Padre Philip Brembah bautizó al niño que es cargado por su padre Alexander Dávila, en la Parroquia de San Vicente de Paul en Arlington. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

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ahijado visitaba su casa a menudo, tocaba el piano con ella y compartían su talento mutuo para la música.

Cuando a Kenny se le diagnosticó diabetes Tipo 1 a los 5 años, cuando era intimidado en la escuela intermedia, cuando estaba enojado con Dios y cuando ponía en duda su fe, la amistad y las oraciones de Martin lo apoyaron a él y a su mamá.

Martin, que es guitarrista de la Parroquia de la Sagrada Familia, dijo: “Los jóvenes prueban y cuestionan su fe, pero vuelven a donde se supone que deben estar”.

Kenny lo hizo. Fue confirmado cuando cursaba su último año de universidad. Ahora, “ama la Misa en latín” y canta en el coro de su parroquia en San Antonio.

Pelton valora las incesantes oraciones y la amistad de Martin a lo largo de la vida de Kenny. “No hay una persona que

tenga una fe más fuerte que María. Ella ha sido una guía constante para mi hijo”, describió Pelton.

Por su parte, Kenny dijo que está “eternamente agradecido” a Martin por su presencia espiritual constante. “La fe de Mary es firme e inquebrantable. Ella ha sido un modelo importante de fe, siempre generosa con su afecto, atención y apoyo”.

## UN ESPÍRITU DE ALIENTO

Volver a una vida católica fiel puede ser difícil.

Miguel Benítez y su esposa, Andrea, habían estado legalmente casados por varios años, pero como ambos ya habían estado casados antes y se habían divorciado, la Iglesia no reconocía su unión. Además, ninguno de ellos se había confirmado.

Sin embargo, como tenían dos hijos, querían que su familia viviera la vida sacramental de la Iglesia Católica.

Benítez admiraba a su compañero

de trabajo David Rodríguez por ser una persona “extraordinaria y atenta”, especialmente por haber adoptado a un nieto que tiene necesidades especiales. Rodríguez y su esposa Elda, habían experimentado la anulación de un matrimonio anterior y posteriormente su matrimonio fue convalidado por la Iglesia.

Benítez admitió que: “Queríamos casarnos por la Iglesia, pero ha sido difícil y, a veces, frustrante. David siempre me alentaba y me decía: ‘Cuando lo hayan logrado, ya verás que todo habrá valido la pena’. Pensarás de manera diferente cuando se logre. Yo sabía que David y Elda habían pasado también por todo esto”.

Rodríguez explicó la razón por la que él y Elda habían convalidado su matrimonio después de 20 años. “No es fácil casarse y vivir mucho tiempo casados. Pero es lo que Dios quiere, comprometerse en los buenos y en los malos tiempos. Por eso, es tan importante

el sacramento del matrimonio”.

Miguel y Andrea le pidieron a David y Elda que sirvieran como sus padrinos de Confirmación. Benítez atribuyó al aliento de sus padrinos tener la motivación necesaria para que él y su esposa caminaran a través del proceso y pudieran superar los obstáculos. La pareja fue confirmada, con la mano de Rodríguez puesta sobre sus hombros, en la Misa de la Confirmación de adultos en la Catedral de San Patricio el 13 de octubre del 2018. Su matrimonio fue convalidado poco después.

Rodríguez dijo que, como padrino de Confirmación, su constante aliento a la pareja es “simplemente hacer lo que Dios quiere que hagamos. Ser humildes y amarnos unos a otros. Para así pasar la fe a la siguiente generación”.

## LAS PREGUNTAS SON BIENVENIDAS

Cuando Bobby Williams se convirtió a la fe católica en el 1993, su amigo y antiguo vecino, Calvin Kimbrough, lo bombardeó con muchas preguntas por 25 años.

Williams dijo que sus “discusiones animadas” a menudo se centraban en lo

que hace que el catolicismo sea único y distinto de las demás religiones. Durante ese tiempo, Kimbrough se describía a sí mismo como agnóstico y decía que recordaba “cómo había admirado a las personas que tenían una fe fuerte, pero que él tenía una mentalidad analítica y le era difícil comprender el misterio de la fe”.

Sin embargo, la experiencia de la muerte de su esposa hace tres años hizo que Kimbrough se abriera nuevamente al cristianismo, por lo que comenzó a visitar diferentes iglesias con varios amigos. Encontró que la Misa en la Parroquia de la Sagrada Familia era “inspiradora”.

Cuando Kimbrough le pidió a Williams que fuera su padrino para el Rito de Iniciación Cristiana de Adultos (RICA) Williams se sintió “inicialmente sorprendido, pero también muy honrado”.

“Calvin estaba explorando y encontrando su camino de vuelta a la Iglesia. Sentía un fuerte llamado”, agregó Williams.

Kimbrough agradeció que Williams fuera a las clases de RICA con él y que le diera el tiempo necesario para responder a sus preguntas.

Williams dijo: “Como yo era también un converso, me acordaba de haberme hecho las mismas preguntas a mí mismo”. “¿Estoy haciendo lo correcto? ¿Lo estoy haciendo por las debidas razones?” Es una búsqueda profunda en el corazón de uno”.

Kimbrough se confirmó en la Vigilia Pascual en el 2017 en la Parroquia de la Sagrada Familia, pero eso fue sólo el comienzo.

Williams explicó, “El proceso de RICA es fundamental. Hay que comprender el significado y la importancia de los sacramentos para poder decir “sí” con la debida y suficiente información. Pero tienes que continuar el viaje”.

Por invitación de Williams, Kimbrough se unió a las clases de Biblia en la parroquia de Williams, la Parroquia del Santo Redentor de Aledo. Ambos hombres son Caballeros de Colón en sus respectivas parroquias.

