

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



O QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Rejoice, Alleluia!

MAY – JUNE 2022
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Paul Brizano
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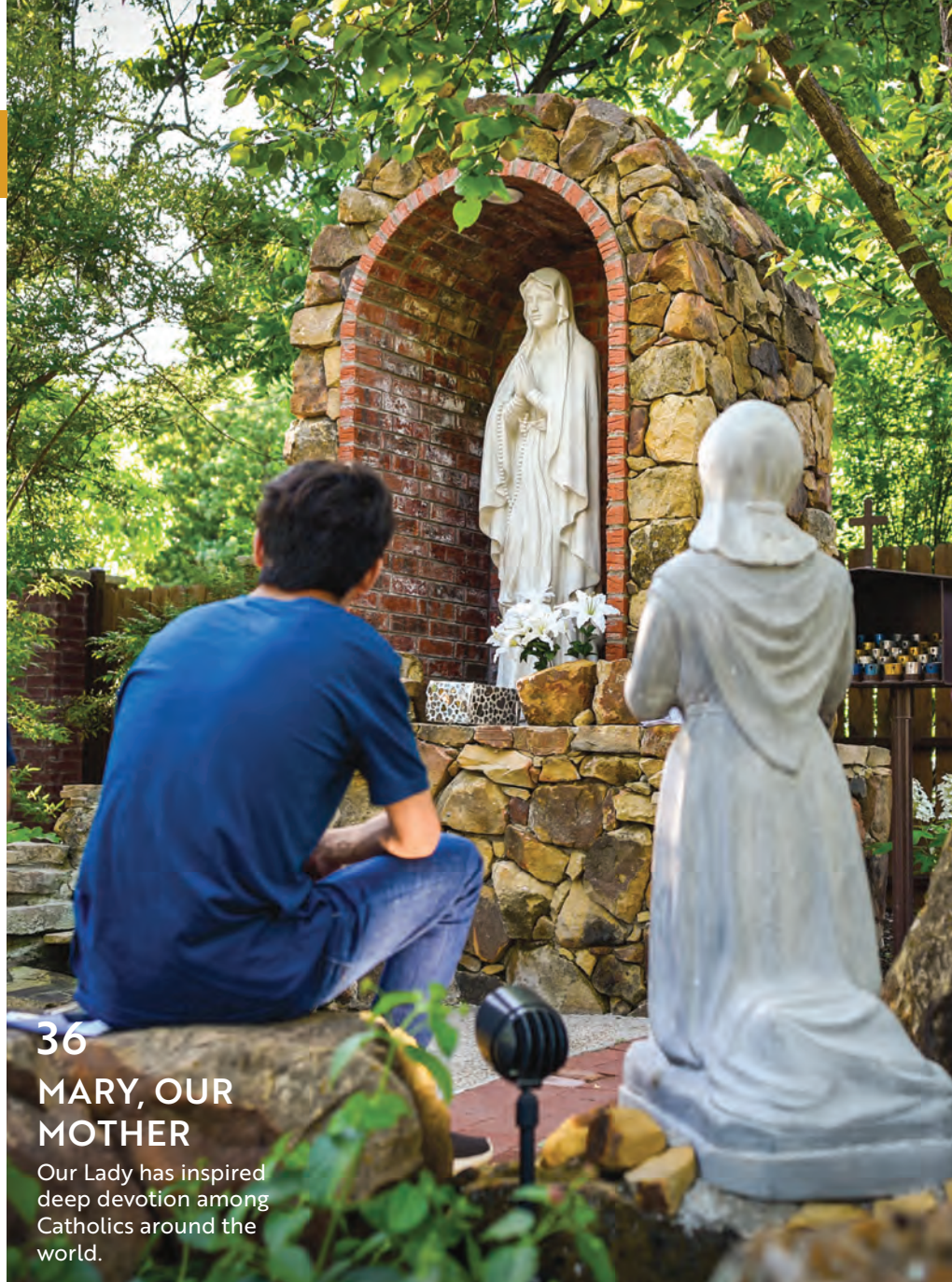
Maria, creación de Dios by Spanish painter Raúl Berzosa. To view more paintings by the artist, visit RaulBerzosa.com.

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Hope and help of sinners

When I was a child I would often groan at the prospect of praying the Litany of Loreto — especially as it was always tacked on at the end of what I deemed already long prayers. Nonetheless, my mother and grandmother were staunch advocates of praying it after each Rosary.

I look back at those times now and appreciate those two ladies' persistence and patience. Thanks to them, I understand the beauty of the Litany of Loreto, the efficacy of prayer, and the rightly deserved honor it bestows upon Our Blessed Mother.

In a way, the litany is a sort of history lesson of Our Lady's compassion and willingness to advocate for us, in order to bring us to greater holiness and love for her Son. This litany was composed during the Middle Ages in — you guessed it — Loreto, Italy. In 1587, Pope Sixtus V formally approved it for public use and recommended its propagation. A few centuries later, Pope Pius VII granted the faithful a partial indulgence every time it was recited. As time passed, more titles and advocations were added by the popes, including two by St. Pope John Paul II and three by Pope Francis.

Young me would have been distraught upon learning that this prayer would get even longer. Current me has no problem with it because whether in heaven or on earth, in times of sickness or war, persecution or famine, day or night, Mary does not relinquish her role of caring for, consoling, and interceding for her oftentimes errant children. Those titles and invocations in the Litany are her badges of honor for saving us, interceding for us, inspiring us, and most importantly, bringing us closer to her Son.

Blessed Pope Pius IX puts it well: "God enriched [Mary] so wonderfully from the treasury of His divinity, far beyond all angels and saints with the abundance of all heavenly gifts, that...beside God, no one can even conceive in thought."

As we celebrate May, the month of Mary, writer Jerry Circelli shows us many examples of her closeness to us (see pages 36-46). And on our website, columnist Sean Wright shares the meaning of Mary's many titles (visit bit.ly/LoretoLitany).

Whatever situation or difficulty you are in, remember that your Mother loves you and can help you. So don't walk, *fly* to her protection!

Juan Guajardo
 EDITOR

Life on The Chrism Trail

Bishop Michael F. Olson, STD, MA



PREACHING THE GOSPEL CLEARLY AND JOYFULLY

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of vindication by our God, to comfort all who mourn; to place on those who mourn in Zion a diadem instead of ashes, to give them oil of gladness in place of mourning, a glorious mantle instead of a listless spirit.”

— Isaiah 61:1-3

Jesus read this Scripture in the synagogue in Nazareth, and immediately following this, Saint Luke describes the rejection that is delivered to Jesus by His friends and extended family members as they react to His proclamation that He is the fulfillment of the prophecy from Isaiah.

Jesus’ proclamation calls the people out of a spiritual listlessness, a lethargy of cynicism and indifference they prefer to

the oil of gladness and the glorious mantle of the Gospel. This oil of gladness is Jesus Christ, the fullness of revelation and God’s own Son.

It is important for us to remember that Jesus is speaking amid the members of His local synagogue who have their own experiences of Jesus. His extended family and neighbors took Him for granted, because they thought they knew all about Him. He is the carpenter’s son. Yet, when Jesus reveals to them that He is the universal fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah they reject Him. Jesus is calling them out of their private experience of Him and out of their personal spiritual interpretations of what Isaiah prophesies. Each one of them would prefer to impose their private experience of Him and private interpretations of Isaiah upon others.

This is not unlike the present-day practice among government leaders, political activists, the economic leaders of multinational corporations, and the

ideologues within mainstream media and social media to incite each of us as individuals to universalize private experience and to impose this agenda upon organized religion and its adherents under the rubric of what they call “globalism.” This results in the absolutizing of relativism, a tyranny of thought and speech that is imposing itself as a cancel culture upon the anointed and faithful members of the Body of Christ, the Church for whom Christ shed His blood and died.

This melancholy misunderstanding of reality has also supplanted the rule of law in our society with a nihilism spawning political ideologies that replace religion in the lives of many. This nihilism has been advanced by this world’s elite with messianic fervor, even among baptized Catholics who present themselves for Holy Communion but have fashioned a peculiar doctrine of narcissism that exempts them from the obligations of charity and the bonds of real communion.



There are other examples. Visit any university campus (including Catholic universities) where the Gospel is not upheld as the liberating truth of the world's redemption, and this is likely what you will find: intellectual incoherence, moral degradation, intolerance of authentic freedom of thought and speech, the inciting of hatred among people of different races, ideology masking itself as science, abortion promoted as an essential human right and a positive good, a missionary zeal for anarchy, and growing persecution of Christianity at the very center of institutional life. All of this is enforced with ruthless efficiency by teachers and administrators who have pledged their lives to the proposition that there is no such thing as truth and who by all available means seek to persuade or coerce their students to repudiate the alleged superstitions of their childhood, beginning with faith. In some form and to some degree, this same disintegration is at work in every institution of our national life, including the armed forces and our national intelligence agencies.

Yet, we preach joyfully Christ Jesus crucified as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant. He is the oil of gladness that imbues our priestly ministry. We cannot settle for mere familiarity with Jesus as the carpenter's son. What we preach is the universal character of the Gospel and the messianic mission of Jesus Christ that we are all equally human, equally subject to God's law, and equally and eternally accountable to God who loves us and commands us to love our neighbor as we

are to love Him. This truth leads us to recognize that our created humanity is measured and structured by the natural law and through grace is held accountable by what the Church's authentic teaching of the Gospel calls the four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. These four last things set the eternal horizon of the accountability of unconditional love.

Our sacramental ministry and our preaching as priests, for which we were ordained and anointed with chrism, provide the means of grace for reorienting our minds, our hearts, and our behavioral habits, and those of the people we shepherd in the person of Christ the Head and Shepherd of the Church toward the beatitude of heaven.

Natural law puts a hedge against our disordered desires of lust and anger. The four last things hold us accountable eternally for our loving obedience or selfish disobedience to the Ten Commandments and Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God not as angels trapped in bodies, but as a unity of body and soul in such a way that both dimensions of this unity — the body and the soul — are intrinsically related to each other and are essential to the human nature that we all share no matter our race, ethnicity, language, or whether our biological sex be male or female. For too long, these essential truths have been understated in our preaching and other aspects of our priestly life and ministry including our ministries of charity and outreach, our schools, and our

curricula for catechesis.

We gathered at the Chrism Mass to bless the sacramental oils: the Oil of the Catechumens, the Oil of the Sick, and the Sacred Chrism. These will be used in our priestly ministry to anoint God's people with the gladness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The distinct anointings with these three blessed oils will first impart strength to catechumens to renounce sin and the glamor of evil. Secondly, they will release the sick and suffering from fear of receiving the consolation of faith. And thirdly, they will imbue the faithful with the sweet odor of the Gospel, the blessed presence of the Anointed One, Jesus Christ.

We gathered at the Chrism Mass as brothers, priests and bishop, present with the faithful we serve, to renew our promises of ordination when we were anointed and imbued with the oil of gladness and the sweet fragrance of holiness. We do so as priests, both diocesan and consecrated religious, members of the presbyterate of this local church of Fort Worth and members in communion with the Universal Church founded by Christ Himself on the Rock of Peter — not as secular apparatchiks of a global and multinational organization. We gather as bishop and priests of diverse national origin, speaking various languages, but united as brothers by the fact that Jesus Christ called each one of us and continues to give us His grace to persevere throughout our years of priestly service. As the presbyterate of this local Church,

Continued on Page 6

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it is essential and praiseworthy for us to gather frequently and encourage each other in word, in deed, and most especially in prayer that we might listen to and serve the community of the People of God entrusted to us.

Pope Saint John Paul II wrote to his brother priests in 1987, "Prayer is essential for maintaining pastoral sensitivity to everything that comes from the Spirit, for correctly discerning and properly employing those charisms that lead to union and are linked to priestly service in the Church. For it is the task of priests 'to gather together' the People of God, not to divide them... the priest, the steward of the mysteries of God, is truly himself when he is for others. Prayer gives him a special sensitivity to these others, making him attentive to their needs, to their lives, and destiny. Prayer also enables the priest to recognize those whom the Father has given to him. These are, in the first place, those whom the Good Shepherd has, as it were, placed on the path of our priestly ministry, of his pastoral care."

Brother priests, dear deacons and religious, and faithful Catholic laity, all of us baptized and anointed as God's priestly people, we are entering a dark time when unrighteousness is called

freedom and blasphemy is taken as a mark of sophistication, when the proponents of these views demand not our respect and tolerance but our moral and spiritual capitulation, and where public and even ecclesial figures of great responsibility are no longer willing to admit the biological difference between men and women, let alone the purpose and dignity of marriage between one man and one woman.

