

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC

Lord,
set them
free



A Portfolio of Protection

Permanent Life Insurance — Our signature product. Insure your life for life.

Term Life Insurance — Affordable protection for temporary needs.

Retirement Annuities — Retirement income you can count on. Guaranteed.

Long-Term Care Insurance — Protect your assets. Get quality care. Prepare for the future.

Disability Income Insurance — Receive an income even when you are sick or can't work.

The Knights of Columbus offers a full-line of quality, flexible products backed by our highly-rated financial strength* to help protect your Catholic family.

LIFE INSURANCE • DISABILITY INCOME INSURANCE • LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE • RETIREMENT ANNUITIES



Bob Hoholick, LUTCF
Cell: 214-455-5256
robert.hoholick@kofc.org



Luis Hernandez, FIC
Cell: 817-975-4220
luis.hernandez@kofc.org



Michael Bryant, FIC
Cell: 940-282-8074
michael.bryant@kofc.org



Arthur Kelly, FIC
Cell: 469-951-7398
arthur.kelly@kofc.org



Eddy Patterson, FICF
Cell: 817-776-0555
eddy.patterson@kofc.org



Stephen Kouba, FIC
Cell: 817-727-5872
stephen.kouba@kofc.org



Carlos Canseco
Cell: 682-465-9691
carlos.canseco@kofc.org



Tom Centarri, FIC
Cell: 682-261-5806
tom.centarri@kofc.org



Tim Bradford, FIC
Cell: 817-821-2323
tim.bradford@kofc.org



Brian Sprague, FIC
Cell: 817-382-7301
brian.sprague@kofc.org



Thanh "Tom" Nguyen
Cell: 682-298-9880
thanh.nguyen@KofC.org



Chris Stark, FICF
General Agent
Cell: 979-218-3664
Office: 817-616-5359
chris.stark@kofc.org

**Join us
online today:**
www.KofC.org/Join

Andrew Tice, FIC
Assistant General Agent
Cell: 972-333-7462
andrew.tice@kofc.org
KofCInsuranceFW.com



EQUALITY ACT CONTRARY TO DIGNITY, FAIRNESS

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



 @BpOlsonFW

In March, the U.S. House of Representatives, by a margin of eighteen votes, passed the Equality Act, legislation which would modify the 1964 Civil Rights Act and purports to address issues of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in many areas of public life. Also contained in the Equality Act is a provision to prevent the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 from offering any protection for religious communities that request exceptions to the new law because of their sincerely held beliefs.

The Church teaches, and has always taught as handed down from Christ, that each human person is created in the image and likeness of God and possesses an irrevocable dignity regardless of gender, race, color, nationality, or any other distinguishing characteristic. Thus, every person should be treated with respect and understood to be equal in dignity. It is this foundation of the dignity of human nature that prompted the Church in the U.S. to actively work for the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act ending legally sanctioned racial segregation.

The Church maintained then, as it always has and does now, that equality of persons before the law is a point of justice to which all reasonable people should aspire, but when false ideas about the nature of the human person are embedded in law, then terrible tyranny will follow. In the case of the Equality Act, the falsehood in question is found in the novel claim that the human person is a disembodied intellect and will possessing a bundle of desires which can then determine the gender identity of the individual and define the meaning of the body, both for oneself and for everyone else, without any reference to biological sex. If this bizarre construal of human nature is enshrined in law by the Equality Act, then any custom or practice anywhere in the U.S. which connects human identity or activity to biological sex will become illegal, and activists will immediately begin to use the judicial branch of government as a truncheon to enforce submission to the claim that God did not create human beings as male and female.

Gender dysphoria is real, and for those who experience it, life can be very difficult. Professionals of every relevant discipline

should help those with gender dysphoria to find a path to peace in their lives, and we should all be patient and understanding of those who feel existentially out of place in their own bodies and extend to them the same respect we give to all persons. That approach of understanding and respect cannot include our agreement to the false claim that gender is a purely personal preference and cultural construct disconnected from the biological sex of the body. It must be pointed out that the Church stands ready to help stop unjust discrimination of any group, but not at the expense of the truth, the oppression of religious liberty, the persecution of other groups of people, and most especially the endangering of vulnerable children and adolescents — as could be the case if the Equality Act is passed.

The Act would force female athletes to compete against males identifying as women. It would also require medical professionals to provide sex-change operations and therapies, even if it violates their religious beliefs and conscience and goes against their best medical judgment. Adoption agencies could also be at risk of being forced to place children with same-sex couples even if this violates their beliefs and those of the birth mother. Our schools would be compelled to provide unisex restrooms and locker rooms for children and adolescents. The teaching of the Gospel and right reason that homosexual acts are unnatural and immoral would be decried falsely to be hate speech by the mandarins of academia, journalism, entertainment, Big Tech, “woke” corporations, and anarchists. This false charge of hate speech makes it ever more urgent that we courageously speak the truth of Christ in love and never out of fear, anger, resentment, arrogance, or contempt for other people. Yet, speak the truth at all costs. Please pray with me and join me in asking our senators bravely to not pass the Equality Act and let us pray for the peace and common good of our republic. 🇺🇸



The USCCB has a quick link to contact legislators:
votervoice.net/USCCB/campaigns

IN THIS ISSUE

May - June 2021

- 8 A LOT OF GOOD**
Faith, tears, and memories on the closing of Our Lady of Victory.
- 12 NOTRE DAME CLOSES**
Hope and trust coexist with grief as the 117-year old school is shuttered.
- 18 TEEN MOTHERS**
Loving Care Pregnancy Center gives support to pregnant students.
- 24 GO THE DISTANCE**
Fr. Zachary Burns, TOR, compares physical and spiritual journeys.
- 42 STAY AND FIGHT**
A Safe Environment Coordinator protects children and the Church.

ON THE COVER

Shining a light on human trafficking
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FOLLOW US ONLINE

Visit NorthTexasCatholic.org for photo galleries, videos, the digital version of the magazine, and web-only articles.

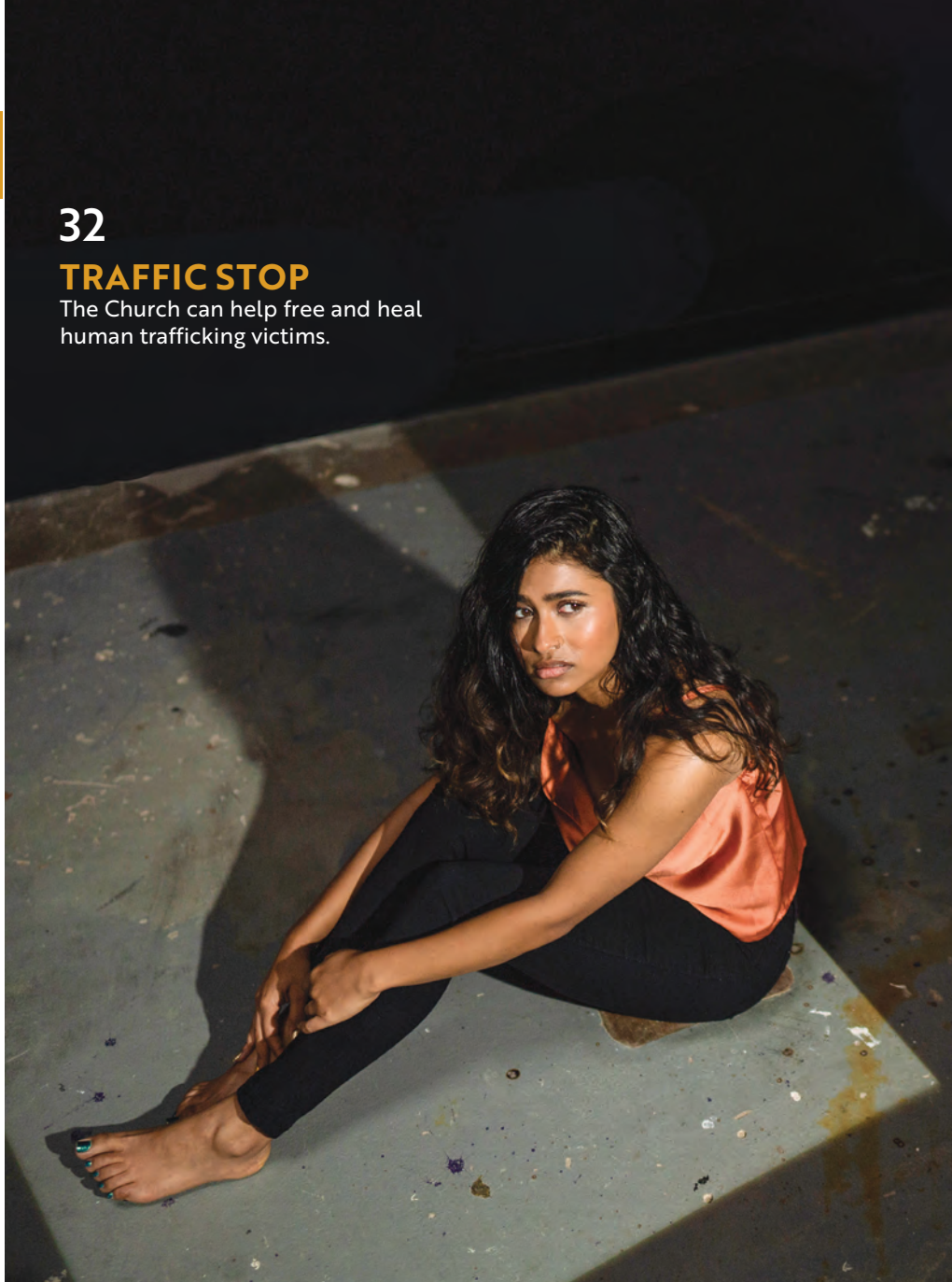
HAVE A STORY IDEA?

Share it with us! Help us make sure your parish community is seen in the NTC online, in print, or on our quickly growing social media accounts. Submit your ideas and briefs to: NTC@fwdioc.org.

32

TRAFFIC STOP

The Church can help free and heal human trafficking victims.



20 SCREEN TIME



26 INSPIRED GIFTS



PUBLISHER BISHOP MICHAEL OLSON

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR PAT SVACINA

EDITOR JUAN GUAJARDO

ASSOCIATE EDITOR SUSAN MOSES

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT ROSA ROSALES

WEB DESIGNER CHRIS KASTNER

CIRCULATION DEBBIE DOWIS

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER ANNETTE MENDOZA-SMITH

CONTRIBUTORS SAHARA ALE | JERRY CIRCELLI
 JAYME DONAHUE | SANDRA ENGELLAND
 JOAN GILLEN | JILLIAN HOLMBOE
 JOY KAISER | RODGER MALLISON
 JENNY MANRIQUE | SUSAN MCFARLAND
 WALKER PRICE | MATTHEW REDDEN
 VIOLETA ROCHA | ALEX ROSALES
 MICHAEL SHERMAN | MARY LOU SEEWOSTER
 MATTHEW SMITH | BEN TORRES

TRANSLATOR YOLANDA NEWCOMB

REGULAR COLUMNISTS JEFF HEDGLEN | ALI HOFFMAN
 FR. NGHIA NGUYEN | CALLIE NOWLIN
 FR. TAD PACHOLCZYK | SEAN WRIGHT

Editorial Office: 800 West Loop 820 S., Fort Worth, Texas 76108, 817-945-9424.

NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC Magazine (USPS 751-370) (ISSN 0899-7020) is published bi-monthly by the Most Rev. Michael F. Olson, Bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth. For those who are not registered parishioners in the Diocese of Fort Worth, subscription rates are \$18 for one year, \$35 for two years, \$50 for three years. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Worth, TX. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to North Texas Catholic, 800 W. Loop 820 S., Fort Worth, Texas 76108.

The appearance of advertising in these pages does not imply endorsement of businesses, services, or products. Readers must exercise prudence in responding to advertising in all media.

For address changes, please contact Debbie Dowis, 817-533-3172.

Helping the oppressed go free

Readers, prepare yourself for a difficult topic this issue: human trafficking. While it may be an uncomfortable read, it's a necessary one as trafficking is a topic that's often swept under the rug in our society or misunderstood as something that only happens overseas in impoverished countries. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In 2010, *Texas Monthly* wrote a longform story on human trafficking and its prevalence in Texas and especially in Houston. Turns out, because of our proximity to the border of Mexico, our two sprawling international airports, and our vast interstate highway system, human trafficking is a major problem here. In her article, Mimi Swartz jumped into the world of one poor woman who was being trafficked against her will. "She mostly worked 12-hour shifts, sold by the hour to men of different colors and creeds, rich and poor, grandfathers, husbands, fathers, sons. Sometimes her shifts lasted 24 hours," Swartz said of the young, Thai woman.

This shamefully happened (and continues to happen) here in Texas and the U.S. In 2019, Polaris, the non-profit which operates the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline, worked on 11,500 human trafficking cases involving 22,326 victims and nearly 5,000 traffickers. According to Polaris, the average age at trafficking is 17 and the overwhelming majority of these victims, by a ratio of 5-to-1, are female. Sadly, odds are those numbers are only a fraction of the whole picture.

What's more, those stats are evidence that it's not someone else's problem, it's ours, and we keep aiding and abetting it. Demand fuels supply. It's our job as disciples of Jesus Christ to stop that and help restore the dignity of the survivors. Fortunately, in recent years the Catholic Church has gotten more and more involved in fighting this crime, from Pope Francis establishing an international day of prayer and commissioning the publication of pastoral guidelines for helping victims of trafficking, to grassroots efforts started by religious sisters and laypeople.

So, the question is: What can you and I do? For starters, we must become informed. Our diocesan Safe Environment Office hosts monthly human trafficking prevention workshops which you can join via Zoom. Secondly, we must pray for guidance on how we as individuals can help. But we mustn't stay stuck on prayer; we must act. In our cover story we mention some ways you can help practically. The U.S. Catholic Bishops (bit.ly/preventing-trafficking) and Catholic Health Association of the United States (bit.ly/traffickingoverview) also have resources and initiatives you can support to help end this scourge. Please join us in this fight, we owe it the victims.

Juan Guajardo
 EDITOR



During the Chrism Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral, Bishop Olson prepares the holy oils for the diocese. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Why the Chrism Mass is vital to the Church

Safe Environment marks abuse prevention month

FORT WORTH — The Safe Environment Office of the Diocese of Fort Worth employed two effective tactics — prayer and knowledge — to combat child abuse in April, which is designated Child Abuse Prevention Month.

During daily prayers on social media, participants prayed for the protection and wellbeing of children and vulnerable populations; for healing for those who have suffered physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; and for victims of human trafficking.

Principals, parents, catechists, facilitators, and students joined Bishop Michael Olson in praying a Rosary, captured on video and available at bit.ly/FWrosaryforhealing.

On April 22, Bishop Olson celebrated Mass at

St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington for the protection of children and the healing of victims of abuse.

Dr. Janye Coffman, a pediatrician at Cook Children’s Hospital, gave a Zoom presentation on how to recognize and prevent child abuse.

Also, Dr. Kim Robinson, licensed psychologist, offered the online seminar, “Innocence Lost to Human Trafficking.”

Sandra Schrader-Farry, director of Safe Environment, was encouraged by the number of faithful who joined in April’s activities.

She hopes prayer and education help “empower the faithful in the diocese to take part in the fight to protect children” and create a safe environment to worship, learn and grow.

FORT WORTH — Can you imagine the Catholic Church without the sacraments or the priesthood?

Both are tremendous sources of grace for the faithful, and both are emphasized in the liturgy of the Chrism Mass, celebrated on the Tuesday of Holy Week.

The Chrism Mass derives its name from the blessing of the three holy oils used in all parishes across the diocese in the coming year. Bishop Michael Olson blessed the oil of catechumens, used in Baptism; the chrism oil, used for Baptisms, Confirmations, Holy Orders, and the consecration of altars and dedication of churches; and the Oil of the Sick.

After describing last year’s hardships brought about by the pandemic and civil unrest, he said to the priests, “The oils that we will bless in this liturgy are indeed oils of gladness that we will use to anoint God’s people in place of mourning — mourning that produces

the listless spirit of existential apathy.”

Also during the March 30 Mass, the priests renewed the promises they made at their ordination.

Bishop Olson reminded the priests of the importance of prayer to sustain them in their ministry of service to others.

Then, looking ahead to Jesus’ passion, the bishop said, “As we renew our promises, we remember that we do so with Christ in the present moment and with the sensitivity and compassion of Gethsemane in which He asks us to pray with Him as His brothers and His priests. Let us ask Him to change our hearts and those of His people from indifference to His incomparable love that does not count the cost, the love poured forth with His Blood on Calvary.”

In blessing the sacramental oils and in renewing priestly promises, the Chrism Mass displays the unity of the Church in the diocese and across the world.

Father Sojan George lights a candle from the Easter candle, held by Deacon Thomas Bates at the beginning of the Easter Vigil Mass. (NTC/Ben Torres)



New Catholics welcomed, salvation history recounted

GRAPEVINE — Last year, the services of the Easter Triduum were celebrated *sine populo*, without a congregation present.

This year's Triduum rites included just minor modifications due to coronavirus precautions, but those "did not detract from the full significance" of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Mass, said Deacon Thomas Bates of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine.

Across the world, many Catholics are welcomed into the Church at the Easter Vigil Mass. In parishes of the Diocese of Fort Worth, 268 individuals were baptized and 164 welcomed into full communion with the Church through Confirmation.

Some parishes, including St. Francis of Assisi, opted to initiate the new members of the Church at a separate Mass to avoid crowding at the Easter Vigil.

The Triduum begins with Holy Thursday Mass.

This year, instead of washing of the feet, congregations welcomed the holy sacramental oils blessed two days earlier at the Chrism Mass.

At the Good Friday service, parishioners revered the cross with a bow, rather than a kiss.

The Easter Vigil Mass begins in darkness as it recounts the story of salvation. Dcn. Bates, who has served at the Grapevine parish since 2009, finds special meaning in the moments after the Old Testament readings, when the lights come on and bells ring to represent Jesus and the resurrection. Although he has served at the Mass for years, he said he's "riding high" at that moment.

Next year, Dcn. Bates hopes that catechumens and candidates will be baptized and confirmed at the Easter Vigil at St. Francis of Assisi. Seeing them light their candles, then light candles held by parishioners, represents that all baptized Christians share the light of Jesus.

PRIEST ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL F. OLSON

REV. ANTO VIJAYAN CARLOOSE, SAC

From outside the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. John the Baptizer Parish in Bridgeport, effective April 8.