Williams dijo: “Veo cambios en Calvin. Ha simplificado su vida. Él sirve como voluntario a las personas sin hogar. Siempre fue generoso, pero ahora su fe entra en juego también, lo que refuerza mi fe”. 🇺🇸

## LECCIONES APRENDIDAS

Los ejemplos de estas personas y otras que han servido como guías fieles en la jornada católica, nos ayudan a reconocer algunos rasgos comunes al ser o elegir a un padrino o madrina, que le acompañe en su caminar en la fe.

- Primero, seleccione un padrino o madrina que lleve una vida católica fiel. Si lo desea, puede escoger a su mejor amigo o amiga de la escuela secundaria, pero si sólo asiste a Misa en la Semana Santa y la Navidad, invítela solamente a la celebración del sacramento.
- Refuerce el papel especial que se tiene. Metroka saluda a Rebecca, “Hola, ahijada” porque “mi esposa y yo somos los únicos que podemos llamarla así”. Celebre el aniversario del Bautismo o Confirmación de su ahijado o ahijada.
- Piense en alguien fuera de la familia. Pelton eligió intencionalmente a alguien que no era un familiar. “Las tías, los tíos y los primos ya tienen un papel en la vida del niño. Yo quería traer a una nueva persona que pueda tener una relación especial con mi hijo”, explicó.
- Mantenga la relación. Benítez dijo que él y su padrino siguen “creciendo constantemente en su amistad”. Recientemente asistieron a un juego de hockey juntos.
- Alimente la fe. Williams invitó a Kimbrough a que se uniera a él en las clases de Biblia de su parroquia y le presta libros que él cree podrían ser de beneficio para su crecimiento espiritual.



Rebecca Kaiser muestra un dibujo que hizo de sí misma montándose en el autobús. (NTC/Ben Torres)





(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

# MISERICORDIA *ABUNDANTE*

La devoción a la Divina Misericordia y la Confesión colman  
a los fieles con abundantes gracias

Por Mary Lou Seewoester

Cuando entras al confesionario de la Parroquia de Nuestra Madre de la Misericordia en Fort Worth, lo primero que ves es un enorme cuadro de Jesús con un vestido blanco y rayos rojos y blancos que emanan de su corazón: la imagen de la Divina Misericordia.

El Padre Bart Jasilek, SVD, párroco de Nuestra Madre de la Misericordia, cree que existe una conexión profunda entre la Divina Misericordia y el Sacramento de la Reconciliación.

“La confesión es un hermoso sacramento de sanación y la Divina Misericordia es el mensajero de ese perdón”, dijo. “La misericordia de Dios está presente en todos los sacramentos, pero, sobre todo, en el sacramento del perdón. Eso es lo que Dios hizo por nosotros en la cruz. Esa misericordia está clamando por ti. ¡Ven y tómalala! ¡La tengo para ti y te la ofrezco gratis!”

El Padre Jasilek, oriundo de Polonia, presentó la devoción de la Divina Misericordia a su parroquia en el 2016, durante el Año de Jubileo de la Misericordia, en su primer año como párroco. Desde entonces, los feligreses han seguido la devoción mientras oran y escuchan una grabación de la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia antes de todas las Misas del fin de semana y entre semana, y el Padre Jasilek escucha confesiones. Los viernes, en que se celebra un día completo de Adoración al Santísimo, se concluye con la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia y la bendición.

“Si fui enviado aquí durante el Año de la Misericordia, a una parroquia llamada Nuestra Madre de la Misericordia, y soy de Polonia, donde Santa Faustina era la mensajera de la Divina Misericordia, entonces debe ser la voluntad de Dios que así sea”, dijo.

## LA HISTORIA

El mensaje y la devoción a Jesús como la Divina Misericordia se basan en los escritos de Santa Faustina Kowalska, una monja polaca, que en la década de

1930 comenzó a recibir revelaciones extraordinarias de Jesús. Nuestro Señor le pidió que registrara las experiencias en un diario, que terminó siendo de 600 páginas. Su diario provocó un gran movimiento centrado en la abundante misericordia de Jesucristo, que continúa hasta nuestros días.

Fundamental para la devoción es la imagen de la Divina Misericordia. Santa Faustina vio por primera vez la imagen de la Divina Misericordia en el 1931 mientras rezaba en su celda de la Congregación de las Hermanas en el Convento de Nuestra Señora de la Misericordia en Plock, Polonia.

Según su diario, llamado *La Divina Misericordia en mi alma*, el Señor la dirigió a “pintar una imagen como el modelo que vemos hoy día y en la que aparecen firmadas las palabras: ‘Jesús, en Ti confío’”. (*Diario, 47-48*)

El diario continúa: “El rayo de luz blanco pálido representa el agua que hace justas a las almas. El rayo de luz rojo representa la sangre, que es la vida de las almas...Estos dos rayos brotaron desde lo más profundo de mi tierna misericordia cuando mi corazón agonizante fue abierto por la lanza en la cruz”. (*Diario, 299*)

En el 1935, Santa Faustina recibió las palabras para la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia cuando tuvo una visión en la que un ángel, enviado a castigar a una ciudad en particular, la llevó a orar y pedir por misericordia. Al principio, sentía que sus oraciones carecían de fuerza, pero luego se encontró a sí misma rogando interiormente a Dios con estas palabras:

“Padre Eterno, te ofrezco el Cuerpo y la Sangre, el Alma y la Divinidad de tu amadísimo Hijo, Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, en expiación por nuestros pecados y los del mundo entero; por Su dolorosa pasión, ten misericordia de nosotros”. (*Diario, 475*).