We must admit that Christian civilization is of the past, and now those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God are derided as unenlightened bigots. It is our privilege and responsibility to proclaim and to teach the fullness of the Gospel in clarity and charity. Thus, the Church in which we have been ordained and anointed to serve returns to the circumstances of the first century as a persecuted minority, and this too is God's grace, so that we may courageously bear witness to the light in the darkness and preach joyfully the truth of the Gospel by our imitation of Jesus Christ who came not to be served but to serve.

This text was adapted from Bishop Olson's homily at the Chrism Mass on April 12, 2022.



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

 @BpOlsonFW

Pray for Them

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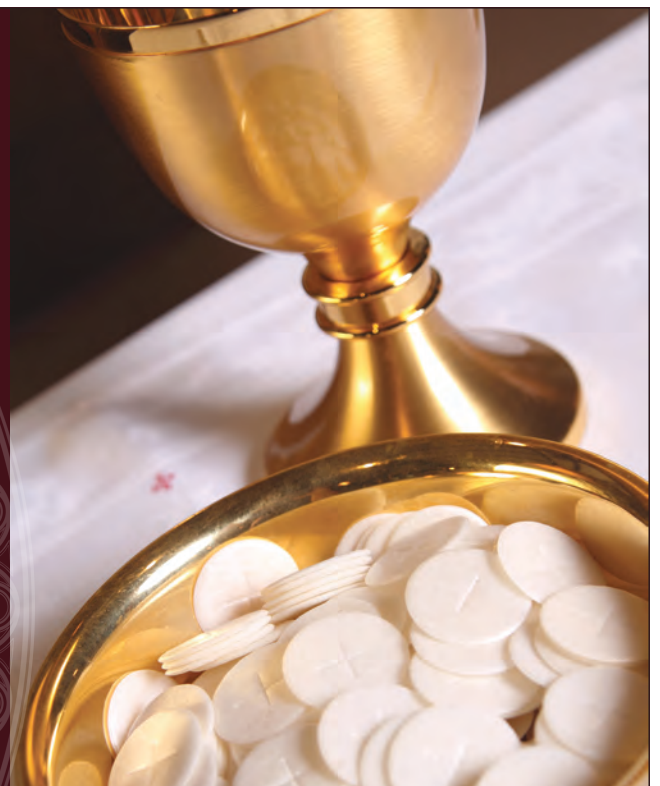
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Saturday, May 21, 2022 | Please visit FWDioc.org for more information

Nolan Catholic/Andrew Goodridge



A sport for the mind

 Nolan's Robo Vikes advance to world championship

FORT WORTH — Competing in the “varsity sport for the mind,” a group of Nolan Catholic High School students recently advanced to the robotics equivalent of the Olympics.

Nolan’s Robo Vikes competed at the World Robotics Championship in Houston in late April after they won multiple championships and awards at district, regional, and state competitions.

Some 400 teams from 37 countries competed in the World Championship.

At the Texas District Championships, Robo Vikes earned the title of District Championship Finalist and won

the Gracious Professionalism award.

Robo Vikes, which began in 2011 with just a few students, now has 32 students and 11 mentors, some of them engineering professionals from Lockheed Martin and Bell Helicopter.

The robotics team is coached by Nolan engineering teacher Brad Billeaudeau.


“Everything you learn in the engineering classroom is here: programming, manufacturing, the design process, CAD (computer aided design),” Billeaudeau said. “It’s the practical application of that knowledge.”

– Sandra Engelland



Rodney Coates walks through the tornado-damaged home of his friend in Jacksboro. (NTC/Ben Torres)

“God’s hand was at work”

 EF-3 tornado did only minor damage to parish

JACKSBORO — A powerful tornado with winds of up to 150 mph that ripped through Jacksboro March 21 left major damage to nearly 90 homes, severely damaged two schools, and peeled some roof shingles off St. Mary Church.

Nobody was at the church when the tornado struck shortly after 3 p.m. St. Mary is part of the tri-parish community of Jack and Wise Counties in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

The church’s pastor, Father Reehan Antony, SAC, said Mass continued as scheduled and none of the church’s programs were affected.

“It will not affect any of the programs because it’s only some of the shingles; a little portion on the church and a portion on the classroom sections are gone,” he said.

After the storm passed, the pastor said that he called a few parishioners who came to the church to help cover the damaged sections of shingles

with tarps.

“We did see a few drops inside that building because the shingles were not there on top,” Fr. Antony said. “Not major, but a few spots here and there.”

Teams with the National Weather Service surveyed damage in Jack County and said the twister was an EF-3 level storm with winds of 140 to 150 mph.

“Let me just say this publicly, that I believe in God and God’s amazing grace was here at our community yesterday, through the situation and what we had facing us,” Frank Hefner, Jack County emergency management coordinator, said at a press conference.

“We’ve seen no major injuries and no deaths with the devastation of what we’re seeing in our community and around our county. God’s hand was at work at keeping us protected,” Hefner said.

– Lance Murray

A Week Like No Other

Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday is the most important week in Christianity, and parishes around the diocese celebrated the events that saved the world and created new life for us.

Chrism Mass. Two acts set apart the Chrism Mass, held this year on April 12 at St. Patrick Cathedral. First, Bishop Michael Olson blessed the oils to be used in sacraments throughout the diocese in the coming year. Secondly, priests renewed their ordination vows, recommitting themselves to the faithful service of God and His people.

Holy Thursday. At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of His Apostles to demonstrate the Son of the Most High came to serve, rather than to be served. In parishes on Holy Thursday, pastors model Jesus by washing the feet of their parishioners, as did Father Mel Bessellieu, pastor of St. Ann Parish in Burseson.

Good Friday. On the most solemn day of the Church's liturgical year, Catholics remember Jesus laying down His life and suffering death on a cross for our salvation. At St. Rita Parish in Fort Worth, the corpus of Jesus was removed from the cross and processed through the church before being placed in a tomb created for this somber service.



NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Ben Torres



NTC/Juan Guajardo

VIEW THE PHOTOS



View our photographic coverage of Holy Week 2022 by scanning the QR code.



NTC/Ben Torres



NTC/Ben Torres

Easter Vigil. During what the Roman Missal calls the “mother of all vigils,” Father Jason Allan, parochial vicar of Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton, welcomed new members into the Catholic Church through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. In the Diocese of Fort Worth, 597 new Catholics received the sacraments of initiation.

Catholics worldwide celebrate this holy night, which begins with the darkness and silence of the tomb and ends with joy of the risen Christ, the Light of the World.



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

Leap of faith

 Top ranked triple jumper approaches Catholic faith with same discipline and focus

FORT WORTH —When Chengetayi “Du” Mapaya launches himself into the triple jump during a competition, he carries his Catholic faith with him in his heart and in the rosary that soars with him around his neck.

Mapaya, 23, is an athlete from the African nation of Zimbabwe who is a senior on Texas Christian University’s 17th-ranked track team in Fort Worth. He is the No.1-ranked triple jumper in the United States this year and ranks among the top 10 jumpers in the world. His best effort covered 56-feet, 3-inches in the hop, skip, and jump event.

TCU Assistant Track Coach Shawn Jackson, who coaches the team’s jumpers, said Mapaya is always humble, even though he is arguably the best athlete on the TCU track team.

“He’s really carried the manners of his parents in terms of being respectful and making sure that he’s respectful to everyone,” Jackson said.

Mapaya says his devout faith is because of his parents, who made sure he regularly attended Mass in his home country.

“Now it’s a part of me. I feel like without it, I’m lost,” he said. “So, I just go every Sunday; I always have to go to church. You know, it’s something that’s like, ‘being in me.’”

“I’ve always had a rosary because I feel like it guides me, just like

[having] good faith,” he said. “My parents told me to just stay true to myself and keep going to church and keep staying close to God.”

The star athlete said when he came to Fort Worth, “I couldn’t just stop [attending Mass]. Luckily, there was a chapel close by, so I figured that out and started going every single week.”

Gabe Gutierrez, campus minister of TCU Newman Center, said Mapaya attends Mass regularly and is an altar server and lector.

Mapaya is “very driven, very focused, very disciplined,” Gutierrez said.


— Lance Murray

Chengetayi
“Du” Mapaya.
(courtesy of
TCU/Peter G.
Aiken)



NTC/Jacqueline Burkepile

A journey of love

 Outdoor Stations of the Cross honor love and inspire meditation

SAINT JO — After Sarah Ehlen’s husband converted to Catholicism on his deathbed in 2011, she traveled on weekends from her Dallas home to their 34-acre wooded property in Saint Jo.

Searching for healing amid grief, Ehlen discovered a way to honor her husband’s memory: building outdoor Stations of the Cross on the land they bought together 27 years ago.

“It was a massive undertaking,” Ehlen explained. “It was an offering to God because I felt blessed, even though I went through something difficult. I felt very blessed by his life. He was a very good father and husband.”

Ehlen then hired a carpenter, placed holy images of the Lord’s Passion on wood, and created a walking path on the land. She had each station handmade and placed near a tree, finishing the project in 2014.

Ehlen remarried in 2017. Her current husband, Joseph Ehlen, refurbished the stations last year, and the couple recently opened them to the public. Sarah then invited Father Joseph Keating, pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Muenster, to pray and bless them in 2021.

Contact s.c.sagert@gmail.com to visit Sarah and Joseph Ehlen’s Stations of the Cross.

— Jacqueline Burkepile

IN MEMORIAM

Full obituaries are available at NorthTexasCatholic.org.

FATHER THOMAS KENNEDY February 28, 2022

“He was open to helping anybody. Despite his own sufferings, he was always there to serve God and help those in need,” said St. Joseph parishioner John Fincher, remembering Father Thomas J. Kennedy, who died February 28 in an Arlington hospital. He was 68.

Born to Margaret and Thomas J. Kennedy Jr. in Garland, a young Tom Kennedy grew up in Arlington where he attended St. Maria Goretti Catholic School and later Nolan Catholic High School. Before discerning a vocation to the priesthood



Father Thomas Kennedy

later in life, the skilled mechanic traveled to Alaska, Africa, and other parts of the world to work on oil rigs.

After completing his studies at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, he was ordained to the priesthood on July 7, 2007, by Bishop Kevin Vann in St. Patrick Cathedral.

His first assignment was at St. Michael Parish in Bedford, followed by Holy Angels Parish in rural Clifton and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Morgan, and St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Pilot Point. He served

as parochial vicar at St. Joseph in Arlington since 2018.

—Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

PRIEST ASSIGNMENTS

REV. VICTOR MANUEL CONTRERAS JUÁREZ, CORC

From outside the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** at Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, effective April 13.

REV. EMMET O’HARA, SAC

From Parochial Vicar of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford to **Pastor** of St. Stephen Parish, effective March 3.

REV. MICHAEL O’SULLIVAN, SAC

From Pastor of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford to **Parochial Vicar** of St. Stephen Parish, effective March 3.

REV. MARIA JOSEPH KIRAN KUMAR PUDOTA, SAC

From outside the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** at St. Michael Parish in Bedford, effective March 18.

REV. SIPRIANUS OLA ROTOK, SVD

Resigned as **Pastor** of St. Rita Parish, effective March 2.

MOTHER ANNE TERESA OF JESUS, OCD February 12, 2022

“Mother Anne Teresa has been the rock and stronghold of our community for so many years,” said Mother Teresa Agnes of Jesus Crucified, OCD, prioress of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity in Arlington.

Born Anne Henrietta Kulinski on July 15, 1947, she spent her early years in Illinois with her family. As a teenager, she felt called to consider cloistered religious life. She entered the order in 1965 to devote her life to prayer.

Alongside her friend Mother Maria of Jesus Crucified, Sister Anne Teresa guided their community to live the Carmelite spirituality after Vatican II, expanded their Fort



Mother Anne Teresa

Worth monastery, and were foundational in the building of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity in Arlington.

In 1986, about two years after the Carmelites moved into the Arlington monastery, Sister Anne Teresa was elected Prioress, becoming Mother Anne Teresa, who ensured a physical and spiritual home for Carmelites.

—Kiki Hayden

SISTER MARY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS, OCD March 29, 2022

Sister Mary of the Precious Blood of Jesus, OCD, lived her life performing acts of love and service for her family of origin, her Carmelite family, and Jesus.

Born in Poland, she immigrated to Chicago with her family in her youth. After attending Catholic high school, she entered the Carmelite monastery in 1975.