IN MEMORIAM

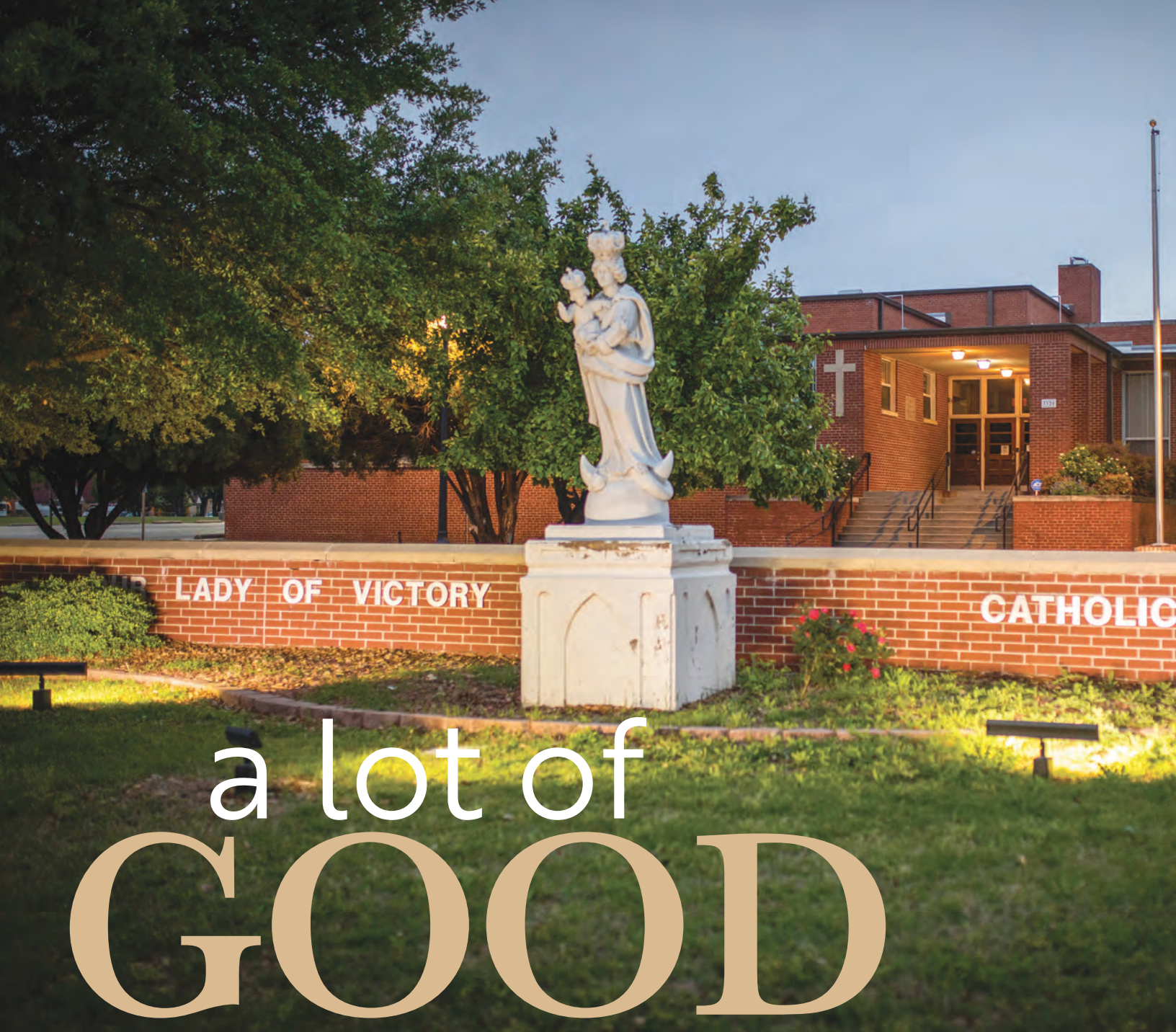
SR. MARY ELAINE BREEN, SSMN

March 8, 2021



After graduating from Catholic schools in Fort Worth, Sr. Mary Elaine joined the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, serving as a nurse, midwife, and caregiver. She became the first Texan sent from the western province to the order's missions in the Congo and Mubuga, Rwanda.

Full obituaries are available at NorthTexasCatholic.org.



a lot of GOOD

Tears, faith, and memories accompany
Our Lady of Victory School's pending closure

By Matthew Smith



The statue of Our Lady of Victory stands in front of the elementary school. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

The Sisters of St. Mary of Namur trekked from Europe to New York to Texas hoping, in the words of Mother Emilie Kemen, to do a little good. In the 202 years since, the sisters have accomplished that and much more by spreading the faith, among other ways, by opening Catholic schools in New York, Texas, and other locales including Our Lady of Victory Catholic School in Fort Worth.

The sisters persevered against unfavorable odds. Father Nicholas-Joseph Minsart founded his parish and an association of religious women, the Institute of the Sisters of St. Mary, in 1819, at a time when religious communities were forbidden in Belgium. The order flourished and the sisters later traveled to New York in 1863, during the height of the Civil War, to establish their first American school. Additional sisters traveled to Texas in 1873 during a time of widespread anti-Catholic animus but went on to found Sacred Heart Academy that same year in Waco.

“The sisters landed in Waco when it was still Waco Village,” Sister Louise Smith, SSMN, said. “There were no paved streets or sidewalks. It was a really rustic place and one of the stops on the Chisholm Trail. So it had cowboys and cattle going through constantly.”

Sr. Louise, who resides in the current convent on OLV’s grounds and serves as an archivist for the order, said the sisters almost abandoned Texas.

“If it hadn’t been for yellow fever, we probably wouldn’t be here today,” Sr. Louise said. “Mother Emilie and the sisters with her were rather discouraged at the beginning because so few students came to register for school.”

The sisters even considered

returning to New York.

“But yellow and dengue fever quarantined Waco and they couldn’t leave,” Sr. Louise said. “Mother Emilie took that as a sign that they weren’t supposed to leave.”

The decision was providential and over a span of 40 years, the sisters established several other Texas schools, including St. Ignatius Academy in 1885 in downtown Fort Worth and OLV in 1910.

Architectural firm Sanguinet, Staats and Hedrick designed OLV’s five-story, red brick Gothic revival-style building that still stands. The same firm also designed nearby St. Mary of the Assumption Church.

The all-girls school welcomed 31 boarders and 41 day students on Sept. 12, 1910, before construction of the building was complete. In addition to the sisters, the building originally included elementary through high school students and later added a junior college. Nolan Catholic High School and the University of Dallas subsequently canceled the need for the high school and college.

Construction of the current elementary and middle school, which included boy and girl students, began in 1953. The sisters sold the large original building in 1988 and moved into their current convent located behind it.

On Feb. 23, however, the Sisters of St. Mary announced their decision to close OLV at the end of the current school year. Sister Patricia Ridgley, regional superior for the SSMNs, cited rising costs, declining enrollment, and the COVID-19 pandemic as the reasons behind the decision.

Continued on Page 10

From Page 9

“Those were a very painful series of meetings and prayers trying to discern what’s feasible with our limited resources and, of course, the great needs of education,” Sr. Patricia said. “When we finally did come to that painful decision, I think we have not second guessed ourselves. I think we’re following God’s path even with that decision.”

News of the closure stirred sadness, but also reflection and a sense of accomplishment.

“We say we are standing on the shoulders of those who went before us,” Sr. Louise said. “I think so often of those marvelous women who established that huge academy over there. To have the courage to put up a building like that. You wonder how they did it. And yet, that’s the kind of thing the SSMNs have done ever since we were established in Belgium.

“I think it’s amazing what they did and the number of students they have taught and given the faith to. I think it was [former Diocese of Dallas Bishop Edward Dunne] who said the sisters brought the faith to North Texas.”

Sr. Patricia agreed.

“When I walk through [OLV’s] halls and see the different sisters who were principals there and think of the sisters who taught there, I think we put some of our very best educators in that school,” Sr. Patricia said. “Many, every summer, would hold their own specialized workshops or attend universities to learn the latest teaching methods. Some were quite innovative at the time. To me, that says real commitment to their vocation that those sisters put into their work.”

Sr. Louise noted that the school sat near the end of Fort Worth’s trolley line when it opened. She added that several famous stars of the day including violinist Maud Powell, opera star Madame Tetrassini and Shakespearean reader Charles E. Griffith performed in the building’s auditorium.

On a darker note, the Ku Klux Klan also burned a cross on school property in the 1920s.

That occurred, Sr. Louise said,

after a young woman entered the order. Although her father was fine with her decision, several of his friends, members of the KKK, apparently were not.

“That’s when they burned a cross on the front lawn,” Sr. Louise said. “Of course, everyone in the convent was looking out the window wondering what’s going on, what are they doing out there?”

On a brighter note, OLV became, in the early 1950s, Fort Worth’s first fully integrated private or public school.

“It really caused a sensation when [Sister Teresa Webber, the Provincial] said it would be an integrated school for both

boys and girls and white and Black,” Sr. Louise said.

Sr. Louise laughed when reminded that portions of the 1990 movie “Problem Child” were filmed at the former convent building.

“Oh, we were ashamed of that but had no control since we no longer owned that building,” Sr. Louise said. “It was a terrible movie.”

Ray Boothe, owner of Boothe Architects Inc., oversaw renovation of the former convent into the Victory Arts Center, which now contains loft apartments.



Sister Lola Ulupano, SSMN, helps a second grade student with his lesson on August 16, 2019.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

“It was 100 years old and within a week or so of being demolished,” Boothe said. “We secured the building and, by the time we were finished, it was given another 100 years of life hopefully.”

“We found some interesting things during the renovation. One of the original builders apparently got paid and bought a new pair of boots because we found a pair of old boots inside the wall.”

Sr. Patricia said she’s glad to see the old building put to new use.

“That was hard too, saying goodbye to the grand red lady as some of us call her,” Sr. Patricia said. “I hope it will continue to be used fruitfully.”

Fort Worth resident Doug Sutherland said his grandfather, William Shaw, operated a dairy in the area in 1909 and helped the sisters negotiate the purchase of the 26-acre city block OLV occupies.

“It’s a sad thing,” Sutherland said of the impending closure. “I’d like to see the school continue to be used for a positive educational purpose.”

Education remains a vital component of the sisters’ mission, Sr. Patricia said, and a committee has been formed to determine the best future use for the school.

Principal Linda Kuntz, a former

student, recalled great memories of playing on the sidewalk and attending Mass in the old convent’s chapel.

She and Sr. Patricia praised the Diocese of Fort Worth for helping students and educators find new Catholic schools.

“We’re passionate about helping them make an informed decision and keeping them within Catholic education,” Interim Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Melissa Kasmeier said.

Former student Brian Mills now teaches middle school math and science.

“Being a student here was awesome because everyone was so close,” Mills said. “That’s a rare thing and OLV always felt like home, honestly.”

“Closing is sad, mainly for the kids,”

Continued on Page 16



Pre-K leads the school in a prayer service on January 29, 2020. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



Construction begins for the 1953 opening of the elementary school building on Hemphill St. in Fort Worth. (courtesy of Doug Sutherland)

OUR LADY Notre Dame

Hope, gratitude, and grief coexist as the 117-year-old school in Wichita Falls ceases operations at the end of the school year

By Susan Moses



Before Wichita Falls had a permanent priest, it had a Catholic school.

Wichita Falls was mission territory when a series of letters began on September 16, 1903, between Mother Teresa Brennan, provincial superior of the Sisters of St. Mary in America, Wichita Falls Mayor Charles Bean, Father John Goessens of Henrietta, Diocese of Dallas Bishop Edward Dunne, and the Wichita Falls Board of Trade.

Although the population was smaller than other cities in which the religious order had established schools, Fr. Goessens assured Mother Teresa that Wichita Falls was “very booming.”

In a letter to Mayor Bean on February 13, 1904, Mother Teresa committed to providing a school for the 30 Catholic families in Wichita Falls. She wrote, “Our best endeavors will be exerted in giving the good people of Wichita Falls an institution of learning of which they may be proud.”

With the help of God, Mother Teresa Brennan, and the religious women and men who followed her, succeeded.

Documents in the *North Texas Catholic* archives reveal the enthusiasm and energy behind the beginning of Catholic education in Wichita Falls, and not just among the small Catholic community, but also non-Catholic businessmen and civic leaders.

In fact, non-Catholics donated most of the \$25,000 raised to purchase the land for the school. When the sisters opened the doors of the three-story, red brick building on September 5, 1905, Mayor Bean’s three children — non-Catholics — were among the 48 students in attendance.

The school grew quickly, and by the end of the first school year almost 150 students, including a small number of boarders, were enrolled at the Academy of Mary Immaculate. Six sisters of St. Mary of Namur were the original teachers at the school. In the coming decades, the religious order would place teachers at 30 Catholic schools in Texas.

Sister Ginny Vissing, SSMN, followed those original sisters by a few generations. She taught full time at the

Wichita Falls school for a dozen years, then continued for almost 30 years on a part-time basis, teaching music for liturgy while she served as director of religious education for Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, until she retired in 2017.

She described her predecessors, “The sisters who founded the school and other sisters early on were brave. They started with very little, and God multiplied their efforts. Their love for children and their charism for teaching led them to touch lives and hearts. Grace was at work in them, and because it was grace, it continued for decades.”

As the need for Catholic education in the area continued to grow, a second Catholic school in Wichita Falls, Our Lady of Guadalupe, originated in 1928 as a catechetical center for children of Mexican immigrants. By 1957, more than 150 students moved into a new building for kindergarten through sixth grade. The curriculum still focused on reading and language arts for students learning English as their second language.

As the population of Wichita Falls increased, Our Lady Queen of Peace opened a parish school in 1954, run by Benedictine sisters, which merged with Sacred Heart Parish’s school in 1968.

Brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Cross came to Wichita Falls to oversee the high school of the Academy of Mary Immaculate, which they renamed Notre Dame High School in 1965, the year before moving into a new facility.

In 1976, a reorganization brought Our Lady Queen of Peace School and Notre Dame High

Continued on Page 14





Mary Cluley, who teaches physical education, greets students arriving at Notre Dame on November 9, 2018. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

“Now is a time for
thanksgiving for fruitful
graces afforded to so
many people through the
institution of Notre Dame
Catholic School in
Wichita Falls.”

Bishop Michael Olson

From Page 13

School together under the leadership of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth.

Notre Dame Catholic School will cease at the end of this school year, due to declining enrollment, years of annual expenses exceeding income, and many years of costly deferred maintenance on the aging buildings.

The 117-year-old school brought a faith-infused, quality education to generations of students in the area.

Deacon Jim Bindel, pastoral assistant of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, attended Catholic schools in Wichita Falls from first through 12th grades. His wife, Susan, attended from second to 12th grades, and her father helped raise donations for the football field and stands at Notre Dame.

He fondly remembers the “beautiful journey” of Catholic education

with the Benedictine sisters in elementary school, followed by the SSMNs and Holy Cross brothers in middle and high school. He believes receiving a Catholic education laid a strong foundation of faith that kept him rooted as he attended college in the “tumultuous ‘60s.”

He conceded that the closing of the school is distressing, but he acknowledged the financial struggles the school has experienced in recent decades. He said, “I’m thankful that it’s been open for the last 20 years, in these difficult times.... The decision was not made hastily.”

Melissa Kasmeier, interim school superintendent of the diocese, said shutting down Notre Dame “was an extremely difficult decision. I don’t think that you ever come to a decision to cease operations without several years of discussions and assessments. It really came down to a couple of things: all the deferred maintenance on the buildings so the

students' and teachers' safety is not compromised, but then also the enrollment and how that impacts your operational, year-to-year budget.”

A 2019 assessment made at the Wichita Falls pastors' request and presented to the school community noted that the elementary school requires \$6.2 million in repairs and renovations, and the high school needs \$9.9 million to bring the facility to acceptable standards.

Furthermore, student enrollment has declined from 511 twenty years ago to an average of about 210 students. A demographic study predicted flat population growth in the Wichita Falls area, especially among families with school-aged children.

The school has borrowed more than \$800,000 from the diocese to cover operational expenses since 2015. The loan does not include tuition assistance and grants from the Advancement Foundation and Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth, which totaled almost \$150,000 in the last two years.

Unfortunately, a similar pattern of

declining enrollment and financial instability can be found in Catholic schools nationwide. According to the National Catholic Educational Association, this year Catholic school enrollment declined by 6.4 percent, the largest decrease in 50 years. More than 200 Catholic schools in the U.S. were shuttered at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

Among the factors influencing school operations, according to Kasmeier, are the reduction in religious sisters and brothers teaching in the schools. She said, “Back in the 1960s you had predominantly [consecrated] religious teaching. All of that's shifted, and now the laity is teaching, and that [affects] your budget and the increased expenses to educate the children. Payroll expenses, of course, take the majority of your budget.”

Kasmeier also observed that tuition-free charter schools compete with Catholic schools for enrollment among some families.

She noted, “We are grateful for Notre Dame's contribution to Catholic education

over the last 100 years. It met the needs early on, and it continued to work to meet the changing needs of the community.”

Bishop Michael Olson added, “While the ceasing of Notre Dame Catholic School is very sad, it is the sadness of transition and not the sadness of failure. The apostolate of Catholic education in Wichita Falls has gone through transition of the passing of one institution to a subsequent institution as means of Catholic education throughout the past 117 years.

“Now is a time for thanksgiving for fruitful graces afforded to so many people through the institution of Notre Dame Catholic School in Wichita Falls. It is also a time for the renewal of Christ-centered family-based catechesis as the foundation for Catholic education into the future,” he said.

In addition to gratitude, Deacon Jim Bindel expressed that as Christians, we hold onto hope. “Hope is a wonderful virtue,” said the Notre Dame graduate.

Continued on Page 16



Rachel Gutsell, then assistant principal at Notre Dame Catholic School, praises students on a job well done on January 17, 2019. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

NOTRE DAME CATHOLIC SCHOOL,
From Page 15

“As Catholics, we know the virtues of faith, hope, and love. But people tend to overlook hope. Even when we die, we hope in the resurrection with Christ.”

His brother, David Bindel, was ordained a permanent deacon in 2020 and serves as the pastoral assistant of Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls.

Deacon David Bindel acknowledged the closure of Notre Dame will leave a void in the faith community of Wichita Falls. Parents and parishes stand ready to help pass on the faith to the next generation. He offered that Wichita Falls parishes have robust youth ministries and religious education programs for Catholics of all ages.

He said, “Our focus is to have [religious education] available for any family searching for deeper faith. For Mom, Dad,

and the family, students of all ages. No matter the age, we are still learning and growing in faith.”

Sr. Ginny, the retired Notre Dame teacher, lives near the elementary and high school campuses, and she anticipates missing the rhythm and noise of the school year in August.