Al día siguiente, recibió interiormente otro mensaje que le pedía que agregara “y del mundo entero” al final de la oración (*Diario 476*).

Éstas se convirtieron en las palabras de la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia,

que se puede rezar, recitar o cantar con el rosario.

## LA GRACIA DE LA DIVINA MISERICORDIA EN LAS PARROQUIAS

El Padre Jim Gigliotti, TOR, párroco de la Parroquia San Andrés de Fort Worth ha sido testigo también de la gracia de la Divina Misericordia en el confesionario, especialmente cuando las personas temen que no puedan ser perdonadas.

“Jesús dice en el Diario de la Divina Misericordia que no hay pecado que sea tan grave que, si el alma está contrita, no pueda ser perdonado”. El Padre Gigliotti añadió que Jesús “le dijo a Santa Faustina: ‘Dile al alma que se me acerca en el Tribunal de la Misericordia’ – ésa es Su palabra para el confesionario – que deben imaginar que sus pecados caen como gotas de lluvia y desaparecen en el océano de Mi misericordia”.

El Padre Gigliotti destacó además que la devoción de la Divina Misericordia también transforma a los católicos no practicantes y calma y consuela a los enfermos y los que ya están en su lecho de muerte.

“He visto que cuando presento a la gente la devoción de la Divina Misericordia, eso les ha brindado gran sanación, alivio y consuelo”, explicó el párroco. “La oración cambia sus vidas. Cambia sus perspectivas y los acerca más al Señor. Los hace sentir hambrientos nuevamente y apreciar la Eucaristía y el sacramento de la Reconciliación”.

Vince Bonillo, un feligrés de la Parroquia de San Andrés, era uno de esos católicos no practicantes hasta que descubrió la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia el pasado otoño en un fin de semana de *Cristo Renueva a Su Parroquia* (CRHP, por siglas en inglés).

“Yo había dejado de rezar y de ir a Misa”, dijo. Pero un día, su esposa le pidió que asistiera al fin de semana de CRHP.

“Dios me mostró la gracia y el perdón ... Aprendí mucho acerca de cuán grande

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y misericordioso es Dios. Esta devoción me ha ayudado a convertirme en un católico más fuerte”, añadió.

Kate Sweeney, feligrés de la Parroquia de Santa Catalina de Siena en Carrollton, descubrió la Divina Misericordia en el 2013 mientras asistía a su madre que estaba en un hospicio. Dos de sus primos al visitarlas las invitaron a rezar la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia.

“La rezamos varias veces al día, pero especialmente a las tres de la tarde”, dijo Sweeney. Cuando su madre falleció, ella estaba rezando la Coronilla junto a su cama. Aunque su madre nunca había mencionado la Divina Misericordia, Sweeney encontró más tarde una copia de las oraciones de la Divina Misericordia con el rosario de su madre.

El Padre Gigliotti explicó por qué la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia es una oración poderosa para los que se encuentran en su lecho de muerte.

“Jesús dice en el Diario que Él mismo va y presenta el alma al Padre a través de la misericordia de la cruz. Él mismo viene al alma que está falleciendo”, dijo.

Poco después de la muerte de su madre, Sweeney se unió a un grupo de feligreses de Santa Catalina que rezan la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia a las 3 p.m. todos los domingos en la capilla de la parroquia.

El Padre Gigliotti dijo que en el mismo diario de Santa Faustina se le pide a la Iglesia que ore una Novena de la Divina Misericordia desde el Viernes Santo hasta el domingo después de la Pascua, ahora conocido como el Domingo de la Divina Misericordia. El Papa San Juan Pablo II incluyó el Domingo de la Divina Misericordia en el calendario litúrgico oficial en el 2000 cuando canonizó a Santa Faustina.

Agregó que el Domingo de la Divina Misericordia incluye “una indulgencia plenaria: la remisión completa del castigo temporal debido al pecado”.

Según un decreto apostólico del 2002, las condiciones para la indulgencia de la Divina Misericordia incluyen la confesión sacramental, la Comunión Eucarística y la oración por las intenciones del Papa, así como la participación en las oraciones y devociones de la Divina Misericordia.

El Padre Gigliotti ha ofrecido los servicios de la Novena de la Divina Misericordia y el Domingo de la Divina Misericordia en todas las parroquias a las que ha servido desde que conoció dicha devoción en el 1978, incluso durante sus 20 años como párroco de la Parroquia de Santa María Goretti de Arlington.

Bonnie Irvine, feligrés de la Parroquia de Santa Catalina de Siena, dijo que participa en las devociones de la Divina Misericordia porque “siempre le pedimos a Dios algo, pero no le pedimos Su perdón a menudo. Esta devoción es más profunda que una oración de petición. No estamos orando solamente por nosotros mismos. Oramos también por los demás”.

“Las mismas palabras de la oración de la Divina Misericordia lo dicen”, agregó. “Ten misericordia de nosotros y del mundo entero”. 🇺🇸

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# Un Enfoque Pastoral

El Tribunal Diocesano sigue agilizando los procedimientos de anulación del matrimonio

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

**L**as 200 a 300 personas que solicitan la anulación de su matrimonio en la Diócesis de Fort Worth cada año a menudo se acercan a este proceso con dos temores, comentó Sara Paglialunga, JCD.

“Su primer temor es que va a costar mucho dinero”, explicó la Doctora de Derecho Canónico que dirige la Oficina del Tribunal Diocesano. “El segundo temor es que les va a tomar mucho tiempo”.