At the monastery in Fort Worth and after the Sisters moved to their new Arlington monastery, Sister Mary showed love through simple acts. “She was always willing to take over dishwasher duties,” said Mother Teresa Agnes, prioress. “She’d just do the



Sister Mary of the Precious Blood of Jesus

humblest tasks, cleaning, no matter what it was, she would do it with great joy, so much like St. Thérèse.”

Sister Mary’s responsibilities included the gentle care of her fellow Carmelites. She sewed beautiful habits, baked altar bread, did laundry, and spent much time in the kitchen.

—Kiki Hayden

Noteworthy achievement



Mary Boatman retires after six decades

VERNON — After more than 60 years playing piano and organ at Mass, Mary Boatman of Holy Family of Nazareth Parish has retired from music ministry, but she hasn't gone far. She has swapped the piano bench for the front pew of the Vernon parish.

Although Boatman acknowledged "music is my life," attending Mass without worrying about being on the correct page before the next song is "beautiful. I'm at peace, I'm comfortable, I'm enjoying it."

She began playing in the diocese in the late 1950s at St. Mary Parish in Quannah, the town where she met and married her late husband. When they moved to Vernon in the 1960s, she began playing at Holy Family of Nazareth while she



Mary Boatman at Holy Family of Nazareth Parish in Vernon. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

raised her four children.

Playing the organ for Saturday Vigil Mass, Sunday morning Mass, funerals, and weddings became more difficult for Boatman as arthritis affected her hands. Physically and

mentally, "I'm not as young as when I started," she said. Of course, she started before most parishioners were born.

Boatman, 92, was honored at a retirement party in the parish hall March 20.

Her friend and fellow musician Sherri Syptak described Boatman as faithful and compassionate. "She's a ray of sunshine who just radiates her love of the Lord and her love of playing music."

Embracing stewardship as a way of life



Centering on God is essential to stewardship

BEDFORD — All of us, as members of the Church, have responsibilities and roles to play, Bishop Michael Olson said during the Diocesan Day of Stewardship held March 19 at St. Michael Church in Bedford.

"For we have been called to be disciples of the Lord Jesus and He has given us the grace to say 'yes,'" Bishop Olson said.

More than 170 religious, ministry leaders, and staff members from more than 25 parishes throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth attended the event, which fell on the Feast of St. Joseph.

"The silence of St. Joseph represents his attentiveness for hearing the call of God," Bishop Olson said. "This is at the heart of our stewardship."

In addition to Bishop Olson, Cande de Leon,

Diocese of Phoenix executive director for the Office of Mission Advancement, spoke.

From the practical to the big-picture view, Bishop Olson and de Leon employed the lenses of faith, hope, and charity as well as identity, trust, gratitude, and love in discussing stewardship's many aspects.

"Stewardship is an expression of discipleship with the power to change how we understand and live our lives," de Leon said. "Recognizing God is the origin of life and all we have, and deeply aware that, as the recipients and caretakers of God's many gifts, we are thankful and eager to cultivate those gifts out of love for God and one another."

— Matthew Smith

Bishop Olson gives a presentation at the Diocesan Day of Stewardship at St. Michael Parish. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)



Sr. Mary Grace, SV, spoke to students and played dodgeball at Nolan Catholic High School. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Sisters of Life visit Fort Worth



Religious community shares pro-life message with St. Andrew and Nolan students

FORT WORTH — Three Sisters of Life from New York traveled to St. Andrew Parish and spoke on three consecutive days, reminding parishioners of their worth and God’s love.

After their final talk on April 1, they visited with students at St. Andrew Catholic School and Nolan Catholic High School. Their visit concluded with prayer on the sidewalks of Planned Parenthood.

Deacon Kevin Bagley said he learned about the sisters “through their good work and reputation, and a parish family has a daughter progressing through formation to be a Sister of Life.”

He was encouraged to bring them to St. Andrew because, “We believe that life begins at conception, and having religious women who have committed themselves to the cause of life is an important message.”

Olga Watson, Director of Campus Ministry at Nolan, said the sisters had lunch with students and played dodgeball with them. “It’s important that students can get to know religious and see they are real people.”

The sisters told students about their order and their journeys that led them to a religious vocation.

— Amanda Deats-Coello





A woman and child evacuate from a residential building damaged by Russian shelling in Kyiv, Ukraine in March 2022. (State Emergency Service of Ukraine)

Bless and Help Them

Local Catholics offer prayers,
support for Ukraine

By Susan Moses

Father Pavlo Popov, the pastor of St. Sophia Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in The Colony, said the initial shock and disbelief of the Russian invasion of Ukraine transitioned into a series of questions. “How long can this go on? How many more victims will there be? How many more have to die?”

Shock has returned as he and his congregation see photos and stories of the atrocities Russian soldiers committed as they retreated from the western regions of Ukraine. “A horror story,” said the pastor. “It’s more shocking, a different shock. The shock of war crimes, especially civilian deaths.”

In the first days after the February 24 invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces, the pastor recalled a busy stream of phone calls and donations. The pace has slowed, he said. “There’s not as much money, but people are still helping. But they realize it’s not going to end tomorrow, or anytime soon, and they have to pace themselves, to prepare for the long run.”

In the weeks since the invasion, the pastor said they’ve developed a “better strategy” for donations and have determined which items are most needed, how to ship necessary materials, and which charities are most effective.

His parishioners, like the faithful from the Diocese

of Fort Worth, are making sure that Masses, prayer, and material support continue to make their way to those in need in Ukraine.

EARLY SOLIDARITY

One of those early signs of unity came during the very early stages of the unprovoked attack on Ukraine.

Bishop Michael Olson joined Fr. Popov and the faithful of the parish at their celebration of Mass on Sunday, March 6. The small church in The Colony overflowed with parish members and others who came to show their support to the Ukrainian community.

Bishop Olson explained, “This visit is an opportunity for us to pray together as God’s people and ask Him to give us peace and an end to this terrible war, this unjust assault upon Ukraine, and also to give solace, for many people here have relatives and friends who are still in Ukraine, to ask God to bless them and help them.”

The bishop delivered the homily and noted that Catholic unity “brings us together today not out of fear but out of faith, hope, and love.”

Parishioners of St. Sophia, most of whom have family and friends in Ukraine, have spent the days since the Russian invasion praying with faith, hope, and love while battling anxiety and fear for their loved ones and their homeland.

Marta Petrash is a St.

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Getty Images/Chris McGrath

A RESIDENT IS COMFORTED



VOA/Yan Boechat

CIVILIANS EVACUATE



NNS photo/Thomas Peter, Reuters

A MAN MOURNS HIS MOTHER

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Sophia parishioner who grew up in Ukraine, where her mother, brother, and other relatives and friends still live. Each day she calls her mother, who is staying with relatives in a rural area in western Ukraine, where her life is fairly normal.

However, Petrash's nephew recently returned to Ukraine from Austria, where he was working, to train with the volunteer territorial defense forces. His concerned aunt sent him tactical gear through a friend who has twice traveled from Texas to Ukraine with suitcases of medical supplies and military clothing.

Petrash's cousin, a physician in Lviv, still practices medicine despite having to take shelter in the basement when air raid sirens sound.

But "what is happening in East Ukraine is horrifying," said Petrash, who immigrated to the U.S. in 1991. "I'm a little paralyzed, I cannot function normally," and she spends much of her day glued to Ukrainian news channels, watching reports and updates.

"There's so much pain in Mariupol," a city of nearly 500,000 on the coast of southeast Ukraine which has been demolished by relentless fighting. "I pray for them. That's all we can do. We need everybody's prayers," she said.

WORLDWIDE PRAYERS

From St. Patrick Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth to Rome and points all around the world, the Catholic Church united to make an Act of Consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The Act of Consecration originated in Fatima, Portugal in 1917, when the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children with a message encouraging prayer and repentance, as well as a request for Russia's consecration to her.

The Blessed Mother said: "If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated."

The message concluded, "In the end,

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(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

United in Prayer

On the Solemnity of the Annunciation, Catholics from around the diocese came to St. Patrick Cathedral for Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson, followed by the Act of Consecration made in union with Rome.



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ABOVE: Laity filled the pews on March 25 for the Solemnity of the Annunciation and to pray the Act of Consecration as requested by the Holy Father.

LEFT: Priests from around the diocese join in praying the Act of Consecration.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Bishop Olson kneels while praying the Act of Consecration at approximately the same time as Pope Francis in Rome.

VIEW THE VIDEO!



View our video on the Act of Consecration by scanning the QR code above.



Ivanka Tomashchuk prays during a Mass at St. Sophia Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church on March 6. Bishop Olson was the homilist for the Mass and afterward met with families affected by the war. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 16

my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”

Since this message, Russia has been consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary four times.

Bishop Olson observed Pope Francis’ request of all Catholic bishops, priests, and laity around the world to join him in the consecration on March 25, the Solemnity of the Annunciation.

The bishop celebrated Mass at the cathedral with a full assembly. Afterwards, the prelate led the congregation as they prayed, “Mother of God and our Mother, to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the Church, and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine.”

The prayer requested Mary’s intercession in the warring nations as well as in the hearts of the faithful.

Later that evening, the congregation at St. Sophia also prayed the Act of Consecration, which Fr. Popov described as “beautiful and spiritually uplifting.”

At the Solemnity of the Annunciation, “the history of salvation begins with the Mother of God. We pray the war will stop with the Mother of God’s intercession,” he said.

RAYS OF HOPE

Although thousands of miles from their Ukrainian homeland, Fr. Popov said his flock has “a big, painful, bleeding wound. We can’t stop the bleeding while the war is raging.”

Despite the people being in pain, they do not despair, he pointed out. “We look through the lens of Christ. We pray. We know God has a plan for us, even if we don’t know what it is, but we see the rays of hope in the darkness.”

Many times, those rays of hope come via the phone as strangers call with offers of help. For example, a man living in Alaska recently called the church and offered a house he owns in Frisco for any Ukrainian refugees who might need it.

“In this world, God acts through other people. God is shining His light, His hope through other people,” said Fr. Popov. “Always with God there lies hope.”

Petrash has been heartened by the Ukrainian flags she sees flying around the Metroplex, as well as the skylines lit up in blue and yellow.

Both Russia and NATO countries underestimated the tenacity of the Ukrainian military and volunteer defense forces, Petrash said. “They thought Ukraine would fall in three or four days. But the fighters will not surrender, despite being underequipped,” she said, calling them heroes.

She believes the significance of protecting Ukrainian democracy extends beyond the country’s borders, saying, “Ukraine is fighting for our freedom and fighting for the freedom of the democratic free world, which is in danger right now.”

Fr. Popov agreed the Russian threat will not stop with Ukraine. Some world leaders are too measured in their response to Putin’s aggression, considering how their actions might affect the price of oil, he cited as an example.

“The time for fear has passed. This is the time to be decisive,” he said. “We need to help [end] the suffering, end the atrocities. But humans are humans; not all choose to do the right thing.”

However the war in Ukraine ends, “The world will definitely be different,” the pastor continued. For people of faith, watching the horror of the war unfold proves, “We cannot put hope in the princes of this world, but on the true King of the world.”

Many local Catholics have expressed a desire to assist those suffering in Ukraine, where more than 10 million people have fled their homes since the Russian invasion. The Diocese of Fort Worth is accepting contributions for Catholic Relief Services at [fwdioc.org/ukraine-relief-en](https://www.fwdioc.org/ukraine-relief-en). CRS partners with Caritas Ukraine to provide humanitarian relief across Ukraine and bordering countries.

Bishop Olson also suggested supporting Catholic Charities Fort Worth and Catholic Charities Dallas, which will be assisting refugees coming from Ukraine in the near future. 🇺🇸



Edee Hansen, left, Frank Ramirez, and Eileen Keller at a parish listening session at Holy Cross Church in The Colony. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Listen UP

Parish listening sessions for Synod 2023 direct our hearts and minds back to God

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Devastating. That's how Marla Trevino described the impact a two-year pandemic had on her parish in Mineral Wells.

"Few people came to Mass," remembered the longtime member of Our Lady of Lourdes. "A lot of people got sick, and we lost many of our elderly."

Isolation, caused by the health crisis, seemed to amplify the separation between the Anglo and Spanish speaking communities in the rural parish. The different groups came together for fundraisers but little else,

observed the parish's bookkeeper.

Two listening sessions, part of a global consultative process prior to the 2023 assembly of bishops in Rome, the Synod on Synodality, helped parishioners reconnect and discover common ground.

"Everything that was said in the English session was echoed in the Spanish session," said Trevino, who facilitated each discussion with a series of questions provided by the diocese. "By listening to each other, parishioners realized they want to be drawn together — not apart. The sessions were valuable and stressed the importance of really listening to each other."