She remembers teaching first grade at Notre Dame as a “great joy.” The young students required “lots of energy,” she recalled, as she had to juggle the role of “teacher, social director, nurse, peacemaker, and mother. But the students are so good, so simple, and so sweet.”

Traditions such as dressing as saints for All Saints Day and the May Crowning’s procession with flowers are special memories for Sr. Ginny. “When you enrich the liturgy and make it colorful and beautiful, the kids really enjoyed it,” she recalled.

Still, she said, “The grace of the Holy

Spirit will last. That is our hope, even in the ending of Notre Dame. The work of the Holy Spirit will continue in some form or another. It’s all the work of God, and we must trust that the work of God will continue.”

Sr. Ginny said the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur are grappling with the reality that two schools they founded — Our Lady of Victory Catholic School and Notre Dame — will close at the end of the school year. She said, “It’s a time of letting go, which can be very difficult.”

Today, the sisters demonstrate the same reliance on God’s providence that Mother Teresa Brennan demonstrated when she agreed to build and staff the Academy of Mary Immaculate in Wichita Falls.

Sr. Ginny said, “We will let go of the past, and trust, and accept God’s plan for the future. We expect God to renew the face of the earth.” 🇺🇸



A statue of Our Lady of Victory stands in front of the school.
(NTC/Rodger Mallison)

OUR LADY OF VICTORY,
From Page 11

he continued. “Some of the eighth graders have younger siblings and it’s sad that they won’t get to have the full OLV experience.”

Louisiana resident Marnie Woynowski attended OLV in the ‘60s, as did her sister and her mother before them.

“It’s sad because of the family connections and that OLV is such an institution with so much history. It was a great school. The sisters were ahead of their time in teaching girls to be strong. They stressed self-confidence and being yourself.”

Former student and current teacher Conor Gillen joked that he enrolled at OLV in the sixth grade and later began teaching English and history in the same room.

“I’ve definitely become a

better Catholic in my time teaching here and I know moving forward that that will continue,” Gillen said. “The news of closing was sad but Principal Kuntz has been a cheerleader and a rock for all of us since day one.”

Although Sr. Patricia expressed sadness over OLV’s closing, she also cherished the decades-spanning legacy of educators, students, and parents.

“I think that’s just remarkable,” Sr. Patricia said. “I think that’s the value of having an institution a long time, the amazing stories we’ve heard, and that’s been really edifying.”

“That helps us celebrate these 110 years and not just grieve, not just mourn it,” she continued. “Because of all the stories we’ve heard and our conviction, I think that, as a community, God is still leading us, if we have the eyes to see and ears to hear.” 🇺🇸

joy RIDE

Catholic Charities
Fort Worth provides
free rides to COVID-19
vaccination sites

By Mary Lou Seewoester



Elizabeth Edwards is buckled up and ready for the ride to her second COVID-19 vaccination at Globe Life Field. (NTC/Matt Redden)

When 90-year-old Elizabeth Edwards learned she was eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, she registered for it as soon as she could, even before she had transportation to the Globe Life Field vaccination site in Arlington. Edwards, who lives in a Fort Worth senior complex, found her ride at Catholic Charities Fort Worth.

“It was a blessing,” Edwards said. “The drivers were so courteous and polite ... and it was free!”

Edwards, who had not previously used CCFW Transportation Services, said she learned about rides to vaccination sites because CCFW had communicated with the manager of her complex.

“We still have people willing to help ... people who care about other people and that’s beautiful,” she said.

Throughout the pandemic, CCFW has adjusted its services to the changing needs of the community. So, when the COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Tarrant County, Transportation Services expanded its schedule to include free trips to vaccination sites. As of April 9, CCFW drivers

completed 602 COVID-19 vaccination trips.

Todd Beard, head of CCFW social enterprises, said when Transportation Services distributed fliers advertising free rides to vaccination sites, it became clear there was a gap in public awareness about the vaccine.

“A sizeable portion of calls were from people who wanted to schedule their vaccine,” Beard said. “So we worked a little bit on that education ... where the [vaccination] sites were and what they needed to do to obtain their vaccine. Then we were able to get them to and from vaccination sites with our customary door-to-door service.”

Joe Manuel, driver supervisor, said requests for rides to vaccination sites flooded the transportation schedule, increasing daily round trips by 25 to 30.

“We just had to do what we’ve always done, but we had to be more strategic in picking up people and scheduling drop offs,” he explained. “We don’t look at people as numbers but as people, as individuals, and we’re there to help them and do the best we can for them.”

Since 2011, CCFW Transportation Services has offered door-to-door service for medical appointments, employment, and even grocery shopping for seniors and those with disabilities. About three dozen full- and part-time paid drivers and six volunteers completed extensive training to ensure that clients travel safely to and from their destinations. To protect riders during the pandemic, they also sanitize vehicles between rides and at the end of each day, Beard explained.

Compared to the 78,000 rides logged in 2019, the transportation team experienced a significant drop in rides last year due to COVID. Yet, in 2020, drivers still traveled 649,000 miles, providing more than 50,000 rides — about 22,000 for medical needs and nearly 11,000 for employment.

Beard credits the Transportation Services team with the program’s consistent high quality of service.

“I’ve never seen such dedication among folks in my life,” he said. “There’s this passion to serve those in need and it resonates in them.” 🇹🇽



walking with them

Loving Care Pregnancy Center helps young moms
in the community succeed

By Susan McFarland

Being a teenager is difficult. Homework, keeping up the grades, and making good decisions all while balancing emotions is taxing for most. Add a baby to the mix and the stress load doubles, along with the fear, anxiety, and loneliness that comes with living life as a grown-up while friends are out doing “normal” teenage activities.

Luckily, teen moms at Trinity High School in Euless are getting help with those issues while making friends with others in the same situation. Loving Care Pregnancy Center, a pro-life apostolate of the Diocese of Fort Worth, provides pregnancy resources and parenting information to teens at the HEB-area school, giving practical assistance and weekly mentoring.

Joan Hilleren, the program’s director, said about 45 percent of pregnancies in the HEB area occur in teens. Loving Care, which was formed seven years ago, connects them with much-needed resources and gives more than just diapers and wipes; volunteers give things to help the young moms succeed, such as new laptops and printers when they go to college.

The program meant so much to one student, she chose a college major that will allow her to help others.

Katelyn, 23, will graduate in May from the University of Texas at Arlington with a bachelor’s degree in social work. She had her baby, Keyanna, in eighth grade at age 14. Her daughter turned 10 in March. Katelyn is now married and on the path to a fruitful career, but she credits the help of Loving Care for the start of her success.

She partnered with Loving Care during her junior year



Katelyn Tanon, 23, and her daughter Keyanna Collier, 10, and husband Karlo Tanon, 23, at Bob Eden Park in Euless, on Jan. 28, 2021. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Joan Hilleren, the director of Loving Care Pregnancy Center. (NTC Photo)

at Trinity High School.

“They really dedicated their lives to everyone who comes,” Katelyn said of the volunteers. “They provided [us] with diapers, wipes... my baby was older, so they provided me with toys and gift cards. I was even connected to a person who donated a car to me.”

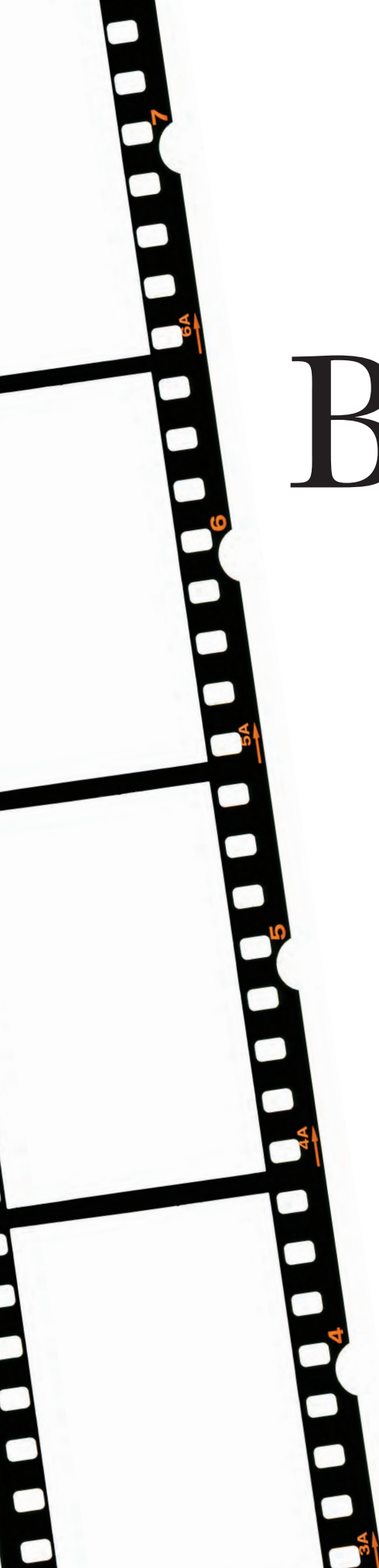
Katelyn said she is “just super thankful to Loving Care for all they have provided. They even covered costs after high school and helped with college textbooks.”

Another teen mom who partnered with Loving Care, Kennedy had her daughter Mellari at age 17. Mellari will be three on Feb. 1. Kennedy graduated from Trinity High School in 2018 and plans on pursuing a career in medical research.

Kennedy said she values all the things



Continued on Page 23



BIG VISION. Big Screen.

Teens use their gifts, passion to bring Catholic message to viewers

By Susan Moses

Take about 200 pre-teens and teenagers, give them 14-hour summer days with minimal adult supervision, and what do you get? A feature-length movie about an epic battle between good and evil, or “practically a miracle,” said co-director Clare Vining.

This story begins in 2015 with a fail. The Vining family of Carrollton couldn’t find a movie that would be appropriate and entertaining for the five children and their parents. What they found instead was a video on how to make a movie.

Watching that lit a match under the two oldest Vining children, Clare and Mary, now 18 and 16 respectively.

Since then, Clare and Mary have made several short films, and on March 29-30, their latest and most ambitious film, “The Light of Virsa,” premiered to sell-out audiences at Cinemark 17 in Dallas.

The Vining sisters are quick

to credit God “for the graces to make it happen” and for the volunteer talents of the 200-member cast and crew. A primary contributor is 18-year-old composer Diego Campos, who wrote and arranged the original score for the 90-minute movie, as well as two previous short films with the Vining sisters.

Diego became involved early in “The Light of Virsa,” while the sisters were still putting the final touches on the script they began writing in February 2019.

“Music is 50 percent of a film,” said Clare. Mary added, “It really makes it flow, and tells you what emotion you are supposed to be having.”

“It’s like glue for the various scenes you put together,” said Diego, a member of St. Mary Parish in Dublin. Diego’s score includes themes for the hero and his foil, and he carefully matches the action of the fight scenes and the abduction.

The music and film combine to tell a tale of an orphan on a



quest to rescue his kidnapped sister and restore goodness and order to the mythical land of Virsa.

Clare explained, “The whole idea of the film is that while the struggle between good and evil is often desperate on the side of good — and it’s a hard, long run — good is the victor in the end, always. So even if it looks like evil is winning, in the end, good always triumphs.

“It’s supposed to be encouragement, especially to Christians, to keep going and to know that they are going to win, as long as they stay with the good. That’s the winning team,” she said.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, CATHOLICISM

Even before its theatrical release and subsequent distribution via streaming at ViningSisters.com, this feature film’s Christian message of hope, perseverance, and the ultimate triumph of good reached a target audience.

Clare and Mary also realized the production itself is a powerful tool of evangelization for the large cast and crew.

Although many, including Clare, Mary, and Diego, have a strong foundation in the faith due to their Catholic homeschooling, others were recruited to the project through flyers at the public library and word of mouth. For some, a day at the set may be their first exposure to teens who are actively practicing the Catholic faith.

The co-directors begin and end each day of filming with prayer, and participants abide by a strict code of behavior governing dress code, phone and media usage, and other matters vital to teens.

In conversations with their peers about the reasons behind the rules, they share “how passionate about Christianity we are. The set is a good place to evangelize and just help people’s

▲ Diego Campos, Mary Vining, and Clare Vining recently premiered their newest and most ambitious film, “The Light of Virsa.” (NTC photo illustration/ Juan Guajardo)

Continued on Page 22

From Page 21

lives grow in a good direction,” said Mary.

Michael Hoffman, who plays one of the few adult roles in the movie, observed the girls growing up as they attended daily Mass at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Carrollton.

He reflected, “I’m so grateful to be a part of watching God move in their lives. God is setting up people to have influence where He needs them to be. He has given them as gifts their desire to be filmmakers and their talents. They give those gifts back to Him, then they feel joy and are energized. It just gets better and better.”

The three teens have given their talents back to God in full measure. Together the sisters have dedicated about 11,000 hours to the project over two years, which began with scriptwriting, continued with filming and editing, and concludes with marketing and distribution. Not to mention scouting the 40 locations, coordinating schedules of the volunteer actors and crew, and mastering special effects software, among many tasks to get their vision to the big screen.

Clare laughed, “We learn the quality as we do the quantity.”

Diego estimates he’s spent more than 4,000 hours writing music for the movie, but it taps into his passion.

“Music is, in my opinion, the purest form of human expression,” he said. “Simply the act of playing

or performing music is giving back to God because it brings joy to others. But when you compose the music, you do that in a more intimate and deeper way than performing. And if I can assist in telling a great story . . . that’s perfect.”

Leesa Hammit, Diego’s music instructor, expects “The Light of Virsa” won’t be his last musical score. She said, “He has tons of talent, so much potential. At a gut level, he understands how to support what’s going on — the emotions, the lighting, the sound effects, the plot. His work is not for his own glory, not about how cool the music is, but to make a cohesive, beautiful ensemble with what’s happening on screen.”

Diego completed his high school studies in December and is enrolled in community college in Stephenville. He plans to study music composition at the University of North Texas.

Clare, who now attends Mater Dei in Irving with her family, will finish high school this spring. She’s not sure about her next step. She said, “We’re very passionate about filmmaking. If this is what God calls us to in the future, absolutely, we’ll be doing this full out, just like we’re doing now and hopefully impacting a lot of people. But if He calls us somewhere else, then that’s where we’ll be.”

A trailer for “The Light of Virsa” can be found at ViningSisters.com, and the score can be heard at DiegoJCampos.com. 🇺🇸

Entrust Your Long-Term & Retirement Savings to Us

OPEN AN IRA OR A TAX-DEFERRED ANNUITY OR ROLLOVER YOUR 401 (K)

3.55%⁺ APY

*Includes current yield + 1.65% first year additional interest



RICK PENNYCUFF
GRAHAM
(940) 560-5164



MIKE DIETER
LINDSAY
(940) 665-3121



RICKY SCHROEDER
WINDTHORST
(940) 337-6423



VALERIE HENSCHIED
MUENSTER
(940) 736-6788



BRYANT HOLUB
WICHITA FALLS
(940) 691-1053



BILL LANGE
GAINESVILLE
(940) 736-3686



BRENDA FLUSCHE
MUENSTER
(940) 768-9814



TERRY PEFFERS
FORT WORTH
(817) 690-7924

CATHOLIC LIFE INSURANCE

Home Office: San Antonio, Texas • (210) 828-9921 • www.clu.com

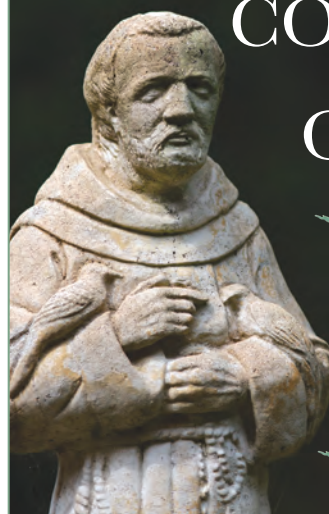
*Interest rates are subject to change & vary by plan.

The minimum interest rate guaranteed is 1.00%. FA 1.21




SAINT FRANCIS VILLAGE


A GATED RETIREMENT (62+) COMMUNITY ON THE SHORES OF LAKE BENBROOK



COME SHARE OUR LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

 A community of strong Catholics, plus independent living and security

 Daily Mass and weekly Confession

 250-acre country living, turkey and deer abound

SaintFrancisVillage.com
StFrancisVillageCatholicChapel.com
817-292-5786



Kennedy and her daughter Mellari. (NTC/Courtesy Photo)

LOVING CARE, From Page 19

she learned while in the program, which she was connected to through the school’s crisis counselor Peggy McIntyre.

“They provided me with a lot of information: helped with parenting tips, how to care for a newborn baby, and helped me to become secure within myself,” she said. “We had lunch every week and they gave a lot of tips about eating healthy and ideas for the baby.... They even helped me get a car.”

Kennedy said the program helped connect her to other girls going through the same thing. She keeps in contact with many of them.

Hillaren said the program has helped about 120 students so far. Being involved with the students is a perfect fit for Hillaren, a Good Shepherd parishioner who is a nutritionist with a teaching background.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were able to hold sessions on campus. But after the school closed in March, they switched to the parking lot.

In October the group was blessed by a family that donated clothes, toys, cribs, and car seats — four truckloads.

“We had Christmas in October; they filled up their bags,” Hillaren said.

Kristy Linehan said after their youngest child outgrew her car seats, baby gear, toys, and clothes, they wanted them to bless more families.

“We donated to various organizations, but Joan and the young parents she helps were and are always so appreciative and grateful that we continued to donate to her amazing charity,” Linehan said. “We feel so blessed to have met Joan and love seeing some of the photos she shares with us of the young families receiving the donations.”

Linehan said her family learned of Loving Care Pregnancy Center through the Catholic Respect Life ministry at Good Shepherd Parish.

“I had joined the CRL because I am passionate about helping protect the lives of the unborn and vulnerable, whether it be through prayer, church ministries, donating to charitable organizations, or sharing information on social media,” she said.

Terri Schauf, diocesan director of Respect Life, said one of the greatest parts of Loving Care is that it directly serves young mothers at the school.

“Joan and all the volunteers are giving them hands-on experience and teaching them that they are beloved daughters of God,” Schauf said. “Here is a program that is walking them through a positive way of life and lifting them up. They are front-line pro-life workers. It’s a beautiful thing. It’s very sacrificial. They go directly in ... walk them through, set a good example, and show God’s mercy.” 🇺🇸

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To Report Misconduct:

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

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

To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

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

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

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



going the DISTANCE

Fr. Zachary Burns, TOR, compares his 100-mile trail run to the journey towards eternity

By Susan Moses

The Mass celebrated by Father Zachary Burns, TOR, on Feb. 6 was remarkable for a few reasons.

First, every Mass is a miracle in which the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Second, that morning he celebrated Mass with his family in a hotel room in Huntsville, Texas, instead of with parishioners at Good Shepherd Church in Colleyville. And the third remarkable circumstance of that Mass: he would soon begin a 100-mile run.