Ambas preocupaciones han sido aliviadas. De acuerdo con las reformas de nulidad matrimonial exigidas en el documento del 2015 *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* (“El Señor Jesús, Juez Gentil”) del Papa Francisco, la diócesis empezó a revisar sus procedimientos para hacer las anulaciones matrimoniales más compasivas, simples y accesibles en el 2016 y continúa mejorando el proceso.

“No hay que pagar nada y la cantidad de tiempo para recibir una sentencia es

cada vez más corta”, aseguró Paglialunga. “Hemos puesto en práctica todo lo que el Papa Francisco nos pidió que hiciéramos”.

Antes de los cambios recientes, una investigación canónica sobre si un matrimonio era válido en el contexto del sacramento podía tomar varios años. El Papa Francisco recomienda fijar una meta de 16 meses para completar el proceso de anulación.

Paglialunga, una abogada de Rotal que posee el grado canónico más alto ofrecido por la Iglesia Católica, fue contratada el año pasado para implementar el mandato y ha ayudado a eliminar el atraso en los casos que estaban pendientes. El Tribunal ahora emite la mayoría de las sentencias en 20 meses y espera poder reducir aún más

este período de tiempo.

Los principales cambios que hacen que el proceso de anulación sea más pastoral comprenden:

- Cada caso ya no necesita dos sentencias afirmativas para su resolución. Una decisión a favor de la nulidad del matrimonio es suficiente y elimina formalidades adicionales.
- De los tres jueces que dictan sentencia en un caso, solamente uno tiene que ser un sacerdote o



Sólo una de 100 abogadas rotales en el mundo, la Dra. Sara Paglialunga, JCD, asegura que el proceso de anulación sea compasivo y ágil. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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diácono ordenado. Previamente, se requerían dos.

- Se han simplificado las reglas que determinan la jurisdicción del tribunal para ver un caso. Un peticionario puede presentar su caso en la diócesis donde se celebró el matrimonio, donde cualquiera de las partes involucradas reside o donde la preponderancia o la mayor cantidad de pruebas se encuentren.
- El obispo diocesano está autorizado para actuar como el único juez en ciertos casos.

El proceso acelerado debe cumplir con ciertos criterios.

“El Papa Francisco dice que si el peticionario y el demandado están de acuerdo con la declaración de nulidad del matrimonio y ambos dicen que el matrimonio no fue válido desde el principio por las mismas razones, el proceso es más corto y toma menos tiempo”, explicó Paglialunga.

Si durante el proceso más corto se hace evidente que el obispo no puede otorgar una declaración de nulidad debido a que no hay pruebas suficientes, el caso se transfiere al proceso completo y formal.

La experta en Derecho Canónico destacó que las revisiones del proceso de nulidad no cambian la doctrina de la Iglesia con respecto al matrimonio o su indisolubilidad.

“Se trata de un sacramento, y un sacramento, como el Bautismo, es para siempre”, enfatizó Paglialunga. “Cuando emitimos un pronunciamiento que dice que su matrimonio no fue válido desde el principio, estamos diciendo que nunca hubo en realidad un sacramento”.

Una sentencia afirmativa indica que la unión careció de una o más de las condiciones necesarias para que hubiera un matrimonio verdadero.

Una declaración de nulidad no tiene nada que ver con la legitimidad de los niños nacidos de una pareja durante su matrimonio. “Los niños no se convierten

en ilegítimos debido a una anulación”, señaló rápidamente.

La declaración de nulidad brinda sanación.

“Esto no es como un divorcio en el que simplemente se firma un documento”, aclaró Paglialunga. “Una persona acude a la Iglesia y debe ser sincera y hablar sobre los problemas en su matrimonio y lo que causó la anulación del matrimonio”.

Una petición de nulidad de matrimonio requiere responder preguntas muy personales sobre la infancia, la infancia del cónyuge y las actitudes sobre el matrimonio, el divorcio y la fidelidad. Se explora también si una persona era lo suficientemente madura para casarse.

“Se supone que este proceso te haga pensar”, dijo ella. “Declarar un sacramento inválido requiere que existan causales que lo justifiquen, y por eso, es que hacemos preguntas muy personales”.

Algunos peticionarios quieren volver a casarse. Otros no tienen planes inmediatos para casarse, pero desean tener paz y cerrar esa etapa de sus vidas.

“El proceso ayuda a aclarar lo que sucedió en un matrimonio y un juez puede recomendar hablar con un sacerdote o consejero”, agregó Paglialunga. “Es muy catártico y sanador. Ése es el objetivo de este proceso”.

Las personas deben usar el proceso de nulidad para su crecimiento espiritual y personal.

“Pueden perdonarse a sí mismos por lo que sucedió y proceder en la vida hacia otro matrimonio que será válido”, sugirió.

Después de la reforma de la ley de la Iglesia por parte del Papa Francisco con respecto a los procedimientos de nulidad, algunas diócesis de los Estados Unidos han visto un aumento en las solicitudes de nulidad. Paglialunga ha notado que las personas que contactan su oficina en la Diócesis de Fort Worth se sienten con menos tensión. El Tribunal ya no recibe decenas de correos electrónicos de solicitantes frustrados que preguntan sobre el estado de un caso.

“Las personas simplemente están felices de recibir su sentencia o saben mediante su abogado que el tribunal está trabajando con diligencia para proporcionarles una sentencia en un tiempo razonable”, comentó Paglialunga. 🇺🇸

# AMBIENTE SEGURO

## Para Reportar Conducta Inapropiada:

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

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

## Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha Abuso:

Si usted sospecha de abuso de un niño, anciano, o adulto vulnerable, o si alguien le ha revelado algún tipo de abuso,

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

**Para Más Información:** Para inscribirse o informarse sobre nuestros programas de prevención de abuso, visite [fwdioc.org/safe-environment](http://fwdioc.org/safe-environment)





ECHAN LA 'RED'

# PARA EVANGELIZAR

Recursos digitales mantienen informados a los católicos

Por Violeta Rocha

**E**l Papa Francisco ha dicho, que a través del buen uso de la comunicación digital, el Evangelio puede cruzar el umbral del templo y salir al encuentro de todos.