Challenged by Pope Francis to focus on the meaning of synodality by "listening to the questions, concerns, and hopes of every church, people, and nation," the Diocese of Fort Worth encouraged parishioners to reflect and dialogue with each other based on two main questions: How am I personally listening to God to serve His will? How am I listening to my brothers and sisters so I can learn how God is talking to them?

More than 90 listening sessions hosted by parishes and faith communities allowed participants to share their experiences of

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All Saints Parish and many others began listening sessions with Eucharistic Adoration. (NTC/ Kevin Bartram)

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worship, discipleship, and evangelization. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the conversations were designed to be collaborative, inclusive, and non-confrontational. Notes taken during the sessions were summarized, delivered to the diocese, and further synthesized into a 10-page document for submission to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The three-year process toward the Synod will continue at the national and North American level before ending with the bishops in Rome in October 2023.

Bringing people together and developing an ability to actively listen to one another is key to the consultative phase of the synod, according to Paola Quintero-Araujo. The director of the St. Junipero Serra Institute is spearheading the diocesan synodal process with Father Jonathan Wallis, vicar general.

“Just having the experience of being back together to learn, listen to God and each other is the result we’re looking for,” she explained. “The call of the synod is not to produce documents. It’s the journey. Being in this journey is already a result that allows us to start changing minds and hearts again.”

Finding our identity in Christ is what is at stake, Quintero-Araujo emphasized, adding, “That’s what has been lost. We see more people finding their identity in political parties, common groups they like,

or personal interests.”

The pandemic — on top of other divisive national issues — caused stress and separation.

“So, one of the immediate results is the joy of gathering with each other, learning to listen to each other, and finding our anchor in Christ so we can move forward.”

Asking pastors to oversee the listening sessions gave them the opportunity to interact with parishioners. The catch phrase for the synod is “journey together.”

“We’re all called to participate,” the director explained. “This journey will happen through listening and discernment guided by the Holy Spirit. We’re discerning how God is calling us to work together and walk together.”

VOICING CONCERNS, STRENGTHS

Father Tim Thompson, pastor at All Saints since December 2021, welcomed the opportunity to host listening sessions in English and Spanish at the historic Northside parish.

“I like the process. I like people coming together to think about their faith and the Church,” he told the *North Texas Catholic*. “I think it will help the Church not just consider its future but recognize the strengths it has and how it can grow and build from there.”

The pastor sees a passion for the faith in the people he serves.

“That hasn’t died,” he assured. “People

have a hopeful and positive feeling for the faith and that will guide and inspire them.”

Keeping young people involved in the Church was a concern voiced by many All Saints participants attending the morning session in English. The listening sessions provided an important forum to discuss “what’s in people’s hearts,” said Deacon Ricardo De Leon.

“We want to bring people back into the Church,” he explained. “We have to get input from parishioners in the pews, so we know why so many are leaving.”

People have a strong desire to be heard and feel a sense of belonging. That’s why strangers sometimes call his parish office hoping just to talk with someone.

“I invite them in,” added the deacon, recalling how one man poured his heart out for two hours. “There’s a lot of people like that out there who want to be heard. Listening to people now will have some effect on the future.”

COMMUNICATION BUILDS COMMUNITY

Before the listening session began at St. Thomas the Apostle, Deacons Mike Handler and Humberto Serrano led participants in a bilingual service that centered on Scripture, prayer, and meditation inside the church’s chapel. During frank and informal roundtable discussions, those present shared their views on how better communication can build a more involved church

community.

“All of us are so busy. Until we intentionally take the time to stop, listen, and pray, we’ll continue to do what we’re doing,” said the parish’s Safe Environment coordinator Bruce Mallory. “I think this exercise is an attempt to get us to stop and focus on the Blessed Sacrament and listen to what the Holy Spirit is telling us.”

Many expressed hope that the listening sessions would become a continuing exercise at the parish. More interaction between ministries and people would allow the parish to grow closer together as a community.

“People at our table liked this idea and want to see it happen more often,” commented Ricardo Baez, one of the Spanish-speaking participants. “We talked about the Church being sensitive and willing to pay more attention to people’s needs.”

LISTENING TO EVERYONE

Hoping to reach as many people as possible, the diocese invited participation from Catholics belonging to small faith communities. Father Ken Robinson attended listening sessions with fellow retirees at St. Francis Village as well as the deaf community — a group he has served for 25 years.

“They each have a different perspective but no radical differences,” observed the priest, who used American Sign Language to celebrate Mass for the group before the April 3 listening session at St. Rita Parish in Fort Worth. How we listen to God and the temptations that prevent us from listening to Him are going to be the same across the board.”

Assisted by the Diocesan Coordinator of Deaf Ministry and interpreter Connie Martin, participants remembered a time when deaf Catholics were content to sit back and watch liturgies from the pew. There was little involvement or awareness of the hearing impaired in the diocese.

In recent years, with more deaf community members serving as altar servers, sacristans, and Eucharistic ministers, that is slowly changing, they agreed. But much more outreach is needed.

“There are more deaf Catholics out there,” David Cassanova pointed out. “We need to find them and invite them [to our Mass] along with our friends and family. Sharing our faith can be difficult but it’s important to do.” 🍷



Priests, including Father Prakash Dias of Sacred Heart Church in Breckenridge, participated in parish listening sessions. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Connie Martin, coordinator of Deaf Ministry, signs during a session for the deaf community. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



Bruce Mallory speaks at a listening session at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish. (NTC/Jayne Donahue)

from the ashes

A look at what's next for the survivors
of the Eastland Complex Wildfire

By Susan Moses

On March 17, at about 5:15 p.m., Evelyn Guillen was wrapping up her workday as a student advisor at Ranger College when her mother called and told her not to return to the home in Carbon that she shared with her brother and parents.

Her mother, Maria, had arrived at the home from work at 4:30 and reclined for a quick nap. Around 5 p.m. a neighbor's incessant honking alerted her husband, Juan, to the call to evacuate.

Maria left with only time to grab her purse, and Juan stayed behind to free their two horses from their enclosure. His next step was to open the pen of their four sheep and a calf, but firefighters prevented him and told him to flee.

That began what Evelyn Guillen remembers as “the worst 30 minutes of her life,” when she was unable to contact her father and feared that he had been caught in one of the largest wildfires ever recorded in Texas history — the Eastland Complex wildfire.

The Guillen family and six other families who belong to St. Francis Xavier Parish in Eastland lost their homes in Carbon that afternoon. Critically dry conditions and winds surpassing 35 mph generated a

fast-moving fire that left many families with only minutes to escape. Others, like Evelyn, went to work that morning and received notice not to come home or were blocked by fire crews.

About 90 percent of the town's population of roughly 350 lost their homes, and the Eastland Complex, a collective name for seven wildfires in or near Eastland County, destroyed more than 150 structures in the 54,500 acres it decimated.

Jackie Juarez, a Carbon resident of 19 years, was thankful that her daughters were on spring break and didn't have the “traumatizing” experience of evacuating. In fact, she was en route to Dallas-Fort Worth Airport to pick up one of her daughters when she received a text from her husband, “Don't worry about it, honey. We will make it.” With those words, “I knew my house was gone,” she said.

Father Vijaya Raju Mareedu, SAC, began calling the families who lived in Carbon that evening, checking on their welfare and making arrangements for shelter. Fortunately, the lives of his parishioners were spared, although an Eastland County sheriff's deputy was killed as she helped others evacuate from the area.

The next morning, he went to Carbon



to see the devastation firsthand, and he was able to accompany some of his parishioners, including Juarez, as they visited the scorched remains of their homes.

Juarez will always remember the sight. “Nothing left of my home, of my cats. Everything was burned, completely everything was lost. Only ashes were left on the ground,” she recalled.

Since the fires, Fr. VJ, as he is known, has provided spiritual support and coordinated assistance with housing, clothing, and food. He's become a conduit of information about disaster relief agencies, and the parish halls of St. Rita and St. Francis Xavier are serving as places for people to donate or



Father Vijaya Mareedu, SAC, walks through the rubble of the Guillen home in Carbon. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

receive material goods, food, and water.

Donations of practical necessities began with local parishioners, and then came in from as far as Dallas, Odessa, and Abilene. Catholic Charities Fort Worth and various Knights of Columbus Councils offered assistance, according to Fr. VJ. Sympathetic ranchers from across Texas have delivered hay and feed for livestock.

On March 19, two days after the fire swept through Carbon, Bishop Michael Olson celebrated Mass at St. John Parish in nearby Strawn. The next morning, the bishop celebrated Mass at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco, St. Rita Parish in Ranger, and St. Francis Xavier Parish

in Eastland. After the Eastland Mass, he prayed with the seven families whose homes burned and two young men who experienced burns in the fire.

The bishop called on the faithful to donate to Eastland Wildfire Disaster Relief “for the compassionate, long-term recovery and significant community needs arising from these tragedies.” The diocese has established a website, bit.ly/EastlandRelief, where donations can be made.

MOVING FORWARD

“There are no words to comfort you,” Fr. VJ has told the families in the ensuing

days, “but in times of pain and difficulty, we will move forward together, trusting in Divine Providence.”

The majority of Carbon homeowners did not carry home insurance. The Guillens, like many of their neighbors, owned older, modest homes and spent years slowly renovating and expanding their homes themselves.

Just six months ago, Jaime Perales moved his wife, four children, and a granddaughter into a home in Carbon.

“I was with my cousin, renting a house for seven years. It took me one year to

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Father Vijaya Mareedu, SAC, speaks with Jaime Perales in the parish hall of St. Francis Xavier in Eastland. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

SEE THE VIDEO

Jackie Juarez, Jaime Perales, and Fr. Vijaya Mareedu, SAC, share their stories at NorthTexasCatholic.org/video-gallery

Scan this QR code to donate.



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renovate my house [in Carbon]. We moved to the house six months ago. With God's help first, we will [build] something again," he said.

The Perales, Guillen, and Juarez families, along with the other four families from the parish, are a close-knit group and plan to rebuild in Carbon.

"We don't want to go anywhere else. If we can find someone to donate materials or something, we will build homes," said Evelyn Guillen. "We will get together; we will build one, then another one, even if it's a small room."

"We're hard workers," added Juarez. "If they bring us materials, we can build our house up. We are all together in this. We can help each other."

HOLDING ON TO HOPE

Currently, life is on a day-by-day basis. Replacing medication and identification documents that were burned. Finding clothing and shoes beyond what they were wearing on that fateful day. Sifting the remains of their homes for anything salvageable. And locating temporary shelter — the Guillens are living in a borrowed RV; the Juarez family is sharing a one-bedroom

apartment; and the Perales family is living with a cousin.

Evelyn Guillen, when she is not helping other families navigate the policies and paperwork of government and charity assistance, has returned to work, as have most of the others.

The Ranger College advisor thinks returning to work is a necessary step to move forward. "If you're at work, your mind is going to be busy. If you keep thinking about [the fire], you're going to get depression," she said.

Guillen's focus is supporting her parents through the trauma, and Juarez concentrates on helping her daughters, who are 15 and 21 years old.

The survivors have found a few bright spots among the ashes — each family's escape from the blaze, the unity of the community, and the presence of the Church.

According to the families, Fr. VJ assures them they are not alone. Juarez said Father VJ "has been with us all the time. He has helped all seven families that were affected by the fire. He has been there for all of us."

Fr. VJ encourages the survivors to "stay close to God; stay close to the Church. God will lead us through. You will see a future of hope."

Hope arrived unexpectedly and on

four legs for the Guillen family, especially Evelyn's father, Juan. After he evacuated, a neighbor was able to release the family's four sheep and calf from their pen.

The next day, Juan recovered his two horses — one was injured — plus the calf and three of the sheep. This being spring, the season of new birth, five baby lambs have since joined Guillen's flock.

RECOVERY EFFORTS

About a month has passed since the fire raged through the community, and grass is sending up green shoots through the black ash that covers the ground. Recovery for the community is not so rapid.

Juan Guillen spent a recent weekend cleaning the site of his former home and hauling debris to the local dump. His daughter, Evelyn, noted several second-hand RVs on homesites in the town, indicating the residents' resolve to rebuild.

Fr. VJ has lunch with the seven families after Sunday Mass each week, sending them home with a box of donated food and clothing.

"They understand it will take time to get good shelter," said the pastor.