“Talk about a mental boost, to know you’ve had the Eucharist before you go out to do something like this is so helpful,” said the parochial vicar, who completed the Rocky Raccoon 100-mile trail run in Huntsville State Park in a little more than 26 hours.

Fr. Burns began running in sixth grade at the encouragement of his father, and he quickly learned to love putting on his shoes and heading to the woods of the Pocono Mountains near his home in Pennsylvania. Throughout high school, and then college at St. Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania, he ran on the cross-country team. The grueling competition eventually dimmed his spark for the sport, and he stopped running.

However, during his formation for the

priesthood, an ultrarunning friar inspired him to lace up his running shoes again, and they ultimately did a 50-miler together to raise scholarship funds for Franciscan University of Steubenville. The day after completing it, he thought, “That was the most fun thing I’ve done this entire summer.” Fr. Burns’ enthusiasm for the sport was rekindled.

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

In training for the Rocky Raccoon 100-mile trail run, Fr. Burns has logged many miles on his feet, freeing his mind to think about the parallels between running and the spiritual journey.

The first commonality he mentioned was discipline. “The spiritual life involves discipline. To persevere in life as faithful Catholics, we must have a certain degree of discipline built into our lives,” he said. You commit and persist, even when it’s inconvenient, even when you don’t want to, without excuses.

Another similarity is the “sacredness of the starting line and the finish line.” Fr. Burns explained that at the start line, “You are filled with anticipation of things that you don’t know — what’s going to happen ahead of me, how will I feel, what crazy things could happen — but I do know that it’s going to be difficult. You trust that there will be a finish line.”

In the race, the participant often finds

periods of suffering. “You believe in your heart that suffering has to lead to redemption. It’s a reality of the cross that suffering and death leads to resurrection,” he said.

In the darkness near 2 a.m. during Rocky Raccoon, Fr. Burns realized he still had a marathon, 26 miles, to go. He was exhausted and discouraged. He said, “In that moment, it was so helpful to remember the work I put in, like the days I pushed myself to get out and run in the pouring rain for hours. It was absolute misery, but you force yourself to do it. When you are in the race and it actually matters, it’s so helpful to look back at the work you’ve put in and let that drive you to the end.”

He compared it to individuals experiencing a life-threatening illness or a horrible situation. “The only thing that gets them through sometimes is that they are prepared for it. They put in the work spiritually.... When they face a harsh reality, they persevere in hope because they have already experienced toughness. This all serves as preparation for the real trials you will face in life.”

At the finish line, “it’s an image of heaven. You’ve reached this place where everyone is rejoicing, realizing the fruit of all their hard work and discipline and suffering,” the 31-year-old said.

Community is essential to both distance running and the journey to eternal life. Fr. Burns said that except for a few

Fr. Zachary Burns, TOR, does much of his training on trails around Grapevine Lake. (NTC/Ben Torres)



competitive runners, participants don't try to win. "Everyone wants the best for everyone else. You do not pass someone without wishing them well," he explained.

The Franciscan friar continued, "It's like religious life. We all know we're shooting for this impossible goal, but at least we have each other, support each other, and push each other along."

During his training, his three brother priests at Good Shepherd accommodated his schedule for long runs. At the event, his parents, brother and sister, and a few Good Shepherd parishioners attended for moral and practical support.

INSPIRING OTHERS

One of his running inspirations was watching his parents challenge themselves as he was growing up. "I grew up watching them pushing themselves harder and harder in their running. The amount of effort they put into running was always inspiring to me when I was younger."

Fr. Burns' amount of effort inspired the middle school students and teachers of Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine.

A frequent visitor to the middle school religion classes, Fr. Burns described the 100-mile event ahead of time and asked the class for their prayers.

Middle school religion teacher Jackie Cummings said Fr. Burns' request for prayers was "powerful." It demonstrated to the students, "When you take on a challenge, either one you've chosen or one you didn't choose, you need to be surrounded by prayer."

Cummings and math teacher Kayla Gilmore wanted the students to appreciate the magnitude of covering 100 miles on foot, so they devised a competition to see which class, or the faculty, would be the first to collectively reach 100 miles.

Each individual logged miles run or walked beginning the same day Fr. Burns started his race.

"With the pandemic, kids are spending

more time on electronics and they are more sedentary. For this contest, they put their electronics aside to walk or run. They learned it's a group effort, and that you can do more than you think you can," Cummings said.

Teachers shared in the enthusiasm, arriving to school early to put in a few laps.

Five days after the priest logged 100 miles, the seventh grade, a sixth-grade class, and the faculty each attained the century mark.

And Fr. Burns?

After completing the event, he was "in a world of pain" and could barely walk, but two days later he was browsing the internet for future trail races.

He said, "While you're doing it, you never think it's particularly fun, but when it's over, you realize that was the greatest experience. It's like life. The things that we remember sometimes are the most challenging and difficult, but the things we ultimately overcame." 🇺🇸

14-year-old Piper
Cristantielli expresses
her gratitude to God
through her dancing.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



● DIVINE
inspiration

Gifted Catholics share stories of how God touches their souls, sparks their creativity

By Jerry Circelli

In greeting his general audience at the Vatican in April 2001, St. Pope John Paul II stressed the importance of the Psalms, telling the faithful: “In singing the Psalms, the Christian feels a sort of harmony between the Spirit present in the Scriptures and the Spirit who dwells within him through the grace of Baptism.”

During this Easter Season and the approaching Solemnity of Pentecost — commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and followers of Jesus Christ — the *North Texas Catholic* explores the creative spirit that dwells within four talented Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Worth. As they share their stories, we might reflect on how the Holy Spirit dwells within each one of us.

CELLIST DISCOVERS HARMONY WITH GOD

You could say that David Fernandez is a living testament to God’s plan for a wonderfully made masterpiece in the womb. God certainly had a hand in shaping his future, and apparently Fernandez’s mother did as well.

A gifted classical cellist, Fernandez gives thanks to both God and his mother, Esmeralda, for his musical abilities, which have allowed him to perform with orchestras in the Rio Grande Valley and

throughout North Texas. In addition to the cello, Fernandez plays violin, viola, bass, guitar, and piano.

“My mom always claims credit, because when she was pregnant with my twin brother and me, she read somewhere that if you play classical music when babies are in utero, they come out smarter. She always tells us that she had the headphones on her stomach before we were born.”

The musician’s mother was right. Both boys were drawn to classical music in elementary school and are professional musicians today. Fernandez has served as an orchestra director for thousands of high school students in North Texas the past 14 years, giving instruction in cello, violin, viola, and bass instruments. His twin brother, Daniel, is a high school band director.

Fernandez, who obtained both a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in cello performance from the University of North Texas, uses his talents to perform and to teach others.

The cellist said that God led him to music, and over time music has strengthened his relationship with his creator.

“As I got older and grew in my faith, I began to see God through the beauty of music,” Fernandez

Continued on Page 28

ation

From Page 27

said. “The musical ability God gave me is the way I know He loves me, and that I love Him. It’s the way that He can touch me in my soul, with music, that is not possible any other way.”

Fernandez has served as choir director at Holy Redeemer Parish in Aledo and now attends St. Thomas Becket Parish in Fort Worth. Fernandez said it is important for him to give back the talents God has given him. He described his work as a performer, teacher, and choir director as “a chance to really share my authentic self.”

The cellist continued, “When there’s a chance to be exposed to beauty, there’s a chance to be exposed to God, because beauty inspires the imagination. I hope when people reflect on that beauty, it ultimately leads them to God.”

Married with four children, Fernandez has passed on his talents to his offspring, who also show signs of exceptional, God-given musical aptitude. He uses both his musical talents and teaching abilities to instruct them as well.

“I think we’re all born with those types of talents, where God has plans for us,” Fernandez said. “We just need to be in tune with them and know that God created us for a purpose.

“I love music so much,” Fernandez said. “There is nothing else I would be able to do or would want to do. It’s my calling.”

GLASS ARTISAN FEEDS FIRE IGNITED BY HOLY SPIRIT

When David Gappa, founder and glassblower for Vetro Glassblowing Studio and Gallery in Grapevine, responded to God’s call to delve full time into his passion of creating glass masterpieces, there was no turning back.

“It’s not something you can stop and start. You have to feed the furnace, and once it’s on, you literally have to keep feeding the fire, every day, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year,” Gappa said.

To make his creations, Gappa works with molten glass at 2,100 degrees Fahrenheit, with two other glassblowers. “We are trying to create a vision in unison, while maintaining perfection and success



of the piece. With some of our highly involved sculptures, we could be working constantly for eight hours, no breaks.”

From elaborate chandeliers to colorful vases in flowing shapes; from sparkling jewelry to radiant ornaments alive with color; and from commissioned sculptures of sea turtles in a luminous aquamarine-colored environment to detailed art-glass renderings of skeletal remains of the colossal Tyrannosaurus rex, Gappa and his colleagues have created endless works of art.

When asked what inspires him to produce such a wide variety of creations, Gappa replied, “I guess the question is, ‘What doesn’t inspire an artist?’ Everywhere you look, every experience that you have should inspire what you do. And that includes prayer and the people you surround yourself with.”

Like Fernandez, Gappa is the product

of a mother who was in touch with God’s plan for her son.

“It was actually my mom who saw that fire within me,” Gappa said.

Aware of the passion that her son had for drawing, Ann Gappa enrolled him in art classes at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History in the early 1980s, when he was in the fourth grade.

Gappa earned a Master of Science degree in architecture from the University of Texas at Arlington and worked as an architect for 10 years before going full time into his glass-blowing business in 2008.

A devout Catholic and parishioner of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller, Gappa has a long history of Church involvement. Among the many ways he gives back to the Church is donating beautiful glass creations to pro-life and Catholic Charities fundraisers.

“I’ve been doing this for 20-plus



years. I've gone through a big journey to get here and God certainly made an impact on me and placed His hand in a whole series of divine events, as well as processes and relationships. Looking back, the more I tried to control things, the less control I had. It's highly obvious to me that God has been a part of my work."

YOUNG DANCER IN STEP WITH GOD'S PLAN FOR HER

At age 14, Piper Cristantielli is beyond her years. A dedicated, disciplined, and passionate ballerina, who is also accomplished in jazz and modern dance, Cristantielli has had to work harder than most youngsters to realize her dreams.

The ballerina's story begins when her mother, a former soccer player and lover of the game, signed her up for a soccer team when she was four years old. Even at that age, Cristantielli said, she had a desire

deep in her soul to dedicate herself to dance. She recalled breaking the news to her mother, "Can't you see it in my heart? I have to dance."

From that point forward, Cristantielli has danced and never looked back. Life did, however, test the young dancer's resolve when she was involved in a serious automobile accident at the age of 7.

"I broke my skull and I broke my pelvis. I went through a lot of surgery. I was in the hospital at least a month. I had to learn to walk and talk again," Cristantielli said.

"My mom would hold my hand in the hospital. And I would hear her say, 'It's OK, Momma is here.' And I would just squeeze her hand because that was the only way I could communicate with her. So, I was like, OK, if that's the only way

TOP LEFT: David Fernandez poses with his cello, which is 21 years old. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ABOVE: David Gappa is seen at his studio, Vetro, in Grapevine. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Continued on Page 30



Artist Maria Diaz stands next to one of her paintings of the Virgin Mary. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 29

she can know I'm here, I'll accept that."

Miraculously, Crantielli made rapid progress, although she does not remember much of the early recovery stages when she was able to speak and walk again. Prospects for dancing again, according to her doctors, were slim to none.

Crantielli learned at a young age, however, that with God, all things are possible. Her accident occurred during the summer of 2014. By fall, she was dancing again.

It certainly has not been easy, the dancer said, but she thanks God for the opportunity to continue to pursue her passion.

"I feel like God brought me back to life," Crantielli said.

"It's really been a journey," she continued, explaining that the bruises and scarring from the accident made her self-conscious when she first returned to her dance studio.

"But I grew out of that and became confident in myself again," said Crantielli, a parishioner of St. Frances

Cabrini Church in Granbury.

During the past seven years, Crantielli has continued with great success as a dancer, performing at multiple venues in North Texas, including six seasons of "The Nutcracker" ballet at Bass Hall in Fort Worth. Soon she will be heading to Pennsylvania for a summer intensive dance program.

"I have a Bible verse that I always remember to keep me going," Crantielli said. "It's *Joshua 1:9* — 'Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'"

The young dancer continued, "I feel that if He's with me wherever I go, I'll be fine. So when I go to Pennsylvania, He'll be with me. Through the accident, He was with me. He grew with me. It helped get my confidence back up for dancing."

As for the future, Crantielli said she wants to teach and inspire young dancers. She also wants to continue her volunteer work at food pantries, where she says, "I like to help people find joy in their lives. I just love to help others."

The young dancer said, "I have in my

mind that God has a unique plan for me. And He's going to direct me in a way that's best for me."

ARTIST DRAWS ON HER TALENTS TO EVANGELIZE

North Texas Catholic readers should be familiar with the moving art created by Maria Diaz, whose depiction of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary graced the magazine's January-February 2021 cover.

With a Bachelor of Art degree in interdisciplinary art and design with a minor in advertising and art history from the University of North Texas, Diaz said she thought originally that it was purely aesthetics that attracted her to create artwork through acrylic and watercolor paintings and digital means.

"It wasn't until college," Diaz said, "that I realized I was actually attracted to the truth, beauty, and goodness that comes with artwork. And really, I was attracted to the Lord, because He is all of those three things."

Diaz continued, "My inspiration to put things on paper is all from God. I think

this is the way He wants to reach His children, and I'm just a vessel for Him to do it. Whenever I feel that inclination to create something, it is always God guiding what I do."

Diaz, whose home parish is St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller, now uses her artistic talents to serve the Church at Texas A&M University-Kingsville as a missionary with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS). The group's outreach missionaries, such as Diaz, share the hope and joy of the Gospel with college and university students, with the goal of inspiring them to continue evangelizing and establishing friendships with others. Her talent in working with others in a community, Diaz said, comes from being born a quintuplet. "I learned at an early age to work with a group."

Much of the artwork created by Diaz appears on social networking services, such as Instagram, designed for sharing images and videos. In addition, she teams with a fellow missionary to promote and illustrate upcoming podcasts for college students about establishing meaningful Catholic lifestyles. The artist also uses her creations to illustrate Bible study topics she leads with students.

"I like to populate social media with good, Catholic artwork," Diaz said. "I want to glorify and praise God with my creativity."

Diaz said she was deeply touched and motivated when she discovered a letter written

by St. Pope John Paul II to artists. On April 4, 1999, the pope wrote a letter addressed "To all who are passionately dedicated to the search for new 'epiphanies' of beauty so that through their creative work as artists they may offer these as gifts to the world."

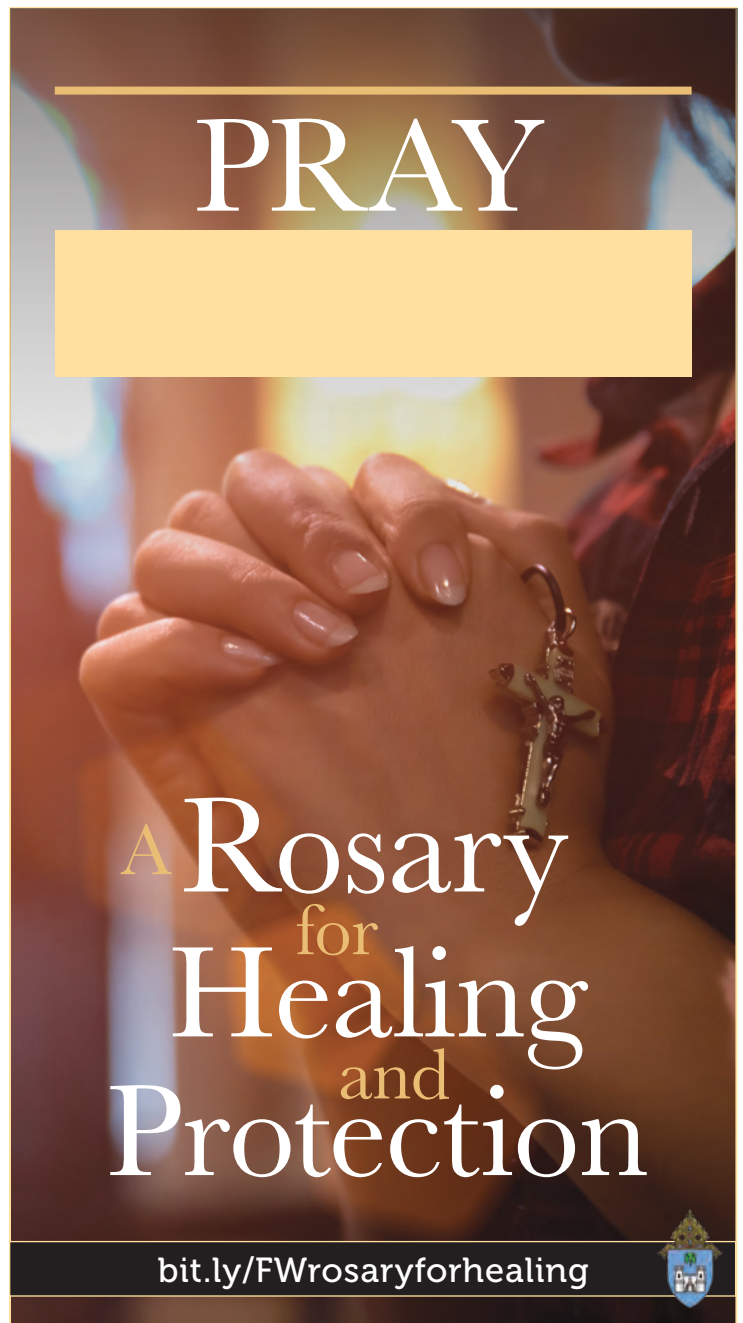
The pope captivated Diaz with the first paragraph, which reads in part:

None can sense more deeply than you artists, ingenious creators of beauty that you are, something of the pathos with which God at the dawn of creation looked upon the work of His hands. A glimmer of that feeling has shone so often in your eyes when – like the artists of every age – captivated by the hidden power of sounds and words, colors and shapes ...

"I took it as an invitation to be a co-creator with God," Diaz said. "When he talks about words and colors and shapes that are hidden, I think artists have a way of creating all that in a beautiful way so our brothers and sisters can sense the presence of God.

"Whether it's music, or art, or dance, we can bring these things to the eyes or ears of people who can enjoy them in their own personal way."