La página web de la Diócesis, **fwdioc.org/hispanic-ministry**, mantiene actualizada todas las páginas de los diferentes ministerios, en inglés y español, como herramienta de evangelización.

Dejando a un lado “la excusa” de que el pueblo latino no usa o depende de la tecnología para informarse, Joel

Rodríguez, Director del Ministerio Hispano, celebra la versión nueva de la página web, que es más sencilla de usar y ofrece información “actualizada, importante y accesible”.

Las actualizaciones comprenden diversos recursos para la fe católica: la Biblia, documentos de la Iglesia, lecturas del día y enlaces para los apostolados que actualmente están aprobados por la Diócesis, como la Pastoral Juvenil, los Cursillos, la Jornada Familiar, el Retiro de Búsqueda y los Talleres de Oración y Vida.

Otra innovación importante es el calendario, que contiene eventos

y la información de contacto de los organizadores. Se quiere lograr en el futuro que el calendario sea “un punto de referencia a nivel diocesano y entre las parroquias... Además, presentar imágenes audiovisuales de las actividades parroquiales o los apostolados... siempre con el respaldo de nuestro Obispo Michael Olson, quien busca que la información sea accesible y transparente”, agregó Rodríguez.

El trabajo de actualización de las páginas web concluyó hace dos meses,

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# LO MÁS SEGURO

La Diócesis sigue fortaleciendo la seguridad en las parroquias y las escuelas

Por Juan Guajardo

La Diócesis de Fort Worth está implementando la segunda fase del plan de protección para continuar fortaleciendo la seguridad en sus parroquias y escuelas.

“Proteger a nuestros feligreses es una gran prioridad” dijo Stephen Becht, el Director de Bienes Raíces y Construcción de la Diócesis. “El Obispo como pastor quiere proteger y velar por las almas de los fieles de la Diócesis, pero quiere también protegerlas cuando se reúnen para celebrar y adorar al Señor de una manera acogedora y segura”.

La siguiente fase del plan de protección consiste en colaborar con la empresa Sabbath Shield, conocida más recientemente como los consultores de seguridad de Guardian Response, para reclutar y entrenar a equipos de voluntarios que trabajarán en estrecha colaboración con las autoridades locales para proporcionar seguridad durante las Misas y otros eventos importantes de las parroquias.

El objetivo de estos equipos es mitigar las situaciones de crisis y proporcionar “acciones decisivas para salvar vidas durante una emergencia, a la vez que sirven de respaldo hasta la llegada de los primeros respondedores y el personal de emergencia”, dijo Monseñor E. James Hart, Canciller y Moderador de la Curia de la Diócesis, en un memorándum.

Algunos de estos voluntarios estarán armados y brindarán “niveles adicionales de seguridad”, mencionó Becht. Los voluntarios funcionarán de manera similar



a los mariscales de vuelo (‘sky marshals’) de la FAA – agentes encubiertos que velan por la seguridad en los aviones. “Muchos feligreses ni tan siquiera se percatarán de quiénes son las personas que pertenecen al equipo de seguridad”, prosiguió diciendo Becht.

Se formarán también equipos médicos que serán adiestrados en primeros auxilios avanzados, lo que incluye el uso del polvo de coagulación y gasas que el ejército utiliza. “Estamos requiriendo que cada parroquia tenga un botiquín de primeros auxilios que contenga todos los primeros auxilios más avanzados disponibles”, declaró Becht.

El equipo de protección armada, que será examinado estrictamente y entrenado exhaustivamente, formará el nivel interno de seguridad, para “proteger la vida de los feligreses en los posibles peores escenarios como el tiroteo ocurrido en Sutherland Springs”, dijo Monseñor Hart.

Becht mencionó además que ya se han puesto en vigor niveles exteriores de seguridad que incluyen personas laicas que caminan por las instalaciones y los estacionamientos de las parroquias, ministros que reciben y saludan a los feligreses en las entradas y ujieres, todos los cuales han sido capacitados para identificar los comportamientos y lenguaje corporal

sospechosos. Estos miembros del equipo continuarán recibiendo entrenamiento de seguridad adicional.

Los voluntarios armados serán feligreses elegidos por el párroco. Se le ha asignado a cada párroco que identifiquen dos o tres líderes en su parroquia para encabezar este ministerio.

Mike Short, copropietario de Guardian Response, en un video enviado a los líderes de la parroquia recomendó que se escojan voluntarios comprometidos, organizados y capaces de tomar decisiones inteligentes. “Policías o personas con experiencia militar previa podrían ser buenos para este tipo de rol de liderazgo dentro de su parroquia, pero no es un requisito”.

Becht enfatizó que estos equipos se someterán a un extenso proceso de selección de varios pasos. Una vez seleccionados, recibirán amplia capacitación bajo la supervisión de Guardian Response, que enfatiza el entrenamiento de desescalada, la defensa personal, el dominio de las armas, y la familiaridad y la coordinación con la policía local.

Se anima a las parroquias que puedan hacerlo a contratar oficiales de policía activos para la seguridad en las Misas y otros eventos importantes, y a que trabajen en conjunto con el equipo de protección armada de la parroquia.