Evelyn agreed. "It's hard, but we know God will provide one way or another." 🇺🇸



Bethany Capps, a parishioner and member of the Guardian medical team, practices CPR during a training at St. Philip the Apostle Parish on March 26. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

at the **READY**

Guardian teams train parishioners for medical emergencies, observation, and security events

By Susan McFarland

As a shout for CPR came during a Mass at St. Philip the Apostle Parish last May, Erica Herrin started to jump up and help. A parishioner had passed out and fell to the ground. Her heart had stopped beating.

Herrin, an emergency medical technician, said the woman was quickly surrounded by a team who took action using an automated external defibrillator (AED). By the time first responders arrived, she was sitting up

and able to speak.

The team that saved her life, the Guardian Ministers, runs like a well-oiled machine and is trained to handle any situation, be it an altar boy throwing up, a parishioner fainting, or an act of terror. During an emergency event they each have a role, from performing lifesaving measures, to calling 911, to meeting first

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SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To Report Misconduct:

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

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

To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

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

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

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



During the Colleyville hostage crisis, Guardian team members helped coordinate the media, police, and parishioners in the Good Shepherd parking lot. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

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responders in the parking lot.

Witnessing the incident inspired Herrin to not only get recertified in CPR, it led to her joining the Guardian Ministers, becoming an instructor through the American Red Cross, and teaching the lifesaving classes to others at her parish.

Guardian teams are a community-led safety and security volunteer ministry that provide parishes with a safe place to worship. Teams are active at multiple parishes throughout the 28-county Diocese of Fort Worth.

Herrin went to EMT school in 2016 and after getting licensed had intentions of working in the field but the timing wasn't right. She said seeing the woman resuscitated was a powerful experience.

"It just devastated me; I was so upset that I didn't jump right into action. I knew right then I would get my recertification immediately," she said. "I told myself if

that happens again, I'm going to get up and help them."

Herrin kept her promise and now trains the medical team of Guardian Ministers. Other Guardian Ministers undergo training to serve as armed guardians, parking lot patrol, ushers, and greeters.

"This is the perfect opportunity to use my skills and passion," she said.

Rich Lubke, an EMT/firefighter who leads the medical team at St. Philip the Apostle, said Guardian Ministers respond more to medical events than to any other. Because they need more team members, he spoke after Mass to encourage people to help

and was quite surprised when 45 people signed up — from doctors and nurses to people with no medical training who are willing to learn.

"CPR is a magical thing," he said. "And the AED is wonderful ... It's a true lifesaving device."

Lubke said two fire stations are within five to six miles of the church.

"Our goal is keeping them safe until paramedics arrive," he said.

CALL TO ACTION



To learn more or receive training as a Guardian Minister, contact your pastor or scan the QR code.

TRAIN THE TEAM

The Guardian Ministry began after Bishop Michael Olson enlisted the help of a security firm in 2018 to help develop a plan to address the reality of mass shootings in sacred spaces. The firm proposed the idea of recruiting, screening, and training parishioners to provide security at parishes, a model that has been used successfully by other Christian churches.

Mike Short, the diocese's director of security, leads the program and trains team members in everything from observation and recognition of potential threats to de-escalation techniques and responding to medical emergencies.

The training has paid off. The team at St. Philip the Apostle noticed suspicious activity from people thought to be part of a Satanic cult and prevented them from taking the Holy Eucharist.

Guardian Ministers were already on alert for this type of scenario, after an incident at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish where a suspected Satanic cult member was captured on surveillance video during Communion. He did not consume the sacred host and instead took it with him.

The incident at St. Philip the Apostle ended without harm. The Guardian Ministers noticed a couple who "stuck out," were behaving oddly, and not participating in Mass. They wore all black. The man had multiple tattoos, including a pentagram on his neck, and was wearing a pentagram ring.

During Mass, the man would get up and walk out and then return to his seat. One such time, the Guardian team approached him and spoke to the man. The man said they were there because his fiancée wanted to go to Mass. The couple left without incident.

Short said Satanic cult members are known for trying to bring the consecrated host to their own "black mass," a ritual that mocks the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

"The Catholic Church welcomes everybody, especially those who are hurting," Short said. "We're kind, but we want to find out their story to protect the whole body [of Christ]."

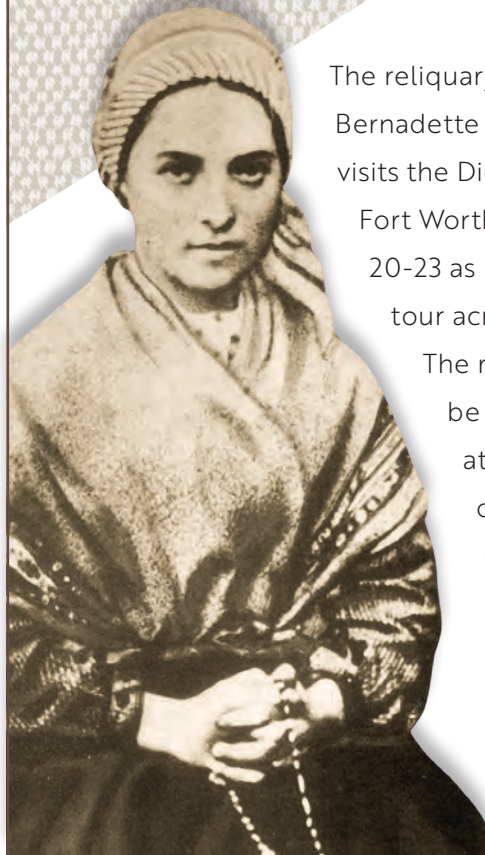
Protecting parishioners and clergy is a top priority not only for churches within the diocese, but others nearby. In January, Good Shepherd's Guardian Ministry team responded immediately after a hostage situation at a nearby synagogue.

The terror unfolded at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville after a man took four hostages, including Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, and engaged in an 11-hour stand-off with law enforcement. All four hostages were released unharmed though the hostage-taker was killed.

During the standoff, officials from numerous law enforcement agencies and media outlets used Good Shepherd's parking lot and facilities. The Guardian team at Good Shepherd opened the parish hall for them and congregants from Congregation Beth Israel so they could warm up and get coffee. They also helped attend to the families of the hostages during the crisis.

"Everybody did a great job of responding," Short said. "It's neat to see the community come together. The details of how it happened at the synagogue brought to mind how important it is for everybody [to be] alert and prepared." 🇺🇸

Save the Date!



The reliquary of Saint Bernadette Soubirous visits the Diocese of Fort Worth from July 20-23 as part of its tour across the U.S.

The relics will be on display at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Mineral Wells.

Look for more in the next issue of the *North Texas Catholic* or on FWDiocese.org

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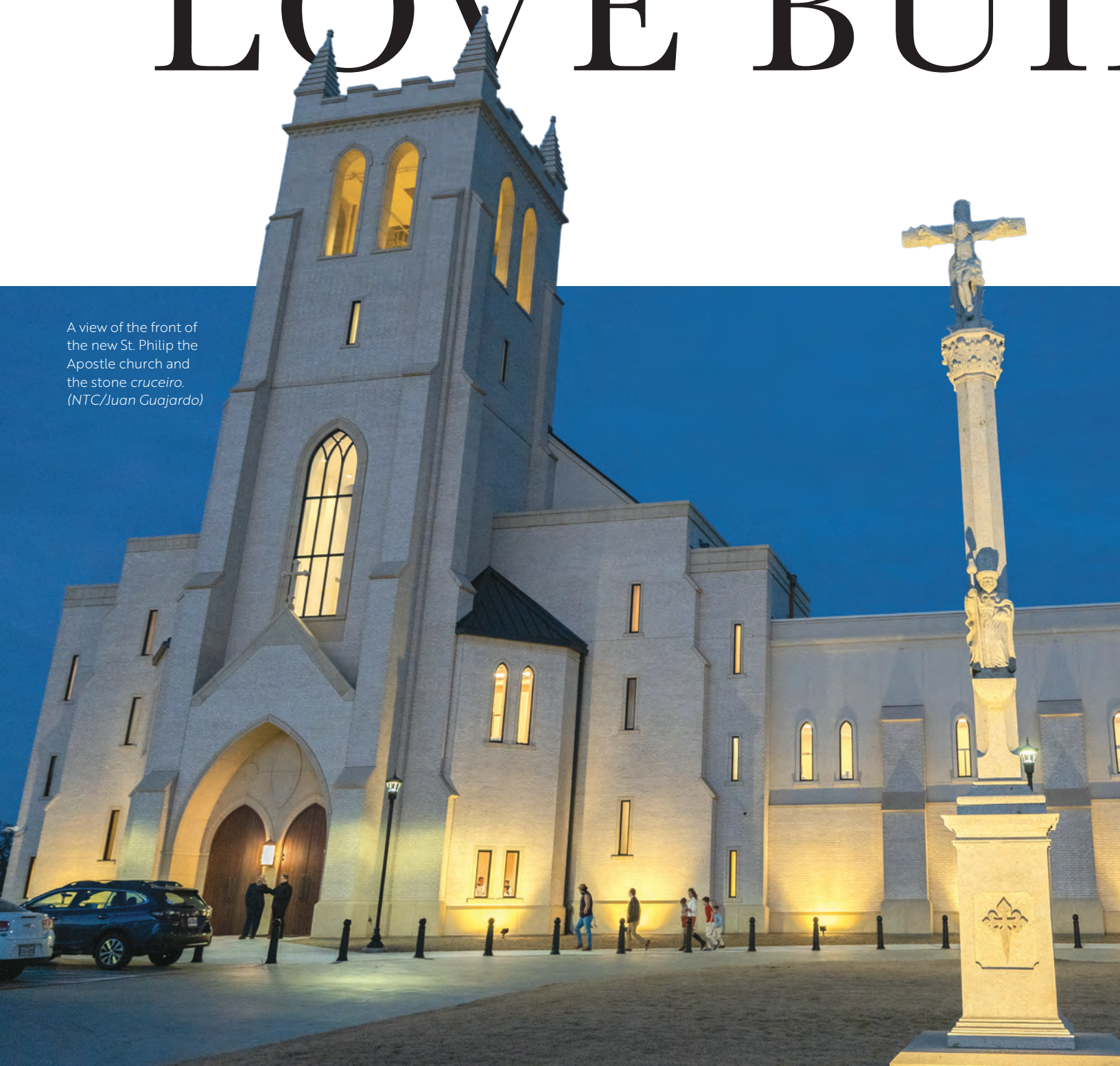


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A view of the front of the new St. Philip the Apostle church and the stone *cruceiro*.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



LT

Bishop Olson dedicates, consecrates new St. Philip the Apostle church

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen



A soaring stone *cruceiro*, bearing the images of Christ and the Virgin Mary, greets visitors to the new St. Philip the Apostle Church in Flower Mound.

“This is the type of cross found at intersections and along the routes of the Camino de Santiago,” explained Father Ray McDaniel, who made the legendary pilgrimage to pray at the shrine and reputed burial site of the apostle St. James in northwestern Spain. “Like so many that experienced it, the Camino was a profound blessing for me and a source of significant spiritual renewal.”

Donated in memory of Sam and Beverly Wilson, former owners of the land where the church now stands, the *cruceiro* serves to remind Christians we are all on a faith journey.

“It takes perseverance to press ahead but God provides the grace needed to overcome obstacles and reach the goal to which He calls us,” continued Fr. McDaniel, St Philip’s pastor since 2013. “The *cruceiro* in front of our new church is a visible symbol of this journey.”

More than 700 parishioners, guests, and clergy braved frigid temperatures February 22 to witness Bishop Michael Olson consecrate the building and altar of St. Philip the Apostle Church at its new Flower Mound location. Designed with elements of early English Gothic architecture, the majestic ivory brick and cast stone structure on Cross Timbers Road is the culmination of eight years of planning, fundraising, and construction for the 50-year-old parish.

Broad participation from the entire community made the new church possible, according to Fr. McDaniel. Parishioners not only raised more than \$9.3 million in a capital campaign for the project, but many also served on committees or offered their construction and creative skills. Volunteers helped move the antique altar up the steps of the sanctuary. Others guided placement of an ornate, hand-carved crucifix from Germany.

“Everyone has contributed their gifts in a beautiful way,” the pastor said. “Any success of this belongs to the many people who not only gave their money to pay for it, but also their time and talent in service to God.”

Using the chalice and paten of the Diocese of Fort Worth’s first bishop, John Joseph Cassata, Bishop Olson concelebrated the Mass of Consecration and Dedication with Fr. McDaniel, Monsignor E. James

VIEW THE VIDEO!



View more photos, plus our video of the church dedication by visiting NorthTexasCatholic.org and clicking on the “Galleries” tab.