The artist concluded, "It's not like everyone has to be a musician or painter or poet, but we all have a special way that we can share God's beauty with those around us. And that's what we're called to do as Catholics — to glorify God with whatever talent He has given us." 📍




PRAY

A Rosary for Healing and Protection

bit.ly/FWrosaryforhealing

SHOP WHERE YOU CAN SEE AND TOUCH WHAT YOU BUY.



WE HAVE MANY BEAUTIFUL GIFTS FOR PERSONAL AND SACRAMENTAL OCCASIONS.

WE ALSO ACCEPT ORDERS ONLINE AT
WWW.STELLAMARISBOOKS.COM

**St. Anthony's Church Supplies - 5312 Trail Lake Dr.
Fort Worth 76133 - 817 924 7221**
Located in the Wedgewood Village Shopping Center



Editor's Note: *The photos in this story do not depict an actual trafficking victim. (NTC photo illustrations/Juan Guajardo)*

K t a l i t h a O

The Catholic Church continues its millenia-long battle against the scourge of human trafficking

By Jenny Manrique

U

M

— Mark 5:41

Sara* crossed the makeup store with blush and a lipstick in her pocket. She hoped to be able to leave the place without raising suspicion. Due to her precarious financial situation, by the time she was 13 she had already stolen food, soap, and deodorant from a supermarket. This time, however, the metal detector gave her away, and in the blink of an eye, a police officer was standing right in front of her.

The police officer discovered the girl didn't live with her family, but in a hotel with her boyfriend, a rather older man, and another girl about her same age, whom she identified as her sister, even though they were not biologically related. Sara's background check quickly showed it was not a mere case of petty theft: the girl had missed school for the past three weeks, and she had escaped the Child Protective Services system, where she had arrived after being sexually abused by her uncle on numerous occasions. Now she was in the hands of a trafficker who sold her for sexual services.

Sara was placed under the care of therapists in Denton County, although many victims of human trafficking are frequently treated as criminals — either because they are forced to recruit other girls the same age or because they commit other minor crimes related to their struggle to survive.

“Pimps and people who sell minor children take advantage of the complexities of the criminal justice system to manipulate them and make them believe they are responsible for their situation, and that they could go to jail if they report them,” said Kristen Howell, Executive Director of the Children's Advocacy Center for Denton County.

“Children feel ashamed, they don't perceive themselves as victims, but as accomplices; this is precisely one of the main things that impedes justice and healing,” she added.

Human trafficking has been considered a crime in the United States only since 2000. The most recent statistics obtained by Polaris, an organization which has operated the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline for over a decade, reported 11,500 cases of human trafficking in 2019. In Texas that year there were more than 1,000 cases involving 2,455 victims. Nevertheless, this crime is notoriously underreported, and it is acknowledged that these statistics only show a fraction of the real problem.

According to the data collected by the Child Sex Trafficking Team of the Office of the Texas Governor Greg Abbott, currently 80,000 children are victims of human trafficking in Texas. The International Labor Organization estimates this crime affects over 40 million people. Seventy-seven percent of those people are trafficked within their country of origin, while 23 percent of them are taken beyond the borders of their home country.

“Human trafficking is the politically correct term for modern slavery,” said Dr. Kim Robinson, an expert psychologist in

S P

“Speak up for
destitute. Spea

Continued on Page 36

e a k

those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are
k up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

— Proverbs 31:8-9



From Page 34

human trafficking, who around a year ago, with the support of the Safe Environment Office of the Diocese of Fort Worth, started holding workshops intended for parents, grandparents, teachers, members of the congregation, and caregivers to teach them how to identify warning signs in teenagers and children who could be human trafficking victims.

In recent years, the Catholic Church has redoubled its efforts to create awareness of this painful scourge. For instance, this January the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops offered a toolkit of resources for Catholics to use during a Week of Prayer to End Human Trafficking. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has also developed a robust toolkit with ways that Catholics can raise awareness about human trafficking.

“It is important for people to understand that the main motivations of traffickers are money and greed. We need to hit them where it hurts most, which is their finances. A \$10,000 bail for one of those guys to get out of jail is a joke,” Robinson said.

The average human trafficker makes about \$12,000 a week for every trafficked girl in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. If he exploits three girls every week, his profits can reach almost \$2 million per year.

Experts explain that the Dallas-Fort Worth area is considered an epicenter of human trafficking, the second biggest in Texas after Houston. The reasons for this sad reality are geographic and commercial: Interstate 35 allows easy transportation of victims from one state to the other. Conventions, big sports events, and concerts, which attract people from all over the country, are factors that exacerbate this forced prostitution.

“A human trafficker once said in court: ‘If I buy drugs, they can be used just once, but a human being can be sold again and again and make much more money,’” Robinson recalled. “Drugs are undoubtedly used in sexual trafficking to intimidate victims or to make them participants of acts they do not want to perform. Substance abuse, which in the long run

endangers their lives, makes them very dependent on the trafficker.”

In the 90-minute workshops offered via Zoom, Robinson asks adults and parents to be alert to behaviors that could indicate their children are being exploited: absences from school, isolation from family, and new friends and habits. Other warning signs are access to luxury items such as cellphones, designer clothes, expensive shoes or bags, and wearing sexually provocative outfits.

Since young people are frequently recruited by gangs, they could start getting tattoos or suffer from unexplained injuries. Although the typical case includes a pimp with an average age of 28 who seduces a girl by promising that he will make her an actress or a model (70 percent of human trafficking victims are female, according to the International Labor Organization’s statistics), males are also victims of human trafficking.

The average recruitment age is 12-14 in the case of girls, and 11-13 for boys. Even though the crime is not restricted to a particular ZIP code or racial origin, FBI data shows that it mostly affects Black, Hispanic, or LGBT minorities, who are already on the margins of society due to discrimination and poverty.

“We know our children well and we can tell if something is bothering them. We realize if they are depressed or anxious, if they are not eating or if they eat too much,” Robinson added. “It is important to monitor their social media, since during the pandemic this has become the main focus of pimps to attract children. Just by looking at their profile, a criminal knows what school they go to, whom they hang out with, where they live, and where they practice sports. It is very easy for predators and human traffickers to become part of the lives of the children and young people they seek and harass.”

Some applications such as NetSmartz, which was developed by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, educate parents and their children on internet safety while using games, videos, and interactive activities. Other applications, such as Qustodio, provide parents with several smart tools to help supervise

Join the fight

Learn what you can do to help stop human trafficking by signing up for “Innocence Lost to Human Trafficking.” The special presentations are hosted by the Safe Environment Office and led by Dr. Kim Robinson, Ph.D.



Visit [fwdioc.org/special-presentations](https://www.fwdioc.org/special-presentations) to sign up.



“I waited
patiently for the
Lord; He turned
to me and heard
my cry. He lifted
me out of...the
mud and the
mire.”

— Psalm 40:1-2

l i f t

the sites that children visit and block any questionable sites.

TRAUMA AND PUNISHMENT

Once the victims are rescued from the network of pimps, their path to healing is long and complicated. The World Health Organization diagnoses the emotional and mental consequences of these victims, who have been exposed to threat and punishment on a daily basis, as “complex trauma.” Many have developed depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress.

“Many victims have had adverse childhood experiences, but have not received any kind of justice in their case, and the abuse they have been through

becomes normalized,” said Howell, from the Children’s Advocacy Center.

“This trauma is devastating for the brain of a child during his or her development. It breaks their capacity to acknowledge that they were hurt by another person,” Howell added.

Even though few cases are brought to trial before the judicial authorities, the way this crime is perceived today has changed, partly thanks to the educational training carried out by different civil society organizations. Federally, these training sessions are mandatory in every agency, but to date in Texas they only reach mental health professionals and hospital workers, who are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms both in the victim and the

trafficker, and to know how to proceed in case of suspicion.

“When we didn’t understand very well the crime of human trafficking, women were arrested for prostitution regardless of their age. Now, we put them in touch with therapists and organizations that give them shelter while we chase the real predators,” said Felicia Grantham, Human Trafficking Coordinator of the Fort Worth Police Department. She belongs to the Tarrant County Five Stones task force, a community network created in 2014 that comprises 27 agencies engaged in ending minor sexual trafficking in the area.

“Recovery is a long and complex

Continued on Page 38

From Page 37

process. It takes a long time for the victims to get out of their own situation because sometimes the trafficker provides everything for them. Therapy can go on for the rest of their lives, due to all the things that the victims need to process and overcome,” Grantham added.

If it is safe, children can go back to their families, but they frequently go to residential centers or they enter the foster care system. They often need outpatient care, or immediate hospitalization, in cases of severe exploitation. It is a big challenge for these children and youth to rebuild confidence in adults, Grantham said.

SANCTUARY FOR THE VICTIMS

A space designed to that end is Ranch Hands Rescue, where psychologist Robinson works. Through horses, ponies, goats, donkeys, pigs, and sheep, victims learn how to connect with animals and gradually regain confidence in their own instinct to evaluate uncertain and unsafe situations.

The sanctuary, located in Argyle, which is north of Fort Worth, will serve as one of the first safe houses for 18 to 25-year-old men who have been victims of human trafficking. It is expected to open on May 1 this year. “They can stay from one to three years so they can recover emotionally and learn how to behave in normal work environments,” Robinson stated. “They can pursue an education if they wish to do so.”

The diocesan Office of Safe Environment has a victim assistance hotline, 817-945-9345, to deal with cases of sexual abuse, cyber bullying, or any case of child neglect which may occur in parish schools or any other facilities of the diocese.

Safe Environment Director Sandra Schrader-Farry explained that in the last year, strong efforts have been made to educate and focus on the human trafficking problem.

“Bishop Olson has said that ‘child trafficking is an evil that comes from darkness.’ This tragic problem calls all of us who live in the Metroplex into action,” said Schrader-Farry. “People have the wrong idea that this is something that happens elsewhere or that requires violent acts such as kidnapping, and that is not the case. Traffickers seduce their victims with charismatic personalities, and then they make them dependent.”

Bishop Michael Olson is a strong supporter of the awareness workshop hosted by the Office of Safe Environment which shines light on the issue.

“Interstate 35 and Interstate 20, which intersect in our diocese, are two major thoroughfares of the trafficking of human beings for the sex trade,” Bishop Olson said. “Thus, it is absolutely our imperative for

t
a
l
i
t
h
a

K O

He took the child by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise!”

— Mark 5:41



U M

Did you know?

"Talitha koum" or alternatively, "talitha kum," is an Aramaic expression found in the Gospel of Mark (5:41). These words are addressed by Jesus to the lifeless 12-year-old daughter of Jairus. After He spoke these words, Jesus took her by the hand and the girl immediately got up and walked.

The Scripture is a vivid reminder of our call as Christians to restore the dignity and freedom of women, girls, men, and boys who are trafficked. Jesus models for us that we must extend mercy, compassion, and support. We don't have to go far to help victims of trafficking:

North Texas



The 5-Stones Taskforce is a community network partnered with the Fort Worth Police Department and engaged in collaborative efforts to end sex trafficking in Tarrant County. Learn more: [5StonesTaskForce.org](https://www.5StonesTaskForce.org)



Children's Advocacy Center for North Texas collaborates with law enforcement and medical professionals to bring healing and justice to children who are victims of trafficking or abuse. Learn more: [CACNorthTexas.org](https://www.CACNorthTexas.org)

National



The U.S. bishops oversee an Anti-Trafficking Program aimed to educate on the scourge of trafficking, advocate for its end, and provide training and assistance to survivors. Learn more:

[USCCB.org/topics/anti-trafficking-program](https://www.USCCB.org/topics/anti-trafficking-program)

International



#EndSlavery is an initiative of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and Pontifical Academy of Sciences to eradicate human trafficking. Learn more:

bit.ly/EndSlavery_Vatican

Catholics in our diocese to learn how to recognize these signs and protect vulnerable children from being abused and harmed."

He added, "When I met with Pope Francis and the Texas bishops in Rome in January 2020, he told us that the greatest evil the Devil is perpetrating today is human trafficking. He told us that we must lead our people in the fight against this evil as faithful successors of the apostles of Christ."

In addition to the awareness workshops, Safe Environment has a "confidential notice of concern" form which is accessible to all members of the diocese and the community. It allows individuals to report anonymously or confidentially any incident or suspicion of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.

"If there are kids in our parish who could be in a dangerous situation, we can start an investigation," affirmed Nancy Mitchell, assistant director of Safe Environment. "This form can help them put the facts in order. They can come to us even before going to the police because sometimes, if there are other victimized minors in the family, the fear is too great."

It's not just the local Church that has been fighting against the scourge of trafficking. Robinson said the U.S. bishops' Anti-Trafficking Program for more than a decade "has been a leader in the U.S. and global response to human trafficking."

Under that umbrella, the USCCB leads several other efforts that span from raising awareness and advocacy to re-integration and employment services for victims of trafficking.

On a global scale the Church has continued its historic fight against trafficking too. Since 2013, his first year as pope, the Holy Father has made fighting human trafficking a priority.

In 2018, after meeting with a young trafficking victim at a papal audience, Pope Francis got to work and instructed the Vatican's Migrants and Refugees Section (which he established in 2017) to address modern slavery and human trafficking.

What resulted was a comprehensive pastoral guide offering orientation on how to combat the "ugly business" of the \$150 billion human trafficking industry which knows no borders and has extended beyond forced labor and sex to trafficking in newborn babies, women for forced surrogacy, and human organs. Titled "Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking," the handbook, which is used by Catholic dioceses and organizations as well as civil agencies, analyzes human trafficking from several angles and provides recommendations ranging from identifying and reporting trafficking to aiding in the spiritual and psychological recovery of its victims.

A LONG PATH TO HEALING

Victims of sex trafficking have a patron in Saint Josephine Bakhita, whose feast day is celebrated on February 8. Josephine Bakhita was a 19th-century saint who was captured in Sudan by Arabic slave traffickers when she was 8 years old. During her lifetime, she was bought and sold five

Continued on Page 40

r
e
d
e
e
m
e
m

“Fear not,
for I have
redeemed
you; I have
called you
by name:
you are
mine.”

— Isaiah 43:1



From Page 39

times and forced to serve rich families who put her in chains, whipped her, and even once inflicted 114 wounds in order to tattoo a property symbol on her. Eventually, she was placed in the care of the Canossian Sisters in Italy who, along with the cardinal of Venice, intervened on Josephine’s behalf in court. A judge concluded that she was free, and she joined the community of religious sisters. Her faith and service, plus courageous action by compassionate Catholics, were key to her freedom and recovery.

Abused children have a complex spiritual dynamic, because when they escape they can feel protected by a God

who helped them to break free, but they can also have a feeling of abandonment when they are going through their worst moments of torture. As with St. Bakhita, Catholics have a critical role to play.

“This is one of the most complex crimes that has been occurring since biblical times,” Howell observed. “It is very important that the Church provide a place for children to recognize that they are not invisible, but beloved and worthy sons and daughters of God. That is how they can experience the path towards their emotional and spiritual healing.” 🇺🇸

**Editor’s Note: The victim’s real name was changed in order to protect her identity.*

Human Trafficking

INDICATORS

While not an exhaustive list, these are some key red flags that could alert you to a potential trafficking situation that should be reported:

- ⚠️ *Living with employer*
- ⚠️ *Poor living conditions*
- ⚠️ *Multiple people in cramped space*
- ⚠️ *Inability to speak to individual alone*
- ⚠️ *Answers appear to be scripted*
- ⚠️ *Employer has identity documents*
- ⚠️ *Signs of physical abuse*
- ⚠️ *Submissive or fearful*
- ⚠️ *Unpaid or paid very little*
- ⚠️ *Under 18 and in prostitution*

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Assuming you have the opportunity to speak with a potential victim privately and without jeopardizing the victim's safety because the trafficker is watching, here are some sample questions to ask to follow up on the red flags you became aware of:

- ❓ *Can you leave your job if you want to?*
- ❓ *Can you come and go as you please?*
- ❓ *Have you been threatened if you tried to leave?*
- ❓ *Has your family been threatened?*
- ❓ *Do you live with your employer?*
- ❓ *Where do you sleep and eat?*
- ❓ *Are you in debt to your employer?*
- ❓ *Do you have your identification? Who has it?*

If you suspect they are a victim of human trafficking, take the following actions:

Ask the person if you can help them find a safe place to go immediately. If they need time, create an action plan with them to get to a safe place when they are ready.

Call and make a report to the human trafficking hotline at **1.888.373.7888**. The 24/7 hotline has multi-language capabilities, so any individual can call directly if they choose. If you need more guidance, you can call and talk through the case with USCCB Anti-Trafficking Program staff at **202.541.3357**.

Information provided by U.S. Department of State and U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.



Carolyn Ditsworth serves as safe environment coordinator at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Lewisville. (NTC/Ben Torres)

stay^{and}fight

Safe Environment Coordinator Carolyn Ditsworth helps preserve the good, the true, and the beautiful in the Church

By Susan Moses

When clergy sexual abuse is in the headlines, Carolyn Ditsworth thinks, “Well, we can’t let them have Jesus’ Church. You have to stay and fight so that the good people are still in the Church.”

“A lot of people feel that these things were terrible. We are quite motivated to make sure that they don’t happen again,” said Ditsworth, the safe environment coordinator for St. Philip the Apostle Parish.

Along with the other 92 safe environment coordinators in the Diocese of Fort Worth, Ditsworth helps hold the line.

It’s a big task at the Lewisville parish, which has more than 3,000 families and a wide array of ministries performed by about 700 volunteers and employees. For the safe environment coordinator, that’s 700 individuals to make certain have participated in Protecting God’s Children awareness sessions and have passed

background screenings. And then keep their credentials up to date.

Ditsworth also oversees the safe environment program for children at the parish.

During the pandemic, some ministries have found a way to continue while others are on hiatus, so the number of volunteers and employees requiring safe environment certification has shrunk to 600, according to Ditsworth. She said, "It's very gratifying the number of people who do want to keep [safe environment certification] up, so that when we do get back to a point in time when we can volunteer and start these ministries going again, they are ready and in place."

Ditsworth values organization and accuracy, as evidenced by her degree in medical records administration. Her former career provided valuable experience for her current position. She explained, "People need to have information on their charts so their doctors, technicians, and therapists can make the right decisions when they are treating them. So that's why I like to see things done right."

Although Ditsworth didn't intend to become the safe environment coordinator at St. Philip, the position plays to her strengths.

Originally hired to maintain the database for safe environment, Ditsworth assumed the role when the previous coordinator left.

She has taken her penchant for organization and detail and paired it with her passion for people and the Church.

Nancy Mitchell, assistant director of the diocesan Safe Environment Program, said Ditsworth is "very professional. She takes her job very seriously." Mitchell said Ditsworth calls the diocesan office with suggestions

for improvement or with a hitch she's concerned others might also experience.