En la primera fase del plan de seguridad de la Diócesis, todas las parroquias y escuelas se sometieron a una evaluación de vulnerabilidad realizada por Guardian Response. De ahí se presentaron sugerencias para mejorar la seguridad, como por ejemplo, poner en marcha procedimientos de crisis, instalar cámaras y cercas, y otros más. Se alentó a las parroquias a revisar sus planes de emergencia y a contactar las agencias policiales locales para obtener recomendaciones adicionales.

Las evaluaciones realizadas por Guardian Response también dieron como resultado que las parroquias y las escuelas removieran los letreros de “zona libre de armas” debido a que las estadísticas dicen que la gran mayoría de los tiroteos masivos en lugares públicos ocurren en zonas libres de armas”, dijo Becht.

Es importante señalar que la directiva que prohíbe las armas dentro de las propiedades de la Iglesia y en los campus escolares sigue en vigor. Sin embargo, este aviso de no portar armas aparece ahora en los boletines en lugar de los edificios, dijo Short a *North Texas Catholic*. El permiso para portar armas dentro de cualquier propiedad de la Iglesia se limita a los oficiales de policía activos y a los miembros del equipo de protección, que han sido investigados y entrenados de manera apropiada y extensa.

“Esto permitirá que los equipos de seguridad puedan detectar adecuadamente a las personas que no deberían portar un arma en las parroquias, a la vez que se tiene una presencia armada en caso de que ocurra una situación de emergencia”, explicó Short. 🇺🇸

tras encomienda del Director del Departamento de Catequesis y Evangelización, Marlon De la Torre, y contó con la colaboración de todos los ministerios bajo su dirección y la actualización de sus propias páginas, como es el caso del Instituto San Junípero Serra, San Francisco de Sales, Matrimonio y Vida familiar, etc.

La nueva versión digital es también “fruto del V Encuentro, donde muchos pidieron tener acceso a la formación e información”, asegura Joel Rodríguez — quien tuvo a cargo la organización del V Encuentro Nacional en septiembre del año pasado — y enfatizó además que continuará manteniendo actualizada toda la información del V Encuentro en esta página.

El uso de la tecnología para acercarse a Dios, “es un llamado a nosotros, los laicos al servicio de Dios en su Iglesia, para utilizar la tecnología disponible para el bien de la humanidad y para que todos tengan acceso a la Buena Nueva, que nuestro Señor nos ha anunciado”, dijo Rodríguez.

Paola Quintero Araújo, Directora del Instituto de formación para adultos, San Junípero Sierra, declara estar muy “interesada en que la gente utilice con frecuencia los recursos en las páginas web, porque así podemos llegar a muchas más personas” e invita a la feligresía diocesana de habla hispana a aprovechar las inscripciones en línea para los cursos y la información relevante disponible como los documentos de la Iglesia.

Además, adelantó que se está “explorando la posibilidad de ofrecer cursos en línea”, durante el próximo verano y el otoño, en inglés y en español. “Es una manera de llegar a las personas que viven en áreas más lejanas, por ejemplo, Wichita Falls, pues se les hace muy difícil venir en persona a tomar los cursos”, añadió Quintero Araújo, quien dirige también el Instituto San Francisco de Sales. Actualmente, las clases en español se dan en el Colegio de San Pedro Apóstol, en White Settlement, y las de inglés, en el Colegio de San José, en Arlington.

Selmy De Reza, 32, feligrés de la Parroquia de Santa Rosa de Lima, en Glen Rose, localizada a poco más de una hora del centro de Fort Worth, dice que el dar a conocer más el uso de las páginas web en español de los diferentes ministerios de la Diócesis “ayudará mucho a motivar a mi comunidad y en caso de que no podamos asistir a las actividades, ver lo que otras parroquias hacen y tratar de hacer lo mismo... como dice el Papa Francisco, ‘hacer más lío’ entre los hispanos y crecer en nuestra fe, unidos con otras comunidades”. Selmy es también voluntaria en el grupo de jóvenes de preparatoria, en la Parroquia de San Frances Cabrini, en Granbury.

De Reza comienza su día con oración, pues asegura que, “si no tenemos oración, no tenemos espiritualidad”, y para ello usa una aplicación, por lo que al ver que la página del Ministerio Hispano tiene las lecturas diarias en español, exclamó: “¡Me parece excelente!” 🇺🇸



# Evitando la Trampa Pornográfica

El Programa de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis de Fort Worth se centra en proteger a los niños y las personas vulnerables del abuso sexual. Un medio para lograrlo es el programa *Protecting God's Children*<sup>®</sup>, que acrecienta el conocimiento y conciencia sobre los depredadores adultos que interactúan con los niños en línea para manipularlos, prepararlos y, en última instancia, victimizarlos a través de la explotación sexual o del abuso sexual.

Sabemos que los depredadores sexuales a menudo intentan acicalar a los niños mostrándoles pornografía, para así insensibilizarlos. Esta exposición a la pornografía no sólo proviene de los depredadores adultos. Otra fuente de pornografía, mucho más común, por la cual una mayor cantidad de niños están expuestos a la pornografía “adulta”, y que mayormente es “pornografía hardcore”, es el Internet.

Las estadísticas recientes indican que el 90 por ciento de los hombres jóvenes y el 60 por ciento de las mujeres jóvenes ya han estado expuestos a la pornografía (gran parte de ésta implica violencia e imágenes abiertamente explícitas) a sus 18 años. De ese 90 por ciento, la edad promedio de exposición a la pornografía es entre los 8 y 11 años. Según varias fuentes, el 80 por ciento de esta exposición a la pornografía, que no siempre es voluntaria, ocurre en la seguridad percibida de sus mismos hogares.



Richard Mathews

El impacto que ver pornografía tiene en los niños es significativo y muy perjudicial para su desarrollo. Puede llevar a la adicción sexual, a los embarazos no planificados, al aumento del riesgo de ser víctimas o

perpetradores de violencia sexual, a una devaluación de la vida humana y a que traten a los demás como objetos.