Continued on Page 30

From Page 29

Hart, Monsignor Francis Tawiah, Father Jonathan Wallis, and more than 40 other priests on the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter.

“Faith has brought us to this building, not simply religious experience,” he told the congregation in his homily. “Faith will transform this building to become a church.”

Like the Apostle Philip, parishioners must be effective messengers in bringing people to Jesus.

“Argument and clever marketing will not conquer indifference. Gimmickry and punditry will not win over the skeptics and the cynics,” he warned.

A consecrated church and altar should be a place where the poor find mercy, the oppressed find true freedom, and all God’s children are treated with dignity so “many may come and see Christ Jesus.”

Bishop Olson told parishioners they have built only a building.

“It is Jesus Christ, the cornerstone, the New and Eternal Covenant who builds His Church through the prayers and acts of consecration of our apostolic ministry,” he explained. “He accomplishes this eternally through the celebration of the Eucharist from which we are sent into the world for His work of salvation. You, the people of God in this parish, with spiritual adoption of the patronage protection of St. Philip the Apostle, will do so forward, from now, as a people of faith.”

During the Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar, Bishop Olson intoned the Prayer of Dedication before anointing the altar and walls of the church with Holy Chrism. Rich in spiritual imagery, the prayer dedicated the church to the Lord for all times and asked for His blessing. The use of sacred oil renders the altar a powerful symbol of Christ, the Anointed One, who on the altar of His body, offered His life for the salvation of souls.

Marked with a cross and candle, four walls of the church were anointed with the same chrism signifying the structure is set aside permanently for

A view of the arching windows and gothic architecture of the new St. Philip the Apostle church. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Bishop Michael Olson sprinkles holy water throughout the church during the Rite of Dedication on February 22, 2022. (NTC/Joseph Barringhaus)



Ginny Maul and Tha Sung wipe down the altar with purificators after its anointing. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Dozens of priests from across the diocese joined more than 700 St. Philip parishioners for the Mass of Dedication and Consecration on February 22, 2022. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Christian worship. Fragrant incense was then burned on the altar and carried down the aisles of the church by a deacon as a sign of prayers ascending to God.

Now consecrated as the Lord’s table, the altar was wiped clean by parishioners who dressed the marble top in white linens before placing flowers against its oak base. The dedication rite concluded with the lighting of candles to remind those present that Christ is the light who dispels darkness in the world.

Illuminated at night on a hilltop parcel of land, St. Philip’s new church — which seats approximately 900 people — is capturing the attention of the wider community. The structure was designed with the traditional features parishioners wanted.

“It’s amazing the number of people who ask about the church and are not even Catholic,” said Lucille Delvecchio, a member of the finance committee. “Father had a vision, and he used that vision to create a very inspirational space. This is probably the most

spectacular and beautiful building in Flower Mound.”

Situated on 40 acres of former pasture, the church is the first phase of a larger expansion project intended to meet the needs of a growing number of Catholics moving into southern Denton County. Plans include enlarging the sanctuary as well as adding a parish hall, religious education building, and rectory. A grove of oak trees and surrounding green space provide opportunities for outdoor devotion and the possible installation of Stations of the Cross, Fr. McDaniel added.

“We have built this house for the Lord. We pray that He may find a home also in our hearts,” the pastor said, addressing parishioners at the Dedication Mass. “This new church has been consecrated for His holy purpose. May He bless and consecrate us anew as we seek to glorify His holy name and spread the Good News of the Gospel to our community and the world.” 🇺🇸

LEADING STUDENTS ON THE path to holiness

New superintendent aims to lead diocesan schools
“to the truth, beauty, and goodness that is our Lord”

By Sandra Engelland

After spending almost 20 years as a teacher and administrator primarily in secular charter schools, Brinton Smith is thrilled to return to his roots in Catholic education as the new superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Smith began his new role full time in February after transitioning from leadership of Tallahassee Classical School in Florida.

“I really missed being in an environment where we could teach the fullness of truth,” Smith said.

Smith has concentrated on classical liberal arts for his whole career and is looking forward to focusing on “truth, beauty, and goodness” through the lens of faith.

“Our first priority is — are we being fully Catholic?” he said. “Are we living out our Catholic faith in our life and in our schools? Do we have a vibrant spiritual life and a strong moral life that reflects truth?”

By concentrating on truth, beauty, and goodness, students trace their education back to the Creator.

“The reason truth, beauty, and goodness go together is that they’re



Brinton Smith ►
SUPERINTENDENT
OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

of God and part of His essence. They are gifts from Him, and they work together,” Smith said.

When students have that foundation, they are changed at the soul level, leading them to good action because they know the right thing to do.

By targeting grammar, logic, and rhetoric, the classical approach to education prepares students to engage others in the public square in positive ways that point them to God, which is an increasingly important attribute in today’s divisive world, Smith said.

The early Church trained young people to be excellent orators so they could go out into the public square and encourage others to follow God. Likewise, modern students learn to discern valid arguments and persuade others in positive ways.

“They can improve the dialogue in the public square, not by arguing past others or yelling, but by actually having true dialogue,” Smith said.

‘DOING THOSE THINGS THAT SET US APART WELL’

Smith’s high regard for classical education is apparent throughout his career. He co-founded and led the Walsingham Society of Christian Culture and Western Civilization, a nonprofit fellowship of professors in the liberal arts who taught courses in theology, literature, history, and more to adults in Dallas-Fort Worth.

He helped open the region’s first Great Hearts charter school and held leadership positions at the Barney Charter School Initiative and Founders Classical Academy, all in North Texas.

Smith also is the executive director of the Classical Teacher’s Conference, which trains teachers in liberal arts and classical education.

He is pursuing a doctorate in humanities from the University of Texas at Dallas, and has earned a bachelor’s degree from the College of St. Thomas More in Fort Worth and a master’s in English literature from the University of Dallas.

“I appreciate my education at St. Thomas More and the University of Dallas,” Smith said. “One of the reasons I got into education is I knew what good this education has done for me, and I feel called to share it with others.”

His goal is to help diocesan schools provide a strong Catholic education and “doing those things that set us apart well,” like providing excellent catechesis and encouraging contemplation of the things that point us to God, such as the beauty of creation and great works of art, which lead us to goodness and truth.

Smith sees his role as superintendent as “a strategic position, thinking about the big picture and casting a vision for all the schools in the diocese.”

That big picture involves supporting students, parents, teachers, and administrators to flourish in their faith in God.

“Truth exists, good exists, beauty exists, and they’re all from the Lord and they return back to the Lord,” Smith said. “The goal is a flourishing human being.”

HAPPY TO HELP DIOCESAN SCHOOLS

Smith and his wife, Rebecca, a Fort Worth native, met in college and have nine children. They live in the diocese and attend Mass at St. Rita Parish in Fort Worth, St. Patrick Cathedral, and St. Mary the Virgin Parish in Arlington.

“I’m happy to be helping my own diocese and to be able to help Catholic schools,” he said.

He’s spent his first few weeks on the job visiting schools across the diocese.

“I really appreciate everyone’s hospitality,” he said.

Smith summed up his objective as superintendent, saying, “I will do my best to serve the students of the diocese, parents, teachers, and administrators, to listen and collaborate and always lead us in the right direction to the truth, beauty, and goodness that is our Lord.” 🇺🇸



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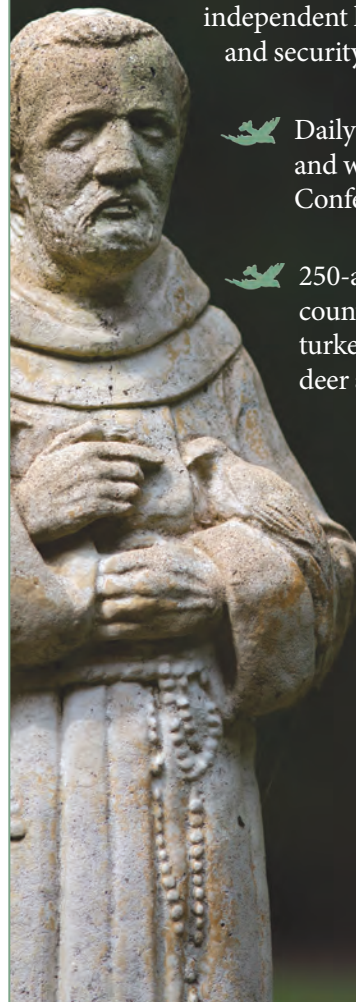
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dance lessons

By honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe, Danza Azteca invites everyone to come closer to Jesus

By Violeta Rocha

Diego Alanís, 15, affirms that entering the church, dancing in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, to the rhythm of strong drumbeats and the vibrant sound of the conch, proudly dressed in his long-feathered headdress, a colorful pectoral, and ankle bones, reflects his faith.

At that moment, “I feel there is only God and me, and I offer Him what I can give Him, which is my dance,” Alanís said, adding that he expresses his love for God and the Virgin of Guadalupe through

Aztec dance.

Alanís is part of Danza Azteca at Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, formed three years ago. It currently has 25 members between 12 and 60.

Aztec dance’s movements include big jumps, fast turns, and constant crouching, which require good physical condition. The troupe rehearses twice weekly, beginning at the end of February, to be ready for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12. They also participate in parish activities, including praying the

Holy Rosary, to promote spiritual growth. The group’s mission is “to bring parishioners closer to faith,” said Juan Matías, 32, a founder of Danza Azteca and a parishioner of Holy Name for five years.

Dancing is not exercising or merely a show, “but a joy that is offered to God,” said Matías, an Aztec dancer since he was 16 in his native Mexico City. He calls it a “blessing” to share his experience and teach the traditional Aztec dance.

“It started as a dream because there was no Danza Azteca group in the Fort

◀ **FROM LEFT:** Rosaura Nava de Alanís, Diego Alanís, Claudia Patlán, and Ismael Patlán at Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Worth area,” he said. “Thank God, they gave us permission to rehearse in the parish.” Matías recalled only four members attended the first rehearsals.

“As Catholics, we don’t want people to think other gods are praised in these dances,” Matías pointed out. “On the contrary, it means remembering the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe on the Tepeyac Hill, after the fall of the Aztec Empire [and the] Spanish conquest, and her beautiful image embodied in San Juan Diego’s cloak. Thanks to the *Virgen Morena*, a large number of indigenous converted to the Catholic faith and began to venerate her with dances,” explained Matías, who affirmed the ministry’s commitment to participate only in religious events.

After each “Guadalupean gala,” the colorful costumes, handmade in Mexico, must be steam washed. The multiple feathers on each headdress, up to three feet long, are disassembled for cleaning. The six drums and eight conches are retouched with paint to keep them in good condition.

Entrusting themselves to God and the Virgin Mary, Matías pointed out, has borne numerous fruits, such as leading a Rosary every Sunday before 10 a.m. Mass, invitations to dance at other parishes, seeing families dance together, and the joy of watching some members enter RCIA and return to the Catholic faith.

Rosaura Nava, a Mexico City native, said, “It is a great joy to have my children dance with me and see them excited to dance to the Virgin and to be close to God,” she said about her son, Diego Alanís, and her eldest son, who also danced before going to college.

Nava, who helps coordinate the group, highlighted the enthusiasm of the dozen young dancers and hopes they “follow the legacy” of Aztec dance “and use that energy to live their faith and get fully involved in parish life.”

Diego not only celebrates “sharing my faith with more people my age” but also appreciates the example of the adult dancers. He does not want to stop “until I do what I set out to do, because all this is to provide glory to the one God,” he added.



Joshua Hernandez plays the drums with Danza Azteca at the St. Rita International Fair on Oct. 3, 2021. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Dancing brings Rosaura fond memories of her childhood when she went to visit the Basilica of Guadalupe with her mother and “saw the fervor of the dancers who came to see the Virgin.” Every time she enters her parish with that same dress she saw as a child, she feels she is bringing to her parish “a little bit of Mexico so that they feel like a family, and celebrate our Mother, the Virgin of Guadalupe, who leads us to her beloved son, Jesus Christ.”

Ismael Patlán, one of the first four members of Danza Azteca, said, “I had never danced before. We learned the moves and, little by little, we saw a tremendous change. Moved by the desire to dance to the *Virgencita*, we have seen that it is possible to move forward as a family.”

“When one is moved and directed by faith, there is a greater dedication and immense joy,” said Claudia Patlán,

Ismael’s wife, who joined the dance after seeing her husband rehearse.

In addition to Danza Azteca, the Patlán couple participates in other ministries — as do most group members — who serve as lectors, altar servers, ushers, and with the youth group.