Mitchell noted that Ditsworth and the other safe environment coordinators have conducted more than 1,500 sessions of the Protecting God's Children program since its introduction to the diocese in 2018. More than 300 renewal sessions have been held, and the number of Catholics in the diocese who have completed training exceeds 23,000.

The sessions have continued during the pandemic, sometimes as a videoconference, and other times in-person using safety protocols.

Now in her eighth year, Ditsworth enjoys meeting the volunteers, and she sometimes recommends ministries she thinks would suit them well. "I appreciate seeing people who do want to volunteer in the parish, in the community, from all the different walks of life," she said.

Ditsworth herself is a volunteer, as well as a parish employee. She has previously volunteered in youth formation and in the Lewisville school district. For the past several years she has served as a minister of care, sharing Scripture, prayer, and the Holy Eucharist with the homebound.

She was inspired to begin that ministry by her mother, who served as a minister of care in her Kansas parish. Then, as her parents aged, the situation reversed, and a parishioner visited them with the Blessed Sacrament.

When her mother passed away, Ditsworth and her father went through her mother's belongings and found the pyx that her mother had used. Ditsworth took it home and had it blessed by Father Ray McDaniel, the pastor of St. Philip the Apostle. She now uses her mother's pyx when she

visits the infirm in homes and assisted living centers.

"I always think of her when I'm using it and think of the good that she did and that I'm trying to do," said the mother of two grown children and grandmother of two.

Visits from the minister of care are gratefully received. Ditsworth recalled a care recipient who concludes each encounter with "Thank you for bringing me Jesus."

A cradle Catholic, Ditsworth appreciates the Catholic Church as a safeguard to what is "true and good and beautiful. We have to keep coming back to that.

"There have been so many fads and things that have gone wrong. It's just hard that our culture and our country and our world is in such disarray right now — the chaos that is out there — and that disturbs my sense of orderliness," Ditsworth said. "It can't stay this way. We're going to have to find our way out of this."

Being grounded in the faith helps her recognize what is true, which the Church was teaching "all the way back then," she said with a laugh. To find the good, she reads about "all these saints, clergy, and laity who do good things."

Working for the Church is the "best of both worlds," according to Ditsworth, and her zeal for protecting children and vulnerable adults has only grown since she started in 2013.

She said, "It's important to get so many people trained, because one pair of eyes may not be looking, but maybe the person next to them may end up being the one who's looking and watching out. It keeps you aware of how seriously people are taking it."

Seriously enough to stay. And fight. 🇺🇸



United with God Every Day

HE IS: Father Bose Jujvarapu, HGN, parochial vicar of Sacred Heart Parish in Seymour and St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Megargel since December 2018.

GROWING UP: Fr. Bose was raised in a remote village in Andhra Pradesh, India, where Mass was only celebrated a few times each year when a priest visited. His father and mother, “a woman of prayer,” taught the faith to Fr. Bose and his older sister and brother.

CELEBRATING MASS: Fr. Bose cherishes the “great celebration” of childhood Masses. When word spread that a priest was coming, he would walk with his family to church, sit in front of the altar, and enjoy a community meal afterwards.

AN EARLY CALL: His infrequent but impactful contact with priests led the seven-year-old to tell his parents, “I want to be a priest. My life should be like that — sacrificing my life to God — not about me but for others.”

MATURING IN FAITH: As a youth, Fr. Bose spent Sundays, vacations, and summers accompanying priests in their daily ministry.

GOOD NEWS: Fr. Bose entered the seminary for the Heralds of Good News Missionary Society on his 15th birthday. Although he hadn’t



considered becoming a priest in a missionary order, “God has a plan to make life fruitful.”


ROAD BLOCK?: In 2008, the seminarian felt unwell and was diagnosed with Type I diabetes. Fear set in, “because as missionary priests, you should be strong in spirit, strong in health.”

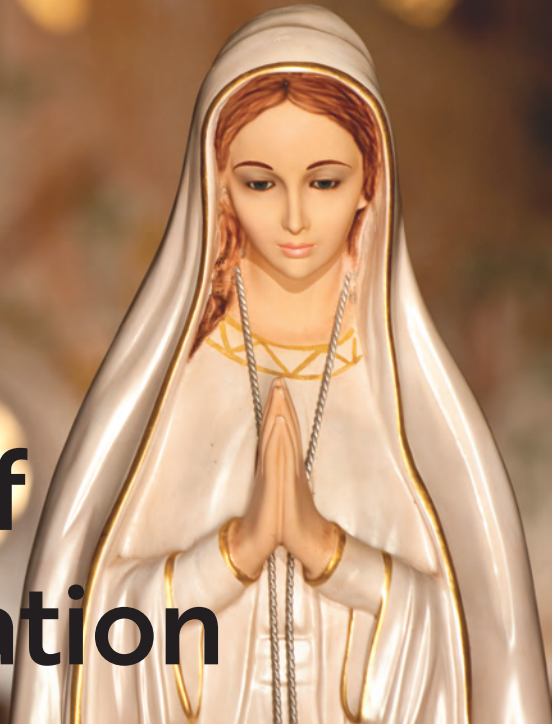
Fr. Bose said the devil introduced doubt that he would become a priest. He spent hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament as he awaited the rector’s decision on whether he could remain in seminary. He

heard Jesus saying, “I chose you for this. Don’t be afraid. I am with you.”

HOLY ORDERS: April 5, 2011.

IT’S A DATE: Father Bose initiated a Mass in honor of the Blessed Mother on the First Saturday of the month, followed by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

BEST THING ABOUT BEING A PRIEST: “When I celebrate Mass, I touch God every day; I’m united with God every day. It’s the greatest joy you can imagine.”



Mary, Model of Faith and Vocation

Early in my journey of faith, I pondered, like many Catholics and non-Catholics alike, why do we honor Mary? Why do we call her our Mother? Why does the Church hold Mary up as the model of our faith?

The answer is simply that we honor her because she is the mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. She is called our mother because when Christ was dying on the cross, He gave her to His beloved disciple St. John. In *John 19:26-27* we read, “When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple there whom He loved, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son.’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.”

Here we see that it was out of great love that Christ gives His own mother to the world. This new family that Christ established was the model that He envisioned as He handed over His mother to the beloved disciple. We seek to respect and honor the wishes of our Lord and Savior by honoring His mother as our own.

What does it mean that she is the model of our faith? Her constant obedience to God is our example of faith perfected. When the Archangel Gabriel came to Mary, she listened, she pondered, and she gave a response. She accepted the

call to her vocation and trusted God’s plan for her life.

Saying “yes” to God’s calling is ultimately acknowledging, accepting, and pursuing one’s vocation. With prayer, reflection, and guidance, we are all capable of responding to God in this way. Finally, everyone is given the choice to respond to this call. This is the model of how one is to discern and pray about his or her vocation.



Fr. Nghia Nguyen

As I was growing up, I remember my mom always taking us to daily Mass at our local parish. I would always give her trouble, coming up with excuses: I have too much homework or I was too tired from school. But no matter what, she always said we were going to Mass. On my journey of faith, I often pondered why we worship the way we do. What’s the point of going to Mass?

I remember one of the hymns we would sing was titled *Xin Vâng*, Vietnamese for “Yes.” The song is about Mary’s fiat to the Lord and about asking her example to teach us this “yes.” Mary was instrumental in my learning that “yes” and embracing the life of faith. That’s why I personally hold Mary as the example and model of our faith. Many saints looked to Mary for guidance and assistance, one of them being St. Pope John Paul II. He saw

Mary as his own mother with his devotion to her. *Totus Tuus*, or “all yours,” was his motto. Besides, who better to guide you to Christ than His mother?

One of the best recommendations I received in my time of formation was that I should develop a relationship with our Blessed Mother. How one does that is by simply praying the Rosary. By praying and meditating on the mysteries of the holy Rosary, I began to reflect on the life of Christ. The Rosary meditations draw us closer to understanding what He did for us.

So, for any reader thinking about religious life or priesthood, I would ask you to reflect on Christ’s life, His mother, and the Holy Family. By their lives, you can reflect on obedience to God’s plan in your life. Mary with her fiat, St. Joseph with his silent response to the message he received in his dream to protect and become the adopted father of Jesus, and Christ with His sacrifice on the cross. This month of May, join the Church in honoring our Blessed Mother by reflecting on her life so that we may grow closer to her Son. ✝

Ordained on May 21, 2016, Father Nghia Nguyen serves as the parochial vicar of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller and as Vocations Liaison with the Vocations Office.




Building Together

SHARING FAITH: James began his journey of faith by attending Mass with Maira early in their relationship. He enrolled in RCIA and she went with him.

She said, “As we learned about our faith and our Church, our faith grew stronger. As our faith grew stronger, so did the desire to serve the Lord. Serving the Lord brings great joy to our family.”

After James’ conversion, he remained in RCIA as a teacher. He explained, “The RCIA program, whether as a student or teacher, helped me to continue to learn about my faith and serve as the rock of my spiritual foundation. I feel that I am on a journey of faith in which God continues to guide me to more knowledge and truth, and all I have to do is to continue to serve with an open heart.”

KNOW AND GROW: Maira said, “You cannot build a relationship with a person without knowing them.” To know God, Maira makes Mass, prayer, Scripture, and religious education priorities for herself and her family.

BUILT ON THE ROCK: James said, “When you build your marriage on faith, you will be able to weather the ups and downs. It is through faith that God gives you the strength to be that partner that your spouse needs.” 

THEY ARE: James and Maira Black, with their daughters Briana and Emma, parishioners at All Saints Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Up to Heaven, Down to Earth

NTC/Ben Torres

I was recently listening to a presentation on some of the great Old Testament figures by Bishop Robert Barron. I was particularly intrigued when he was talking about Jacob, especially his thoughts on Jacob's Ladder. I never really understood that image of angels ascending and descending. It's such an otherworldly image. Bishop Barron's insights sent me on a journey of rediscovering the ways I have encountered God throughout my life.



Jeff Hedglen

We are in the middle of the Easter season. The truths of Jesus' death and resurrection are most likely well planted in our hearts and minds, but that doesn't mean they do not deserve deep reflection and consideration. One way to do this is to take some time to reflect on the ways the power of the resurrected Jesus has transformed our lives.

Bishop Barron explained that the angels that are going up and down are, in a way, a symbolism of heaven opening and something of God coming down and something of us going up. Then he connects this ancient vision of Jacob to Jesus. In the Paschal Mystery, Jesus becomes Jacob's Ladder, for God Himself came down (not just "something of God"), took human form, and then took humanity back up to heaven.

Thus, Jesus is now the conduit of the

power of God, and this "living Jacob's Ladder" is the means of our initial and continued conversion; meaning that, for most of us, at some point in our life the heavens opened, God came down in a very personal way, and we sent something of us back up. Bishop Barron then posed the question that started my journey back in time. He asked: What for you was Jacob's Ladder? What was a moment in your life where the angels of God were ascending and descending to you?

Upon reflection, a couple of circumstances in which I have encountered God came to mind. The first was moving to Texas as a 16-year-old. This was life altering for my teenaged self, but I got connected to Church quickly and my youth ministry experiences introduced me to God in new and deep ways.

Meeting my wife while on vacation in Germany was another time when I felt the heavens open and God's blessings ascending and descending. Early in our marriage we experienced six miscarriages in two and a half years and at the time, the ascending and descending blessings did not feel the same. But as time went on, we both came to see that God was sending down healing and carrying up our sorrow.

I would encourage you to find a time of quiet to reflect on your life and

remember when the heavens opened up and something of God came down and touched you, and you gave something of yourself to God. If no specific moment comes to mind, perhaps reflect on how God has been there through the ups and downs, maybe in unseen ways. Also, be open to the reality that God never tires of opening heaven to shower love and mercy down upon us.

This last year has been one that has kept many of us away from one of the greatest "openings of heaven" that happens daily and most especially on Sundays. I am of course referring to Mass. In a particular way every Mass is a Jacob's Ladder moment. For heaven opens up to us and God comes down in Word and Sacrament and we offer ourselves back to God by participating wholeheartedly.

To be sure, we need to all be mindful of personal safety and pandemic protocols, but the Church has worked hard to create safe environments for the faithful to gather and encounter the opening of heaven in the divine liturgy. At the earliest moment that you can, come back to the altar of Jesus and partake of the feast where heaven and earth unite, and Jacob's Ladder finds its fullest expression in the Eucharist. 🇺🇸

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



DETEN N

Nota del Editor: Las fotos en este artículo no muestran víctimas reales de la trata humana.
(Ilustración fotográfica NTC/Juan Guajardo)

TIENDO LA ESCLAVITUD moderna

La Iglesia Católica continúa
su milenaria batalla contra el
flagelo de la trata de personas

Por Jenny Manrique

Sara* cruzó la tienda de cosméticos con rubor y un lápiz labial en su bolsillo. Tenía la esperanza de poder salir del lugar sin despertar sospecha. Debido a su precaria situación económica, a los trece años ya había robado alimentos de un supermercado, un jabón o un desodorante. Sin embargo, esta vez el detector de metales la delató y en un abrir y cerrar de ojos estaba frente a un policía.

El agente descubrió que la niña no vivía con su familia, sino en un motel con su novio, un hombre mucho mayor que ella y otra joven más o menos de su edad a quien identificó como su hermana, aunque biológicamente no estaban emparentadas. El historial de Sara pronto mostró que no se trataba de un simple caso de hurto menor: la niña llevaba tres semanas sin ir a la escuela y había escapado del sistema de Servicios de Protección Infantil (CPS, por sus siglas en inglés) a donde había llegado tras ser abusada sexualmente por un tío en repetidas ocasiones. Ahora se encontraba en manos de un traficante que vendía sus servicios sexuales.

Sara fue puesta en manos de terapeutas del Condado de Denton, a diferencia del destino de otras víctimas de la trata de personas que con frecuencia son consideradas como delincuentes; bien sea porque son obligadas a reclutar otras niñas de su edad o porque cometen otros delitos menores asociados con su lucha por sobrevivir.

“Los proxenetas y las personas que venden menores, aprovechan las complejidades del sistema de justicia penal para manipularlos y hacerles creer que ellos son los causantes de la situación en la que se encuentran, y que pueden ir presos si los denuncian”, dijo Kristen Howell, Directora Ejecutiva del Children Advocacy Center (Centro de Defensa de los Niños) del Condado de Denton.

“Los niños se sienten avergonzados, no se identifican a sí mismos como víctimas, sino como cómplices; esto es precisamente una de las principales razones que impiden que se haga justicia y que puedan sanarse”, agregó.

La trata de personas es una conducta considerada un crimen en los Estados Unidos desde solamente el 2000. Las cifras más recientes recogidas por Polaris, una organización que opera desde hace más de una década la Línea Directa Nacional de Trata de Personas de los EE. UU., reportaron 11,500 casos de trata humana en el 2019, de los cuales 2,100 ocurrieron en Texas. No obstante, el delito es notoriamente subestimado y se reconoce que estas cifras son sólo una fracción del problema real.

Según los datos recogidos por el equipo de trata sexual infantil (CSTT, por siglas en inglés) de la Oficina del Gobernador Greg Abbott, actualmente hay 80,000 niños víctimas de la trata en Texas. La Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT) estima que el delito afecta a más de 40 millones de personas. El 77% de ellas son traficadas dentro de su país de origen, mientras que un 23% son llevadas fuera de

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 52



h a b l a

“Abre la boca en favor del mudo, sostén la causa de todos los desamparados. Abre la boca y juzga a los pobres y afligidos con verdadera justicia.”

— **Proverbios 31, 8-9**



DE LA PÁGINA 50

las fronteras de su propio país.

“La trata de personas es la forma políticamente correcta de referirse a la esclavitud moderna”, dijo la Dra. Kim Robinson, psicóloga experta en la trata humana, quien con apoyo de la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, comenzó hace cerca de un año a dictar talleres dirigidos a los padres, abuelos, maestros, feligreses y cuidadores para identificar las señales de alerta en los jóvenes y los niños que puedan ser víctimas de la trata.

En los últimos años, la Iglesia Católica ha redoblado sus esfuerzos para crear conciencia sobre este doloroso flagelo. Por ejemplo, este enero la Conferencia Católica de Obispos de Texas ofreció un conjunto de herramientas y recursos que los católicos pudieran utilizar durante una Semana de Oración para poner fin a la trata de personas. La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos también ha desarrollado un sólido conjunto de herramientas útiles para que los católicos pueden crear conciencia sobre la trata de personas.

“Es importante que la gente comprenda que el motivador principal de los traficantes es la codicia y el dinero”, dijo Robinson. “Necesitamos golpearlos donde más les duele, que son sus finanzas. Una fianza de sólo \$10,000 para que uno de estos sujetos salga de la cárcel, es una burla”.

El traficante promedio de trata humana gana alrededor de \$12,000 a la semana por cada niña traficada en la zona de Dallas-Fort Worth. Si explota a tres niñas cada semana de manera permanente, sus ganancias pueden llegar a los tres millones de dólares anuales.

Los expertos explican que el área de Dallas/Fort Worth es considerada un epicentro para la trata de personas, y ocupa el segundo lugar en Texas detrás de Houston. Las razones para esta triste realidad son de índole geográfica y comercial: la carretera Interestatal 35 permite llevar fácilmente a las víctimas

de un estado a otro. Las convenciones, los grandes eventos deportivos y los conciertos, que atraen gente de todo el país, son factores que propician esta prostitución forzada.

“Uno de los traficantes de trata humana dijo un día ante el tribunal: si vendo drogas, se usan una sola vez, pero un ser humano se puede vender una y otra vez y producir mucho más dinero”, recordó Robinson. “Las drogas son sin duda utilizadas en el tráfico sexual para intimidar a las víctimas o hacerlas cómplices de actos que no quieren realizar. El abuso de sustancias que a la larga pone en peligro sus vidas, las hacen muy dependientes del traficante”.

En los talleres de 90 minutos que se ofrecen vía Zoom, Robinson le pide a los adultos y a los padres que estén alertas para detectar comportamientos que pueden indicar que sus hijos están siendo explotados: las ausencias de la escuela, el aislamiento de la familia, un grupo nuevo de amigos y nuevos hábitos. Otras señales de alerta son el acceso a artículos de lujo como teléfonos celulares, ropa de diseñadores, zapatos o carteras caros, y el uso de prendas sexualmente provocativas.

Como a menudo son reclutados por pandillas, los jóvenes pueden aparecer con tatuajes o lesiones inexplicables. Aunque el típico caso incluye a un proxeneta de una edad promedio de 28 años, que enamora a una niña bajo la promesa de convertirla en actriz o modelo (el 70% de las víctimas del delito son mujeres, según las estadísticas de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo), los varones son también víctimas de la trata humana.