## ¿CÓMO LO PUEDE SABER UN PADRE O UNA MADRE?

Según **ProtectYoungMinds.org**, los padres a menudo pasan por alto las siguientes señales de que un niño o una niña puede estar viendo pornografía:

1. Pasar mucho tiempo en línea, especialmente por la noche y, sobre todo, “después de acostarse”.
2. Cambiar rápidamente la pantalla cuando el padre o la madre entra en la habitación.
3. Cambiar repentinamente la manera de comportarse, en particular, comenzar a utilizar lenguaje vulgar y degradante hacia el sexo opuesto o el acto sexual.

## ¿QUÉ DEBE HACER EL PADRE O LA MADRE?

No tenga miedo de acercarse por detrás a su hijo(a) para ver lo que está viendo en la pantalla.

Use filtros y/o monitores en todos los dispositivos electrónicos que los niños

podrían usar para acceder al Internet.

Hable con sus hijos acerca del gran daño que hace la pornografía a las personas a cualquier edad.

## ¿CÓMO PUEDO HABLAR CON MI HIJO O HIJA?

**BreakTheCycle.org** recomienda que los padres dialoguen con sus hijos y se escuchen mutuamente, de manera tal, que no implique dictar juicio ni echar culpas. Reconozca que el tema es difícil, pero que es necesario discutirlo y que la pornografía no es representativa del verdadero amor y las relaciones saludables.

Victor B. Cline afirmó en su artículo titulado, “Los efectos de la pornografía en los adultos y los niños”, que las personas se ven afectadas por lo que ven. El psicólogo clínico con licencia ha observado que la mayoría de las “desviaciones sexuales son conductas aprendidas, por lo general, a través de un condicionamiento involuntario o accidental”.

El conocimiento, la vigilancia y la acción son necesarios; particularmente, para los padres, ya que la mayoría de las adicciones sexuales y pornográficas comienzan en la niñez media o la adolescencia. ✚

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Richard Mathews es el Director de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Trabajó en el pasado como fiscal y se desempeñó por varios años como abogado general de Boy Scouts of America y de Trail Life USA.

# La Generosidad de una Familia

**M**i columna para la Pascua presenta a una familia de refugiados de Nigeria – padre, madre y dos hijos – que por temor a los ataques contra los cristianos por el grupo terrorista Boko Haram abandonó su hogar en el norte de ese país y se escapó a Nueva York.

Según el columnista Nicholas Kristof del periódico *The New York Times*, un pastor los dirigió a un albergue de desamparados. Allí, Kayode Adewumi, su esposa, Oluwatoyin, y sus dos hijos, Tanitoluwa, de ocho años, y Austin, varios años mayor, vivían anónimamente esperando respuesta a su solicitud de asilo.

El padre alquiló un auto para ser chofer de Uber y consiguió licencia para vender casas por medio de Brick and Mortar. Su esposa estudió para ser auxiliar de salud y pasó el examen. Ellos inscribieron a Tani, entonces de siete años, en la escuela pública no. 116, donde un maestro de tiempo parcial le enseñó a los alumnos a jugar ajedrez.

El niño estaba encantado y habló con su mamá y ella envió un correo electrónico a la escuela pidiendo que le permitieran participar en el programa de ajedrez supervisado por Russell Makofsky sin tener que pagar los honorarios porque la familia vivía en un albergue de desamparados.

Makofsky accedió y la mamá llevaba a Tani cada sábado a practicar ajedrez tres

horas en Harlem. Un año después, a la edad de ocho años, Tani fue coronado el campeón de ajedrez del estado de Nueva York en la categoría de kinder a tercer grado.

Makofsky le dijo asombrado a Kristof: “Un año para llegar a ese nivel, subir la montaña y ser el mejor de los mejores, jamás había visto eso”.

Como resultado, Tani ahora tiene un hogar, ofertas de becas a escuelas privadas de élite y una invitación del Presidente Bill Clinton.

Una cuenta GoFundMe, establecida después de la primera columna que Kristof escribió, recaudó \$200,000 para la familia Adewumi, ofertas de departamentos, también de consulta legal gratis por abogados de inmigración y tres compañías ofrecieron hacer una película de la vida de Tani, y la mamá consiguió empleo de auxiliar de salud en un hospital.

Lo más interesante de esta historia fue la reacción de los Adewumi a todo esto. Aceptaron la oferta de un departamento módico de dos dormitorios en lugar de un lugar más lujoso, como también muebles, sábanas y toallas y cien libros de ajedrez.

Pero de los \$200,000 sólo utilizaron el 10 por ciento como diezmo para su iglesia y con el resto establecieron la Fundación Tanitoluwa Adewumi para ayudar a otros inmigrantes africanos que estaban luchando en los Estados Unidos, como lo hicieron los

Adewumi hasta hace poco.

Los padres aplazaron inscribir a Tani en una escuela de élite hasta después que acabe la primaria. Optaron por mantenerse fieles a la escuela pública no. 116 que le enseñó a su hijo a jugar ajedrez. “Esta escuela mostró su confianza en Tanitoluwa”, dijo la madre. “Por eso reciprocamos esa confianza”. Y en la escuela, la directora Jane Hsu presidió un rally reconociendo el triunfo de Tani.

“Tani es un recordatorio que los refugiados enriquecen esta nación y que el talento es universal, aunque la oportunidad no lo sea”, escribió Kristof. “En Nigeria”, dijeron sus padres, “su brillantez en ajedrez jamás hubiera resaltado”.

Ya en su nuevo hogar, Tani expresó el deseo de comer de nuevo las comidas de su mamá.