“By getting involved in a ministry, you get to know your parish community, and you are aware that your service is for God; that is why you give the best of yourself,” Claudia asserted.

She recognizes that although the physical effort for the dance requires a lot of practice, what’s most important is spiritual growth. “Not only do we recite the Holy Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy in church, but we also pray at the beginning of each rehearsal. That has helped the group to remain true to their dedication and continue to grow,” she added. 🇺🇸

Symbolism in Aztec Dance

Feathers on the headdress: Dancers emulate a bird flying in the sky by hopping, crouching, and spinning fast. They represent the birds that sang when Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared on the Tepeyac Hill.

Drum: Made from a single piece of tree, it is solid, like the rock that is our God.

Conch: Its sound symbolizes the water that falls from the sky. God sends the rain, which reaches the sea; the lakes and rivers are filled, where the conch lives.

A view of the statue ►
of Our Lady of
La Vang in front
of Vietnamese
Martyrs Church in
Arlington. (NTC/
Juan Guajardo)



Mary's

T I M E L E S S M I

May, the month of Mary, is the perfect time to reflect on Marian apparitions and their significance

By Jerry Circelli

It is fitting that May, regarded by the ancient Greeks and Romans as a lunar cycle representing motherhood, fertility, and life, would eventually be recognized by the Catholic Church as the month of Mary.

In her honor, the *North Texas Catholic* spotlighted some of the global apparitions of the Blessed Mother, her messages to the faithful, and deep devotions to her among Catholics in our diocese and around the world.

Through the centuries, apparitions of Mary have taken place around the world. She has delivered messages of hope, healing, and the need to grow closer to her son, Jesus Christ.

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

MEXICO

Ever since Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Aztec convert Juan Diego in 1531, her importance in leading people to Christ has continued to increase. Several million people converted to Christianity after her appearance. Today, countless pilgrims from around the world make their way to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City — the most visited shrine in the Americas. Some even journey on their knees, for miles, to express the depth of their devotion.

Guillermo Muñoz, Hispanic ministry coordinator at St. Michael Parish in Bedford, is devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe and sees her as St. John the Apostle saw Our Lady of the Apocalypse.

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ESSAYS



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“The first time I heard ‘A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of 12 stars,’ I said, ‘That’s Our Lady of Guadalupe!’”

Muñoz recounted how Mary helped convert the Aztecs to Christianity and showed them that she is the mother of the true God. She brought the Gospel to all the Americas.

“She is my mother, she is my role model, and the one who can intercede for me and for everyone,” Muñoz said.

At parishes throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth, groups like Las Guadalupanas are involved in Our Lady of Guadalupe devotions and celebrations, Muñoz said. Also, matachines — religious dancers — perform at parishes, including St. Michael, to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe. Likewise, many Knights of Columbus groups have a deep devotion to her, he said.

“Even though almost 500 years have passed since her apparition to Juan Diego, she still brings cultures in our diocese together,” Muñoz said.

OUR LADY OF LA VANG

VIETNAM

In the thick rainforest of La Vang, Vietnam, faithful Catholics found refuge during religious persecutions in the late 1700s.

Here, where they prayed the Rosary daily at dusk, they were surprised when they encountered a woman holding a child. When she spoke, they realized this was Mary with Jesus in her arms.

The year was 1798, and Mary told the villagers that she knew of their hardships, including sicknesses that resulted from lack of medicine, poor nutrition, and contaminated water. She instructed them to gather specific types of leaves



in the area and to make a tea from them. She told the faithful that on the spot where they stood, their prayers to God would be heard.

The villagers found cures in the tea Mary asked them to make, and religious persecutions against them also subsided. By 1820, a small chapel was built on the spot and many people converted to Christianity. With the return of persecutions, the chapel was burned but later rebuilt.



During his visit to Vietnam in 1998, the 200th anniversary of the apparition, Pope John Paul II expressed hope that a new basilica could be built. By 2012, an elaborate church accommodating 5,000 faithful was completed. At the spot where Mary appeared, a statue now stands depicting her holding the infant Jesus,

Continued on Page 40

TOP LEFT: Guillermo Munoz stands in front of an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Michael Parish in Bedford. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ABOVE: A parishioner prays for the intercession of Our Lady after Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Parishioners pray the Rosary in the prayer garden of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Mineral Wells. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Michele Thomsen at the prayer garden of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Mineral Wells. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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as she did in 1798.

Centuries later, she maintains popular appeal among Vietnamese Catholics. In 2012, when Arlington’s Vietnamese Martyrs Parish finished construction of its new church, the faithful made sure Our Lady was honored with a large painting in one of the naves, a huge stained glass window above the narthex, and a beautiful granite statue in front of the church’s entrance.

Deacon Michael Hoang, of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Fort Worth, feels especially touched by Our Lady of La Vang.

“She is always my spiritual mother who intercedes to God on my behalf,” the deacon said. “I love her and pray a few Rosaries every day to honor and keep my close relationship with her.

“The whole story of her apparition is so overwhelming and is filled with compassion and love from God,” he continued. “Many people continue to call on her for help.”

As one who is devoted to Mary in all her manifestations, the deacon said it is no different when he prays for intercession “to Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Guadalupe, or Our Lady of La Vang. I always look up to her as the mother of Jesus.”

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

FRANCE

Another widely known appearance of Mary is Our Lady of Lourdes. While 14-year-old peasant girl Bernadette Soubirous was collecting firewood near a grotto in Lourdes, France, the Virgin Mary made the first of 18 appearances.



Mary identified herself as “The Immaculate Conception” and asked Bernadette to pray for sinners and to dig in the ground, where spring water with healing properties would flow.

Many miraculous healings took place there and a beautiful shrine was eventually built on the site. Millions of people throughout the world visit the shrine annually to deepen their faith, pray for cures, and seek miracles of their own from the free-flowing, healing waters.

Michele and Rick Thomsen of Brock did just that in June 2015. At the time, Michele was seriously ill and in need of a kidney transplant.

“I was really struggling with fear, anxiety, and depression over

my health issues,” Michele said.

“At Lourdes, I was among many others who were ill, and we were all praying for intercession and miracles. There I felt Our Lady’s love, compassion, and intercession. I attended Mass, recited the group Rosaries, and bathed in the waters of the grotto,” Michele said.

“I felt loved and valued despite my broken body and spirit. I was blessed to have an emotional healing. With Our Lady of Lourdes’ intercession, I was at peace and able to calmly face my health challenges.”

When they returned home, the Thomsens, who are members of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, continued to pray and were told that it would

be extremely difficult to find a transplant match for Michele. Medical experts said it would likely take at least seven years for her to receive a transplant, provided a match could even be found.

Shortly after a novena to Our Lady of Lourdes, Michele received a call that a good match had been found. Within only eight months of their pilgrimage to Lourdes, the Thomsen’s prayers were answered — Michele received her kidney transplant and has been doing well.

“It was truly a miracle that I attribute to Our Lady’s intercession,” Michele said.

Continued on Page 42

▲ Parishioners of St. Peter the Apostle Church carry the statue of Our Lady of Fatima during a procession on her feast day. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Inspired by his deep devotion to Our Lady of Knock, Father Emmet O'Hara, pastor of St. Stephen Church in Weatherford, had a statue of Our Lady installed outside the church. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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“My devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes has strengthened my faith because I feel her love and compassion. I now understand her desire to bring us to her Son and her willingness to take our petitions to Him.”

OUR LADY OF KNOCK

IRELAND

The miraculous appearance of the Blessed Mother on the gable wall of a church in County Mayo, Ireland, in 1879 was first witnessed by only two villagers. Word soon spread and the number of parishioners grew to include 15 people. On this otherwise dark evening, they witnessed a heavenly vision.

Villagers saw Mary clothed in white garments with a brilliant crown upon her head. To her right stood St. Joseph and to her left was St. John the Baptist. To the left of St. John appeared a cross and lamb. Today, the faithful are still gathering at that same gable wall, now part of the Apparition Chapel of Our Lady of Knock Shrine.

Carrara marble carvings replicate the vision described by the villagers: Mary reflects the deep devotion of the parishioners. St. Joseph, standing

Continued on Page 44

Geographic Locations

- North America**
 - Our Lady of The Miraculous Medal* 1830 A.D. Rue de Bac – Paris, France
 - Our Lady of Laus* 1664 – 1718 A.D. Laus, France
 - Our Lady of Lourdes* 1858 A.D. Lourdes, France
 - Our Lady of Hope of Pontmain* 1871 A.D. Pontmain, France
 - Notre Dame de Garaison* 1515 A.D. Garaison, France
 - Our Lady of La Salette* 1846 A.D. La Salette, France
 - Our Lady of the Le Puy* 250 A.D. Le Puy en Velay, France
- United States**
 - Our Lady of Guadalupe* 1531 A.D. Mexico City, Mexico
- Mexico**
 - Our Lady of Ocotlán* 1541 A.D. Ocotlán, Mexico
- South America**
 - Our Lady of Las Lajas* 1754 A.D. Guátara Canyon, Columbia
 - Our Lady of Coromoto* 1652 A.D. Coromoto, Venezuela

Apparitions of M

Vatican Recognized	Traditionally App
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Lady of Guadalupe Our Lady of Lezajsk Our Lady of Siluva Our Lady of Laus Our Lady of The Miraculous Medal Our Lady of Zion Our Lady of La Salette Our Lady of Lourdes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Lady Help of Christians Our Lady of Hope of Pontmain Our Lady of Gietrzwald Our Lady of Knock Our Lady of Fátima Our Lady of Beauraing Our Lady of Banneux Our Lady of Kibeho
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Lady of the Pillar Our Lady of Le Puy Our Lady of the Snows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Lady of the Pillar Our Lady of Le Puy Our Lady of the Snows Our Lady of the Pillar Our Lady of the Snows Our Lady of the Pillar Our Lady of the Snows Our Lady of the Pillar Our Lady of the Snows

In Chronological Order (First App

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Dr. Maria Moneta de Castro was gifted a beautiful Italian-made statue of Our Lady of Fatima (below) by her now-deceased husband for their 25th wedding anniversary. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



From Page 42

at her side, is seen as protector of the Holy Family. St. John the Baptist, who referred to Jesus as the Lamb of God, is preaching at the Eucharistic altar, with the cross and Lamb at the center of the apparition.

The gift and mystery of the Eucharist, represented by the lamb of God upon the altar, is unique among other Marian apparitions.

Pope John Paul II blessed the statues during his visit to the shrine in September 1979. Pope Francis prayed at the site when he visited Ireland in August 2018.

A man who has been a frequent visitor to the Knock Shrine ever since he was a boy is Father Emmet O'Hara, SAC, pastor of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford.

As a child growing up in Ireland, Fr. O'Hara traveled to the shrine often with his mother, who had a deep devotion to Our Lady.

"The Blessed Mother touched me in my vocation to be a priest," Fr. O'Hara said. "I had a great devotion to her then, as I do now."

As a seminarian, Fr. O'Hara continued his pilgrimages to the Knock shrine. Each May, he travels with his fellow Irish Pallottine priests and associates to the shrine, where he makes it a point to pray at the outdoor stations

of the cross.

"The Knock shrine is a place of great spirituality," Fr. O'Hara said. "People go there from all over the world. There is a beautiful Adoration chapel there and it's just such a great blessing to be on those holy grounds."

OUR LADY OF FATIMA

PORTUGAL

One of the most well-known Marian apparitions is Our Lady of Fatima in central Portugal. In 1917, Mary appeared six times to three shepherd children and asked them to pray every day to bring peace to the world. In the last apparition, Mary revealed herself as "The Lady of the Rosary."

She told the children of a second world war to come, the evils of communist totalitarianism, the abandonment of the Christian faith, and the many persecutions that would unfold.

"But in the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph," she said.

A crowd of tens of thousands of people witnessed the Miracle of the Sun on Oct. 13, 1917. On this rainy day, people saw the sun zigzag in the sky, emitting flames that reflected many colors. Suddenly, the sun appeared to plummet toward earth, then reverse direction. When the event was over, the ground had dried and their clothes were no longer wet.

A small chapel on the site of the apparitions was built in 1919. It has grown today to become the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, attracting pilgrims from around the world.

Dr. Maria Moneta de Castro, a retired pediatrician in Fort Worth, has been and will continue to be one of those faithful pilgrims. She has visited the shrine at Fatima many times.