La edad promedio de reclutamiento en el caso de las mujeres es de 12 a 14 años, y de los varones, es de 11 a 13 años. Si bien el delito no reconoce un código postal o raza en particular, los datos del FBI demuestran que afecta en su mayoría a las minorías de la comunidad afroamericana, hispana o LGBT, quienes ya viven en los márgenes de nuestra sociedad debido a la discriminación y la pobreza.

“Conocemos a nuestros hijos y

podemos notar si algo les molesta. Nos damos cuenta si están deprimidos o ansiosos, si no comen o comen demasiado”, agregó Robinson. “Es importante rastrear sus redes sociales, ya que durante la pandemia éstas se han convertido en el foco primario de los proxenetas para atraer a los jóvenes. Con sólo mirar el perfil de ellos, un delincuente puede saber a qué escuela asiste el niño, con quién pasa el rato, dónde vive y dónde practica deportes. Resulta muy fácil para los predadores y traficantes de trata humana insertarse en la vida de los niños y jóvenes a quienes buscan y acosan”.

Algunas aplicaciones como NetSmartz, que fue desarrollada por el Centro Nacional para Niños Desaparecidos y Explotados, educan a los padres y a sus hijos sobre la seguridad necesaria en el internet al utilizar juegos, videos y actividades interactivas.





levanta

“Esperaba al Señor, él se inclinó hacia mí y escuchó mi clamor, me sacó de la fosa fatal del barro del pantano; puso mis pies sobre roca y aseguró mis pasos.”

— Salmo 40, 1-2

Otras aplicaciones, como Qustodio, proporcionan a los padres numerosas herramientas inteligentes para ayudar a supervisar los sitios que los niños visitan y obstruir los sitios que son cuestionables.

EL TRAUMA Y EL CASTIGO

Una vez que las víctimas son rescatadas de la red de los proxenetas, el camino para su sanación es largo y complicado. La Organización Mundial de la Salud (WHO, por sus siglas en inglés) creó el diagnóstico de trauma complejo para definir las consecuencias emocionales y mentales para estas víctimas que han sido expuestas a diario a la amenaza y el castigo y, que como consecuencia, han desarrollado depresión, ansiedad, trastorno obsesivo compulsivo y estrés postraumático.

“Muchas víctimas han tenido una experiencia infantil adversa, pero no han recibido ningún tipo de justicia en su

caso y llegan a normalizar el abuso que han sufrido”, dijo Howell del Children Advocacy Center (Centro de Defensa de los Niños).

“Este trauma es devastador para el cerebro de un niño en desarrollo. Destruye su capacidad para reconocer que es otro quien los ha lastimado,” agregó Howell.

Aunque son pocos los casos que llegan al enjuiciamiento ante las autoridades judiciales, la manera en que se percibe el crimen ha cambiado hoy día, gracias en parte a la formación y entrenamiento educativo realizado por diversas organizaciones de la sociedad civil. A nivel federal estos entrenamientos son obligatorios en todas las agencias, pero en Texas hasta la fecha sólo cubren a los profesionales de salud mental y a los trabajadores de hospitales, a quienes se les prepara para reconocer los signos y síntomas tanto en la víctima como en el

traficante, y saber qué hacer en caso de sospecha.

“Cuando no entendíamos muy bien el delito de la trata de personas, las mujeres eran arrestadas por prostitución sin importar su edad. Ahora las conectamos con terapeutas y organizaciones que les dan refugio, mientras perseguimos a los verdaderos depredadores”, dijo Felicia Grantham, Coordinadora de Trata de Personas en el Departamento de la Policía de Fort Worth. Ella pertenece al grupo de trabajo Five Stones del Condado de Tarrant, una red comunitaria creada en el 2014 que reúne a 27 agencias comprometidas a poner fin al tráfico sexual de menores en esa área.

“La restauración es un proceso largo y complejo. Toma mucho tiempo para que las víctimas se salgan de su propia

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 54

“No temas,
porque yo te
he rescatado;
te he llamado
por tu nombre,
tú eres mío.”

— Isaías 43, 1

redime



DE LA PÁGINA 53

situación porque a veces el traficante es quien les provee todo. La terapia puede ser algo que dure toda la vida por todo lo que las víctimas necesitan procesar y superar”, añadió Grantham.

De ser seguro, los niños pueden regresar con sus familias, pero con frecuencia van a centros residenciales o entran al sistema de cuidado de los hogares de crianza (‘foster homes’, en inglés). Necesitan a menudo atención ambulatoria o una reclusión médica inmediata cuando se trata de una explotación severa. Es un gran desafío lograr que estos niños y jóvenes recuperen la confianza en los adultos.

SANTUARIO PARA LAS VÍCTIMAS

Un espacio diseñado para ello es el Ranch Hands Rescue, en el que trabaja la

psicóloga Robinson. A través de caballos, ponis, cabras, burros, cerdos y ovejas, las víctimas aprenden a cómo relacionarse con los animales y a recuperar paulatinamente la confianza en su propio instinto para evaluar situaciones inciertas y no seguras.

El santuario, que está ubicado en Argyle, al noroeste de Dallas, servirá como una de las primeras casas seguras para varones de entre 18 y 25 años que han sido víctimas de la trata humana. Su apertura se espera para el 1 de marzo de este año. “Allí podrían quedarse desde uno hasta tres años, para recuperarse emocionalmente y aprender cómo comportarse en entornos laborales normales”, dijo Robinson. “Pueden estudiar una carrera intermedia si lo desean”.

La oficina de Ambiente Seguro tiene disponible una línea directa de asistencia a víctimas, cuyo número es el

817-945-9345, para tratar casos de abuso sexual, intimidación cibernética o cualquier caso de negligencia contra niños que pueda ocurrir en las escuelas parroquiales o cualquiera instalación de la Diócesis.

Sandra Schrader-Farry, Directora de la oficina, explica que en el último año el esfuerzo ha sido dedicado a educar y enfocarse en el problema de la trata de personas.

“El Obispo Olson ha dicho que “la trata de niños es un mal que se genera de las tinieblas”. Este trágico problema nos hace un llamado a la acción a todos los que vivimos en el Metroplex”, dijo Schrader-Farry. “La gente tiene la idea errónea de que es algo que pasa en otros lugares o que requiere de actos violentos como un secuestro y no es así. Los traficantes seducen a sus víctimas con personalidades carismáticas y las vuelven dependientes”.

Únete a la lucha

Aprenda lo que puede hacer para ayudar a combatir la trata de personas e inicie la sesión de “La inocencia perdida debido a la trata humana”. Las presentaciones especiales son auspiciadas por la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro y dirigidas por la Dra. Kim Robinson, Ph.D.



Visite [fwdioc.org/special-presentations](https://www.fwdioc.org/special-presentations) para inscribirse.

La oficina también tiene un formulario llamado “Aviso confidencial de preocupación” al que pueden acceder todos los feligreses de la parroquia y la comunidad. Permite denunciar de manera anónima o confidencial cualquier incidente o sospecha de abuso físico, sexual o emocional.

“Si hubiera niños en una parroquia que podrían encontrarse en una situación de peligro, podemos iniciar una investigación”, sostuvo Nancy Mitchell, administradora asistente de la oficina. “Este formulario les sirve para describir los hechos en orden. Pueden venir a nosotros incluso antes de acudir a la policía, porque si hay otros menores victimizados en la familia, el miedo es muy grande”.

Las víctimas del tráfico sexual tienen una patrona en Santa Josefina Bakhita,

cuya fiesta se celebra el 8 de febrero. Josephine Bakhita era una santa del siglo 19 que fue capturada en Sudán por traficantes de esclavos árabes cuando tenía ocho años. Durante su vida, fue comprada y vendida cinco veces y obligada a servir a familias ricas que la encadenaron, la azotaron e incluso una vez le infligieron ciento catorce heridas para tatuarle un símbolo de que era propiedad suya. Finalmente, fue puesta al cuidado de las Hermanas Canossian en Venecia quienes, junto con el Cardenal de Venecia, intervinieron en nombre de Josephine ante la corte. El juez concluyó que estaba libre y ella se unió a la comunidad de las hermanas religiosas. Su fe y servicio, además de las valientes acciones de los católicos compasivos, fueron clave para conseguir su libertad y ayudar a su recuperación.

Los niños abusados tienen una dinámica espiritual muy compleja porque al escapar pueden sentirse protegidos por un Dios que los ayudó a liberarse, pero también pueden sentir una sensación de abandono cuando están pasando por sus peores momentos de tortura. Así como con Santa Bakhita, los católicos juegan un papel muy importante en estas situaciones.

“Éste es uno de los crímenes más complejos que ha venido ocurriendo desde los tiempos bíblicos”, observó Howell. “Es muy importante que la Iglesia proporcione un lugar para que los niños reconozcan que no son invisibles, sino amados e hijos dignos de Dios. Así pueden experimentar el camino hacia su sanación emocional y espiritual”, concluyó. ✝

**Nota del Editor: El nombre real de la víctima se cambió para proteger su identidad.*

AMBIENTE SEGURO

Para Reportar Mala Conducta Sexual:

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

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

Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha de Abuso:

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

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

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



Impacto HISTÓRICO

Se mezclan lágrimas, fe y los recuerdos del bien realizado ante el cierre inminente del Colegio de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria

Por Matthew Smith

Las Hermanas de Santa María de Namur viajaron de Europa a Nueva York, y de ahí a Texas “con la esperanza de hacer un poco de bien”, según lo dijera la Madre Emilie Kemen. En los 202 años transcurridos desde entonces, las hermanas han logrado eso y mucho más al difundir la fe y, entre muchas otras obras, al abrir escuelas católicas en Nueva York, Texas y otros lugares, entre las cuales se encuentra el Colegio de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria de Fort Worth.

Las Hermanas perseveraron en su misión pese a grandes adversidades. Llegaron a Texas en el 1873 en una época en que prevalecía una actitud anticatólica generalizada. No obstante, ese mismo año fundaron la Academia del Sagrado Corazón en Waco.

“Las hermanas llegaron a Waco cuando era todavía Waco Village”, dijo la Hermana Louise Smith, SSMN. “No había calles ni aceras pavimentadas. Era un lugar realmente rústico y era una de las paradas del Chisholm Trail. Así que había vaqueros y ganado en constante movimiento por la ciudad”.

La Hermana Louise, que reside en el convento actual de los terrenos de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria y se desempeña como el archivero de la orden, dijo que las Hermanas estuvieron a punto de irse de Texas.



Foto de las Hermanas, sacerdotas y estudiantes de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria en el año 1917. (NTC/foto de archivo)

“Si no hubiera sido por la fiebre amarilla, probablemente no estaríamos aquí hoy”, añadió la Hermana Louise. “La Madre Emilie y las Hermanas que estaban con ella estaban un poco desanimadas al principio porque muy pocos estudiantes vinieron a inscribirse en la escuela”.

Las Hermanas incluso consideraron regresar a Nueva York. “Sin embargo, la fiebre amarilla y el dengue pusieron en cuarentena a Waco y no pudieron irse”, dijo la Hermana Louise. “La Madre Emilie tomó eso como una señal de Dios

de que se suponía que no debían irse”.

La decisión fue providencial y, durante los próximos cuarenta años, las Hermanas establecieron varias otras escuelas en Texas y Fort Worth, incluida la Academia de St. Ignatius en el 1885 y el Colegio de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria en el 1910.

La empresa de arquitectura Sanguinet, Staats and Hedrick diseñó el edificio de cinco pisos de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria, de estilo renacentista gótico y construido con ladrillo rojo, que aún se mantiene en pie. La escuela para niñas dio la bienvenida a 31 internas y 41 estudiantes matriculadas de día el 12 de septiembre del 1910, antes de que se completara la construcción del edificio. Además de las Hermanas, el edificio originalmente incluía a estudiantes que cursaban desde la primaria hasta la secundaria, y luego se agregó un colegio universitario. Al



Escuela Primaria Nuestra Señora de la Victoria en Hemphill. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

abrirse más tarde Nolan High School y la Universidad de Dallas ya no hubo la necesidad de tener la escuela secundaria y el colegio universitario.

La construcción de la escuela primaria y secundaria actual, que incluía tanto a niños como niñas, comenzó en el 1953. Las Hermanas vendieron el edificio grande en el 1988 y se mudaron al convento actual ubicado detrás del mismo.

El 23 de febrero de este año las Hermanas de Santa María anunciaron su decisión de cerrar el Colegio de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria al cabo del año escolar actual. La Hermana Patricia Ridgley, Superiora Regional de la Orden de las Hermanas de Santa María de Namur, citó el aumento de los costos, la disminución de la matrícula de estudiantes y la pandemia del COVID-19 como las principales razones para tomar esta decisión.

“Las numerosas reuniones y oraciones fueron muy dolorosas al tratar de discernir qué era factible con nuestros recursos limitados y, por otro lado, la

gran necesidad que existe de la educación católica”, dijo la Hermana Patricia. “Una vez que finalmente llegamos a esa penosa decisión, no nos hemos arrepentido. Creo que seguimos la voluntad de Dios al hacer esta decisión”.

La noticia del cierre provocó tristeza, pero también reflexión profunda y una sensación de logro.

“Creemos que seguimos los pasos de las hermanas que nos precedieron”, dijo la Hermana Louise. “Pienso muy a menudo en esas mujeres maravillosas que establecieron esta gran academia aquí. Tuvieron el coraje de levantar un edificio así. Uno se pregunta cómo lo hicieron. Y, sin embargo, ése es el tipo de cosas que las Hermanas de Santa María de Namur han hecho desde que nos establecimos en Bélgica”.

“Cuando camino por los pasillos de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria y veo las fotos de las diferentes hermanas que fueron directoras allí y pienso en las hermanas que enseñaron allí, creo que pusimos a algunas de nuestras mejores educadoras en esa escuela”, dijo la

Hermana Patricia. “Muchas de ellas realizaban cada verano sus propios talleres especializados o asistían a la universidad para aprender los últimos métodos de enseñanza. Algunas fueron muy innovadoras en la época que vivieron. Todo esto me hace pensar que las Hermanas tenían un compromiso real con su vocación que se proyectaba en su trabajo y apostolado”.

Es importante señalar que, como un hecho muy positivo, Nuestra Señora de la Victoria se convirtió históricamente a principios de la década del 1950 en la primera escuela pública o privada totalmente integrada de Fort Worth.

Ray Boothe, el propietario de Boothe Architects Inc., supervisó la renovación del antiguo convento para convertirlo en lo que se conoce hoy día como Victory Arts Center, un complejo de apartamentos tipo loft. “El edificio ya tenía 100 años y le quedaba una semana antes de ser demolido”, dijo el señor Boothe.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 61



NUUESTRA SEÑORA notre dame

Antes de que Wichita Falls tuviera un sacerdote permanente, tuvo una escuela católica

Por Susan Moses

Wichita Falls era un territorio de misión en el momento que una serie de cartas comenzara el 16 de septiembre del 1903 entre la Madre Teresa Brennan, Superiora Provincial de las Hermanas de Santa María en América, el alcalde de Wichita Falls Charles Bean, el Padre John Goessens de Henrietta, el Obispo de la Diócesis de Dallas Edward Dunne y la Junta de Comercio

de Wichita Falls.

Aunque la población era más pequeña que en otras ciudades en las que la orden religiosa había establecido escuelas, el Padre Goessens le aseguró a la Madre Teresa, SSMN, que Wichita Falls experimentaba “un gran crecimiento” en ese entonces.

En una carta al Alcalde Bean escrita el 13 de febrero del 1904, la Madre Teresa se comprometió a brindar una escuela para las 30 familias

católicas de Wichita Falls. Ella escribió: “Pondremos todo nuestro esfuerzo para brindar a la buena gente de Wichita Falls una institución de aprendizaje de la que puedan estar orgullosos”. Con la ayuda de Dios, la Madre Teresa Brennan, y los religiosos y religiosas que la siguieron, lo consiguieron.

Varios documentos de los archivos de *North Texas Catholic* revelan el entusiasmo y la energía que había en torno al comienzo de la educación católica en Wichita Falls, y no sólo entre los fieles de la pequeña comunidad católica, sino también entre los empresarios y líderes cívicos no católicos. De hecho, los ciudadanos no católicos donaron la mayor parte de los \$25,000 recaudados para comprar el terreno para la escuela. Cuando las Hermanas abrieron el 5 de septiembre del 1905 las puertas del edificio de ladrillo rojo de tres pisos, los tres hijos del alcalde Bean, que no eran católicos, se encontraban en el primer grupo de los 48 estudiantes de la escuela.

La escuela creció rápidamente y, al final del primer año escolar, el nuevo colegio contaba con casi 150 estudiantes, incluido un pequeño número de internos, que estaban inscritos en la Academia de María Inmaculada. Seis Hermanas de Santa María de Namur fueron las primeras maestras de la escuela. La orden religiosa colocaría a través de las próximas décadas maestras en treinta escuelas católicas de Texas.

La Hermana Ginny Vissing, SSMN, siguió los pasos de las hermanas fundadoras por varias generaciones. Enseñó a tiempo completo en la escuela de Wichita Falls durante una docena de años, luego continuó por casi treinta años a tiempo parcial y enseñó música litúrgica mientras se desempeñaba como Directora de Educación Religiosa de la Parroquia Nuestra Señora Reina de la Paz hasta que se jubiló en el 2017.

Describió a sus predecesoras: “Las hermanas que fundaron la escuela y las hermanas que le siguieron al principio fueron valientes. Comenzaron con muy



Mary Cluley, que enseña educación física en el Colegio Católico de Notre Dame de Wichita Falls, saluda a los estudiantes y los padres al llegar a la escuela por la mañana. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

poco y Dios multiplicó sus esfuerzos. Su amor por los niños y su carisma por la enseñanza los llevó a tocar muchas vidas y corazones. La gracia estaba trabajando en ellas y esa gracia continuó obrando durante décadas”.

A medida que la población de Wichita Falls crecía, la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora Reina de la Paz abrió una escuela parroquial en el 1954, dirigida por las Hermanas Benedictinas, que se fusionó con la Escuela Parroquial del Sagrado Corazón en el 1968.

Los Hermanos de la Congregación de la Santa Cruz llegaron a Wichita Falls para dirigir la escuela secundaria de la Academia de María Inmaculada, a la que se le cambió el nombre para ser conocida como Notre Dame Catholic High School en el 1965, un año antes de mudarse a sus nuevas instalaciones.

En el 1976, una reorganización fusionó la Escuela de Nuestra Señora Reina de la Paz y la Escuela Secundaria de Notre Dame bajo la dirección de la Diócesis Católica de Fort Worth.