Al acercarse la temporada de la Pascua, la generosidad de los Adewumi, tan libre del materialismo, es una lección para todos nosotros.

Kristof cuestionó cómo podían rechazar hasta el último centavo de la gran cantidad que recibieron. Les preguntó si no querían una fiesta de celebración. ¿Nuevos teléfonos celulares iPhone? ¿Una vacación? Su respuesta: “No”. Y Tani añadió: “Quiero ayudar a otros niños”. 🇺🇸



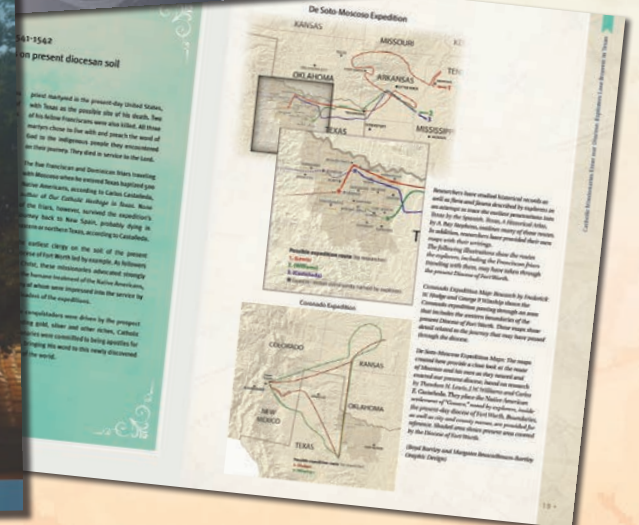
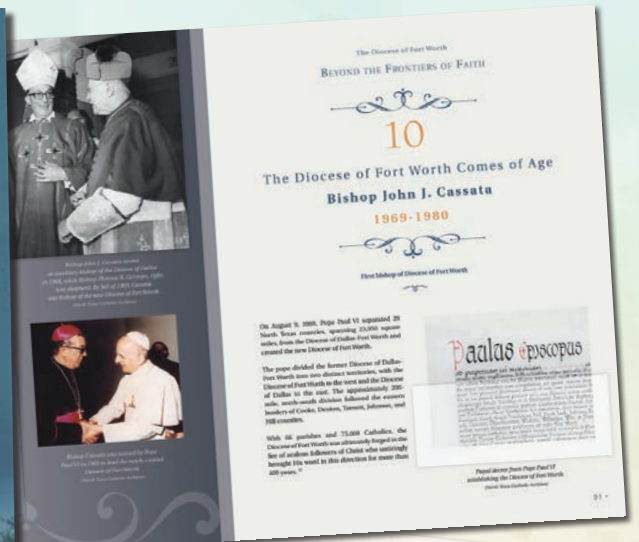
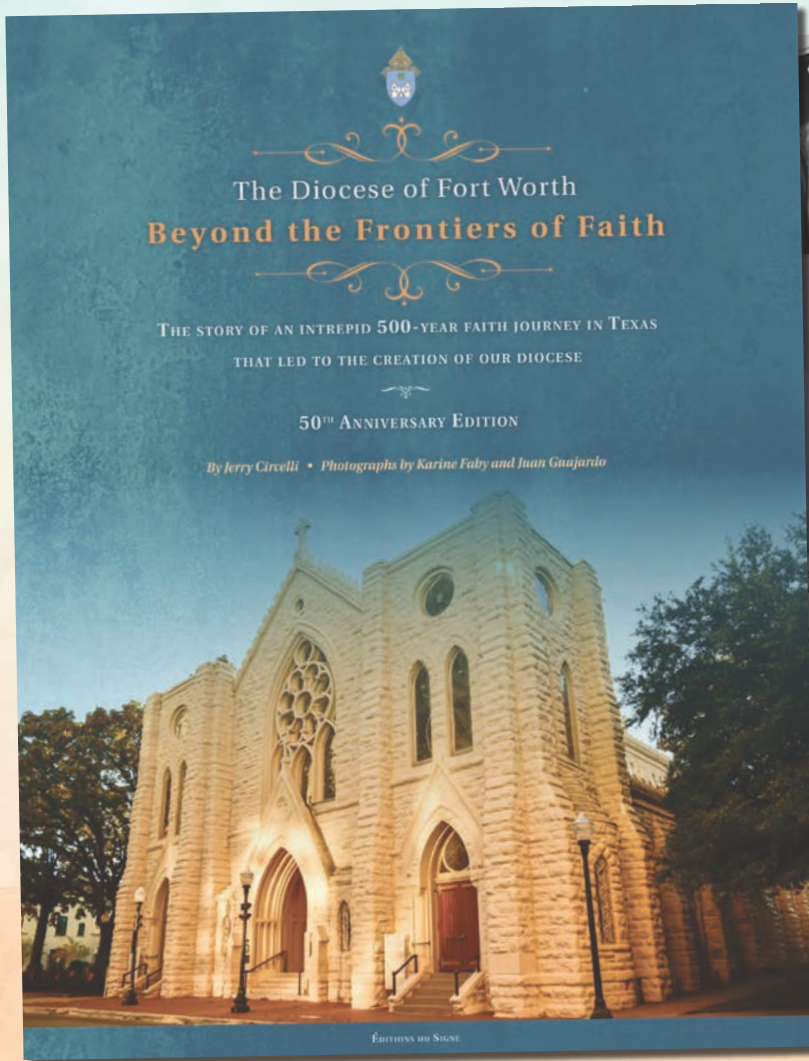
Moisés Sandoval

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Moisés Sandoval escribe para la columna del Catholic News Service “Buscando Vida/Seeking Life.”



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