Notre Dame Catholic School cerrará al final de este año escolar debido a la disminución de la inscripción de alumnos,

muchos años en que los gastos anuales superaron los ingresos y el costoso mantenimiento diferido por años de los edificios envejecidos.

La escuela impartió por 117 años una educación de calidad enraizada en la fe a generaciones de estudiantes del área.

El Diácono Jim Bindel, Asistente Pastoral de la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora Reina de la Paz, asistió a las escuelas católicas de Wichita Falls desde el primer hasta el duodécimo grado.

Él recuerda con cariño el “hermoso recorrido” de su educación católica con las Hermanas Benedictinas en la escuela primaria, seguidas por las Hermanas de Santa María de Namur y los Hermanos de la Santa Cruz en la escuela intermedia y secundaria. Él cree que el haber recibido una educación católica sentó una base sólida de fe que lo mantuvo firme mientras asistió a la universidad en los “tumultuosos años de la década del 1960”.

El Diácono Bindel admite que el cierre de la escuela es inquietante, pero también reconoce que la escuela ha experimentado grandes luchas financieras en las últimas

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 60

NOTRE DAME, DE LA PÁGINA 59

décadas. Dijo: “Estoy agradecido de que haya estado abierta durante los últimos 20 años, en estos tiempos tan difíciles... La decisión no se tomó apresuradamente”.

Melissa Kasmeier, la Superintendente Escolar Interina de la Diócesis, dijo que cerrar Notre Dame “fue una decisión extremadamente difícil. No creo que alguna vez se tome la decisión de cesar las operaciones de una institución sin haber tenido varios años de discusiones y evaluaciones. La decisión final se basó principalmente en un par de cosas: el mantenimiento diferido por años de los edificios y lo que se necesitaría para arreglarlos, pero también la disminución de la inscripción de estudiantes y cómo eso afecta el presupuesto operativo anual de la escuela”.

Un estudio realizado en el 2019 presentado a la comunidad escolar y los párrocos de Wichita Falls señaló que la escuela primaria requeriría unos \$6.2 millones en reparaciones y renovaciones, y la escuela secundaria necesitaría unos \$9.9 millones para llevar las instalaciones a los estándares aceptables.

Además, la matrícula de estudiantes ha disminuido de 511 hace veinte años a un promedio de 210 estudiantes actualmente. Un estudio demográfico predijo que el crecimiento de la población en el área de Wichita Falls permanecerá igual para el futuro, especialmente, entre las familias con niños de edad escolar.

La escuela ha tomado prestados más de \$800,000 de la Diócesis para cubrir los gastos operativos desde el 2015. El préstamo no incluye la asistencia para la matrícula de estudiantes y las subvenciones de la Fundación de Avance y la Diócesis Católica de Fort Worth, que totalizaron casi \$150,000 en los últimos dos años.

Kasmeier señaló: “Estamos profundamente agradecidos de la contribución de Notre Dame a la educación católica durante los últimos cien años. La escuela respondió a las necesidades de Wichita Falls desde el principio y continuó trabajando para satisfacer las necesidades cambiantes de la comunidad”.

El Obispo Michael Olson dijo:

“Aunque el cese de la Escuela de Notre Dame es muy triste, es la tristeza de la transición y no la tristeza del fracaso. El apostolado de la educación católica en Wichita Falls ha hecho la transición del paso de una institución a otra institución posterior como medio de educación católica.

“Ahora es un tiempo de acción de gracias por las gracias fructíferas ofrecidas a tantas personas a través de la institución de la Escuela Católica Notre Dame en Wichita Falls,” el Obispo Olson continuó diciendo. “Es también un tiempo para la renovación de la catequesis familiar centrada en Cristo como fundamento de la educación católica en el futuro”.

La Hermana Ginny, la exmaestra de Notre Dame, recuerda que enseñar en el primer grado de Notre Dame fue una “gran alegría”. Los jóvenes estudiantes requerían “mucho energía”, recordó, ya que tuvo que hacer malabarismos para realizar el papel de “maestra, directora social, enfermera, pacificadora y madre. Pero los estudiantes eran muy buenos, sencillos y dulces”.

Ya jubilada, la Hermana vive cerca de la escuela primaria y la secundaria, y anticipa que va a echar de menos el ritmo y el ruido del año escolar que comienza en agosto cada año.

Aún así, dijo, “La gracia del Espíritu Santo durará. Ésa es nuestra esperanza,

incluso con el cierre de Notre Dame. La obra del Espíritu Santo continuará de una forma u otra. Todo es la obra de Dios, y debemos confiar en que la obra de Dios continuará”.

David Bindel, el hermano del Diacono Jim Bindel, fue ordenado como diácono permanente en el 2020 y se desempeña como Asistente Pastoral de la Parroquia del Sagrado Corazón de Wichita Falls.

El Diácono David Bindel reconoció que el cierre de Notre Dame dejará un vacío en la comunidad de fe de Wichita Falls. Los padres y las parroquias ayudarán a transmitir la fe a la próxima generación. Mencionó que los ministerios de juventud y los programas de educación religiosa para los católicos de todas las edades de las parroquias de Wichita Falls son muy sólidos.

Dijo además que “Nuestro enfoque es tener disponible educación religiosa para cualquier familia que busque una fe más profunda. Para la mamá, el papá, la familia y los estudiantes de todas las edades. No importa la edad que tengamos, seguimos aprendiendo y creciendo en la fe”.

La Hermana Ginny concluyó diciendo, “Dejaremos atrás el pasado, confiaremos y aceptaremos el plan de Dios para el futuro. Tenemos la esperanza de que Dios renueve la faz de la tierra”. 🇺🇸

El edificio original la Academia de María Inmaculada. (NTC/foto de archivo)



NUESTRA SEÑORA, DE LA PÁGINA 57

“Aseguramos el edificio y al terminar su demolición, esperamos que se le diera otros 100 años de vida”.

La Hermana Patricia dijo que está contenta de ver que el viejo edificio se vuelva a usar.

“Eso también fue difícil, decirle adiós a ‘la gran dama roja’, como algunas de nosotras lo llamábamos”, comentó la Hermana. “Espero que se siga utilizando de forma útil y fructífera”.

La educación sigue siendo un componente vital de la misión de las Hermanas de Santa María, dijo la Hermana Patricia, y se creó un comité para determinar el mejor uso de la escuela en el futuro. La Directora Linda Kuntz, una exalumna, compartió sus lindos recuerdos de cuando jugaba en la acera y asistía a Misa en la capilla del antiguo convento.

Ella y la Hermana Patricia elogiaron a la Diócesis de Fort Worth por ayudar a los estudiantes y a los profesores a encontrar una nueva escuela católica. “Nos apasiona ayudarlos a tomar una decisión informada y mantenerlos dentro de la educación católica”, señaló la Superintendente Interino de Escuelas Católicas, Melissa Kasmeier.

El exalumno Brian Mills enseña actualmente matemáticas y ciencias en la escuela secundaria.

“Ser estudiante aquí fue maravilloso porque todos éramos muy unidos”, dijo Mills. “Eso es algo raro, pero de veras que la escuela de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria se sintió siempre como estar en casa”.

“El cierre es muy triste, en particular para los niños”, continuó diciendo. “Algunos de los estudiantes de octavo grado tienen hermanos menores y es triste que ellos no puedan completar su experiencia educativa en Nuestra Señora de la Victoria”.

Marnie Woynowski, residente de Luisiana, asistió a Nuestra Señora de la Victoria en la década del 1960, al igual que su hermana, y su madre, quien también asistiera a la escuela cuando era niña.

“Es triste que la escuela cierre por sus conexiones familiares y porque Nuestra Señora de la Victoria es una institución con tanta historia. Fue una gran escuela.

La Hermana Lola Ulupano, SSMN, ayuda a sus estudiantes en Nuestra Señora de la Victoria. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Las Hermanas se adelantaron a su tiempo al enseñar a las niñas a ser fuertes. Hicieron hincapié en la confianza en sí mismas y a ser uno mismo”.

El exalumno Conor Gillen dijo jocosamente que comenzó a estudiar en sexto grado en el Colegio de Nuestra Señora de la Victoria y que años más tarde enseña inglés e historia en la misma sala de clases. “Definitivamente me he convertido en un mejor católico en el tiempo que he enseñado aquí y sé que eso continuará”, dijo Gillen. “La noticia del cierre fue triste, pero la Directora Kuntz nos ha animado y nos ha servido de roca a todos nosotros desde el principio”.

Aunque la Hermana Patricia expresó su tristeza por el cierre de Nuestra Señora

de la Victoria, ella aprecia profundamente el legado de los profesores, los estudiantes y los padres por tantas décadas.

“Creo que es simplemente extraordinario”, dijo la Hermana Patricia. “Creo que ése es el valor de tener una institución por mucho tiempo y de las historias maravillosas que hemos escuchado a través de los años. Todo esto ha sido realmente edificante”.

“Todo eso nos ayuda a celebrar estos 110 años y no sólo a lamentarnos y apenarnos”, prosiguió diciendo. “Debido a todas las historias que hemos escuchado y a nuestra propia convicción, creo que, como comunidad, Dios nos sigue guiando, si tenemos ojos para ver y oídos para escuchar”. ✦

Altibajos de la vida

Escuché recientemente una presentación del Obispo Robert Barron sobre algunas de las grandes figuras del Antiguo Testamento. Me intrigó de manera particular cuando habló de Jacob, especialmente su reflexión sobre la Escalera de Jacob. En realidad, nunca entendí bien esa imagen de los ángeles ascendiendo y descendiendo. Es como una imagen de otro mundo. No obstante, las ideas del Obispo Barron me llevaron a navegar por una jornada de redescubrimiento de las formas en que me he encontrado con Dios a lo largo de mi vida.

El Obispo Barron explicó que los ángeles que suben y bajan son, de cierto modo, un simbolismo de la apertura del cielo y de ‘algo’ de Dios que desciende y de ‘algo’ de nosotros que asciende. El Obispo habló además de la conexión entre esta antigua visión de Jacob y Jesús. En el Misterio Pascual, Jesús se convierte en la Escalera de Jacob, porque Dios mismo bajó (no sólo “algo de Dios”), tomó forma humana y luego, se llevó a la humanidad de vuelta al cielo.

De esta manera, Jesús es ahora el conducto del poder de Dios, y esta “Escalera de Jacob viviente” es el medio de nuestra conversión inicial y continua. Lo que significa que, para la mayoría de nosotros en algún momento de nuestra vida, los cielos se abrieron, Dios descendió

de una manera muy personal y enviamos algo de nosotros de vuelta con Él. Él Obispo Barron planteó la pregunta que inició mi viaje a través del tiempo: ¿Qué fue para ti la Escalera de Jacob? ¿Cuál fue un momento de tu vida en el que los ángeles de Dios ascendían y descendían hacia ti?



Jeff Hedglen

Después de reflexionar un rato me vino a la mente un par de circunstancias en las que me encontré con Dios. La primera fue al mudarme a Texas cuando tenía 16 años. Esto cambió mi vida como adolescente, pero me conecté rápidamente con la

Iglesia y mis experiencias en el ministerio juvenil me llevaron a ver a Dios de una manera nueva y con mayor profundidad.

El conocer a mi esposa mientras estaba de vacaciones en Alemania fue otra ocasión en la que sentí que los cielos se abrían y las bendiciones de Dios subían y bajaban. Al principio de nuestro matrimonio experimentamos seis abortos espontáneos en dos años y medio, y en esos momentos, las bendiciones ascendentes y descendentes no se sentían igual. Pero a medida que pasó el tiempo, ambos llegamos a ver que Dios nos estaba enviando sanación y se llevaba nuestro dolor.

Te animo a encontrar un momento de tranquilidad para reflexionar sobre tu vida y recordar cuándo has sentido que los cielos se abrieron y algo de Dios descendió y te tocó, y le diste a cambio algo de ti mismo a

Dios. Si no te viene a la mente un momento específico, tal vez puedes reflexionar y pensar cómo Dios ha estado ahí contigo a través de los altibajos, posiblemente de una manera invisible. Además, te exhorto a que te abras a la realidad de que Dios nunca se cansa de abrir el cielo para derramar amor y misericordia sobre nosotros.

Este último año ha sido uno que nos mantuvo a muchos de nosotros alejados de una de las mayores “aperturas del cielo” que ocurre a diario y, muy especialmente, los domingos en Misa. Cada Misa es un momento de la Escalera de Jacob. Ya que el cielo se abre para nosotros y Dios desciende en Palabra y Sacramento; y, por otro lado, nosotros nos ofrecemos a Dios participando de todo corazón de la Eucaristía.

Sin duda, todos debemos tener en cuenta la seguridad personal y los protocolos de la pandemia, pero la Iglesia ha trabajado arduamente para crear entornos seguros para que los fieles se reúnan y encuentren la apertura del cielo en la divina liturgia. Tan pronto como puedas, vuelve al altar de Jesús y participa de la fiesta donde el cielo y la tierra se unen, y la Escalera de Jacob encuentra su expresión más plena en la Eucaristía. 🇺🇸

Jeff Hedglen es el Director del Ministerio del Campus de la Universidad de Texas en Arlington.

La Ley de Igualdad no se Trata de la Igualdad o Dignidad Humana

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



 @BpOlsonFW

La Cámara de Representantes de los Estados Unidos aprobó en marzo de este año la Ley de Igualdad por un margen de dieciocho votos. Esta legislación modificaría la Ley de Derechos Civiles del 1964 y pretende abordar cuestiones de discriminación por la orientación sexual y la identidad de género en muchas áreas de la vida pública. La Ley de Igualdad incluye una disposición para impedir que la Ley de Restauración de la Libertad Religiosa del 1993 ofrezca ningún tipo de protección a las comunidades religiosas para insistir en las excepciones a la nueva ley a causa de sus creencias.

La Iglesia enseña, y siempre ha enseñado según la enseñanza que el mismo Jesús nos dio, que cada persona humana está creada a imagen y semejanza de Dios y posee una dignidad irrevocable independientemente de su género, raza, color, nacionalidad o cualquier otra característica distintiva. Por tanto, toda persona debe ser tratada con respeto y entendida como igual en dignidad. Es basado en la dignidad de la naturaleza humana lo que impulsó a la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos a trabajar activamente por la aprobación de la Ley de Derechos Civiles del 1964, que puso fin a la segregación racial legalmente sancionada.

La Iglesia sostenía entonces, como siempre lo ha hecho y lo hace ahora, que la igualdad de las personas ante la ley es un punto de justicia al que todas las personas razonables deberían aspirar, pero cuando las ideas falsas sobre la naturaleza de la persona humana se incorporan a la ley, entonces lo que sigue es una terrible

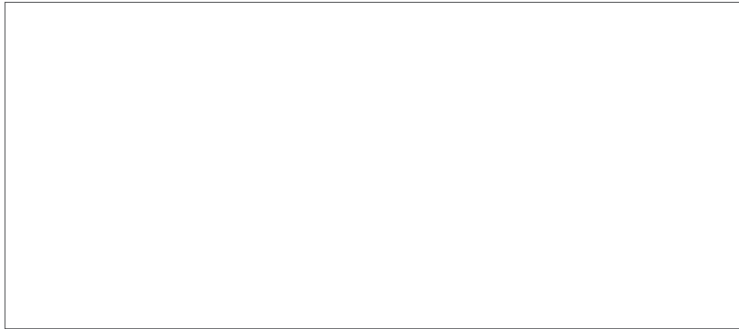
tiranía. En el caso de la Ley de Igualdad, la falsedad en cuestión se encuentra en la novedosa afirmación de que la persona humana es un intelecto incorpóreo y que posee un conjunto de deseos que luego pueden determinar la identidad de género del individuo y definir el significado del cuerpo, tanto para uno mismo como para los demás, sin ninguna referencia al sexo biológico. Si esta extraña interpretación de la naturaleza humana se consagra en ley por la Ley de Igualdad, entonces cualquier costumbre o práctica en cualquier lugar de los Estados Unidos que conecta la identidad o actividad humana con el sexo biológico se volverá ilegal, y los militantes comenzarán inmediatamente a utilizar la rama judicial del gobierno como una porra para imponer la sumisión a la afirmación de que Dios no creó a los seres humanos como hombre y mujer.

La disforia de género es real y para quienes la experimentan, la vida puede ser muy difícil. Los profesionales de todas las disciplinas relevantes deben ayudar a las personas con disforia de género a encontrar un camino hacia la paz en sus vidas, y todos debemos ser pacientes y comprensivos con aquéllos que se sienten existencialmente fuera de lugar en sus propios cuerpos y tratarles con el mismo respeto que le damos a todas las personas. Ese enfoque de comprensión y respeto no puede incluir que estemos de acuerdo con la falsa afirmación de que el género es una preferencia puramente personal y una construcción cultural desconectada del sexo biológico del cuerpo. Cabe señalar que la Iglesia está dispuesta a ayudar a detener toda discriminación injusta de

cualquier grupo, pero no a expensas de la verdad, la opresión de la libertad religiosa, la persecución de otros grupos de personas y, muy especialmente, el poner en peligro a los niños y adolescentes vulnerables.

Esta ley obligaría a las atletas a competir contra los hombres que se identifican como mujeres. Requeriría además que los profesionales médicos hagan operaciones y ofrezcan terapias de cambio de sexo, incluso si viola sus creencias religiosas y su conciencia, y aún si fuera en contra de su propio juicio médico. Las agencias de adopción también podrían correr el riesgo de verse obligadas a colocar a los niños con parejas del mismo sexo, incluso si esto viola sus creencias y las de la madre biológica. Nuestras escuelas se verían obligadas a proporcionar baños y vestuarios unisex para los niños y adolescentes. La enseñanza del Evangelio y la razón recta de que los actos homosexuales son antinaturales e inmorales serían censurados falsamente como un discurso de odio por los mandarines del mundo académico, el periodismo, el entretenimiento, las grandes empresas de tecnología, ciertas corporaciones y los anarquistas. Esta falsa acusación de discurso de odio hace que sea cada vez más urgente que hablemos con valentía la Verdad de Cristo con amor y nunca por miedo, ira, resentimiento, arrogancia o desprecio por otras personas. No obstante, digan la Verdad a toda costa.

Por favor, les pido que oren conmigo y que se unan a mí para pedir valientemente a nuestros senadores que no aprueben la Ley de Igualdad. Recemos por la paz y el bien común de nuestra República. 🇺🇸



LIVESTREAMED!



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU
THÂN ÁI MỜI BẠN
CORDIALMENTE LE INVITA

to the **Priestly**
Ordination of



JASON ALLAN



THOMAS JONES



SAMUEL MAUL



BRETT METZLER



JOSEPH MORENO



LINH NGUYEN



Saturday, May 22, 2021 | 10 a.m. | Available by livestream on fwdioc.org