"My devotion to Our Blessed Mother increased after these pilgrimages and inspired me to share them with others," said Dr. de Castro, a member of



Emma Uwaniyigena, a native of Rwanda who now lives in Fort Worth, attends Our Mother of Mercy Parish. Her devotion to Our Lady of Kibeho led her to donate a replica statue to her parish (below). (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth.

During her 31 years of practice, Dr. de Castro said many people shared their grief with her over losses of loved ones and struggles with illness. To provide comfort, Dr. de Castro often gave them rosaries that she brought back from Fatima.

“I could see in their faces how grateful they were in receiving them,” she said. “I asked them to pray the Rosary with me and would give them the printed prayers, too. I was able to evangelize and share my faith and devotion to Our Lady of Fatima.”

Even in retirement, Dr. de Castro continues to visit the sick and families who have lost loved ones. Her calling card consists of food, flowers, and of course, a rosary and the miraculous story of Fatima.

OUR LADY OF KIBEHO

RWANDA

One of the most recent apparitions of Mary took place four decades ago on the continent of Africa in Kibeho, Rwanda. In 2001, the Holy See declared the testimony of three teenage schoolchildren to be authentic about the apparitions that took place from 1981-83.

Our Lady revealed to the

teenagers a vision of Rwanda falling into a widespread state of death and destruction, foreshadowing the 1994 genocide, during which more than a half million people were killed in the span of 100 days. Dozens of children were murdered at the school where the Marian apparitions took place.

Our Lady asked for increased prayer, conversion of hearts, and for a chapel to be built.

During a 1990 trip to Rwanda, Pope John Paul II visited the visionaries and asked all the faithful to turn to the Virgin for guidance.

Today, a Marian sanctuary at Kibeho, named the “Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows,” is a place where pilgrims come to pray for conversions, reconciliation, and peace.

Emma Uwaniyigena, who was born in Rwanda, was 7 years old in 1981 when the apparitions of Our Lady of Kibeho first occurred. Her parents drove her to the school where the apparitions were taking place. Later in life, after moving to Texas, Uwaniyigena visited Our Mother of

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Mercy Church in Fort Worth, where she is now a parishioner. She introduced herself to Father Jerome LeDoux, SVD, the former beloved pastor who has since passed away.

“He knew all about Our Lady of Kibeho,” Uwaniyigena said. “It made me feel at home even though I was far away from the place of my birth.” With Uwaniyigena’s help, Our Mother of Mercy was able to obtain a statue of Our Lady of Kibeho and now celebrates her feast day annually.

Our Lady of Kibeho’s message of repentance and conversion of hearts “is very touching deep down in my heart,” Uwaniyigena said.

Through Our Lady of Kibeho’s influence, the Rwandan Catholic community continues to grow at Our Mother of Mercy, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller, and other parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth, Uwaniyigena said. Many

Rwandan families meet regularly with other Catholics from Burundi, a neighboring nation of Rwanda. Among their many activities, group members have organized a choir and provide food and clothing to people in need.

MARY’S UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

Michael O’Neill, known as “The Miracle Hunter” and host of an EWTN show of the same name, discussed Marian apparitions with the *North Texas Catholic*.

He pointed out that Mary has appeared in local attire, spoken in local languages and dialects, and even changed her complexion to fit her surroundings.

“At Kibeho in Rwanda, she is dark skinned,” O’Neill said, “while at Robinsonville [now Champion], Wisconsin — the site of the bishop-approved apparitions of Our Lady of Good Help — she appears with blonde

hair. On Tepeyac Hill in Mexico, she looks like a *mestiza* to appeal to both Spaniards and the indigenous alike. Mary presents herself to her children in a way that they would most easily recognize her and accept her.”

The miracle hunter continued to explain “the Virgin Mary has appeared in times of both war and peace, famine, and plenty. She has appeared, however, at significant times and places in history like in Mexico in 1531 after the Conquest; in Pontmain, France in 1871 at the end of the Franco-Prussian War; at Fatima during World War I; and at Kibeho, Rwanda, in 1981 to warn of the impending genocide. She comes as a loving mother to the aid of her children when they need it the most.

“The Virgin Mary consistently requests that we engage in prayer, seek peace, and turn away from sin in her many messages,” O’Neill said, “which, taken individually and as a whole, have the singular goal: to guide the faithful to her Son.” ✚



Summer Camp 2022

Week 1 June 19-25
Week 2 June 26- July 2

A limited number of campers will be accepted

An adventure based camp for boys ages 9-13
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Activities subject to change

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Organized and operated by Subiaco Academy Alumni Inc. and fathers of campers with the monks of Subiaco Abbey

Adult counselors to camper ratio 1:5
All counselors, CITs (counselors in training), and volunteers are trained in safe environment policies - CDC guidelines will be followed -



Allison Moore, director of the Gabriel Project, is shown with Emma Bouillion, coordinator of young adult outreach at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, at the parish's Gabriel Project supply closet. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Gabriel Project continues to expand

By Mary Lou Seewoester

Every baby is a celebration, according to Allison Moore, director of Catholic Charities Fort Worth Gabriel Project. “We celebrate that this mom has chosen life. And because of that, we mentor her with encouragement and prayer,” she added.

“We are called to help our brothers and sisters in need,” continued Moore. “And to do that in a spiritual way. We pray with these mothers, and we pray for them.”

Gabriel Project is a CCFW parish-based ministry that pairs trained volunteers, or Gabriel Angels, with women in crisis pregnancies. Angels accompany mothers throughout their pregnancy and beyond, with spiritual, emotional, and practical help. Once they are close to delivery, they help provide items for baby.

Moore, who became Gabriel Project Director last November, intends to continue the legacy that Angela Walters began in 2004 as one of Gabriel Project’s founders

in the Diocese of Fort Worth. Moore also hopes to expand Gabriel Project to more parishes.

“Gabriel Project is not changing, but growing and moving forward,” she said.

Gabriel Project currently has 87 volunteers, 55 of which are Angels who accompany 74 expectant mothers. The diocese has 22 parishes with active Gabriel Projects, and this year, CCFW will bring the ministry to Wichita Falls. Sacred Heart Parish will be the hub and will collaborate with nearby parishes also participating in Gabriel Project.

Moore explained that Sacred Heart will provide a safe place for Gabriel Angels and moms to meet, as well as a Gabriel Closet containing items for newborns. She said both spaces will be available to Gabriel Angels at other Wichita Falls parishes.

CCFW recently opened a new Gabriel Closet at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller and will open another at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, bringing the number of storage areas in the diocese

to eight. From those storage spaces, angels deliver items such as diapers, wipes, bottles, clothing, blankets, and even pack ‘n plays so baby has a safe sleeping plan, Moore said.

Gabriel Project also manages a crisis hotline for expectant mothers at 800-545-5935 or at gabrielproject@ccdofw.org.

Moore said hotline calls have increased somewhat since the Texas Heartbeat Act, which took effect Sept. 1 and bans abortion after detection of a fetal heartbeat — normally around six weeks of pregnancy.

“We were prepared and ready for the request for Angels to increase,” Moore said, “but there was not a major influx as we might have expected.”

Moore, who is also a Gabriel Angel and a pro-life sidewalk counselor, said she prays daily for all Gabriel Project mothers.

“Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters you do for me,” Moore added, referring to *Matthew 25:40*. “That rings true to what I and all of the [Gabriel] Angels are driven by.” 🇺🇸





room for everybody

How a vibrant stewardship culture flourishes at Most Blessed Sacrament Parish

By Susan Moses

Sadly, the position in which Tommy and Linda Woodson found themselves was not unusual.

Members of Most Blessed Sacrament Parish since 1985, the couple had been quite involved with the parish as they raised their five children. But once their nest was empty, they looked around the pews and felt they were sitting among strangers.

My, how times have changed. Most Blessed Sacrament has fostered a

culture of stewardship and an atmosphere of welcome in the last five years, causing parish engagement, ministry participation, and relationships between parishioners to soar.

“Tommy’s goal is knowing everybody by name,” said Linda Woodson, explaining her husband’s routine of introducing himself to visitors and newcomers. “Worshipping with folks that we now know — you want to know everybody. It’s almost like a movement in this parish.”

Monsignor Joseph Pemberton, the pastor of the 1,800-family parish, said seeds of

stewardship were planted before he arrived at the Arlington parish in 2016. “The spirit of that concept was already here when I came.... It wasn’t too hard to make it begin to bloom, to blossom, and so we continue to build on that with God’s grace,” he said.

A critical first step in the transformation of the parish was the introduction of Welcome Weekends (formerly known as Christ Renews His Parish), an opportunity for parishioners to form small communities and determine ministries in which they would like to serve.

When Msgr. Pemberton decided to



◀ Msgr. Joseph Pemberton and the Stewardship Committee of Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in Arlington. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

launch Welcome Weekends, he asked the Woodsons to be the contact people, which started the retired couple's personal commitment to stewardship at the parish.

Getting people involved is the goal. "As people become involved and see what the needs are, then they make the connection that they can make a difference. There's room for everybody, 100 percent participation," Tommy said.

"And an invitation for everybody to participate in some way," emphasized Linda.

Msgr. Pemberton noted he's surrounded by many leaders that have inspired "an excitement, an energy that is contagious: to see stewardship not as something we do, but as a way of life."

For example, according to the pastor, "If we're working on a particular project, when it's over and done with, they say, 'What more can we do?' There's always a hunger to do more and more."

The Stewardship Committee of Most Blessed Sacrament Parish began meeting regularly in 2019 to help funnel that dynamic spirit into hospitality, prayer,

formation, and service. About 25 members and staff attend the monthly meetings.

The Woodsons, who chair the committee, said the atmosphere is a "culture of 'yes' where we never, ever squash an idea," said Linda.

Tommy elaborated, "We call them mustard seeds, because they are so small and yet if somebody comes up to you with an idea, at first we take that mustard seed and say, 'If you think that needs to happen, give it a little more thought and then a little more words, and let's go back to it again when it has more form and structure.'

"They have to make this their own home. They have to feel that their being here makes a difference; and they are relevant; they are important; and that God wants them here and that we want them here," he continued.

Mustard seeds that have born fruit include a parish library, Rosary groups, and check-in phone calls during the pandemic.

Stewardship extends beyond the parish walls as well, reaching into the Arlington community to those experiencing hunger or homelessness. And earlier

this year the parish donated \$45,000 to help build the All Saints Family Activity and Youth Center in Eastland, which four parishes will share.

Msgr. Pemberton explained the gift for the parishes more than 100 miles west of Most Blessed Sacrament. "We're part of them and they are part of us. So as a family, we have a responsibility to each other, to try to help our brothers and sisters in faith, and to walk with them in their journey, as they walk with us."

Stewardship "causes people to dream," said Tommy. "And once we get the okay to move forward, then we work on making it happen."

Those dreams, Msgr. Pemberton pointed out, are rooted in Christ and our role "as an extension of the mind, the heart, the hands of Christ Himself."

"Through the grace of God, we have taken that seed [of stewardship] and He has enabled it to grow, if we stay focused on Christ. Once we take our eyes off of Christ, all of this endeavor is going to fail, because we begin to look at ourselves as the one doing it, not our Lord. Ultimately it is His grace that is enabling all this goodness of stewardship to be alive here," Msgr. Pemberton said. 🇺🇸

Doubling the Dollars

The All Saints Family Activity and Youth Center planned in Eastland has been awarded a challenge grant by the Mabee Foundation. If \$200,000 is raised by January 11, 2023, the Mabee Foundation will match it. Including the Most Blessed Sacrament gift, \$62,141 has been raised toward the grant to date. The multi-purpose center with classrooms, a kitchen, and auditorium will serve four parish communities: Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Cisco; St. Francis Xavier in Eastland; St. John in Strawn; and St. Rita in Ranger.

Father Vijaya Mareedu, SAC, pastor of the four parishes, said, "God's hand is seen in the process, seeing the parishes working together" raising money through burrito and tamale sales, rodeo contests, and the like. "All four parishes realize we are working for the future."

The project's total budget is \$2.3 million, a daunting amount, but Fr. Mareedu said, "This is God's work. If He wills it, nothing can stop it." Parishioners are grateful for the grant and support from the diocese, which shows "We care for you. We are one diocese, one Church," said the pastor.

Donate online at bit.ly/MabeeEastland.

MAKE THE GOAL!



Scan this QR code to help match the Mabee grant.



Leaving a mark

In their careers as educators, Shonta' and Nicolas Giovannitti help their students rise to the next level. In their service to Our Mother of Mercy Parish, the couple helps build the faith of their community. And in their role as mother and father to three sons, the parents love, pray, and teach their sons the faith and values to hold close when they become young men.

In Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), the Holy Father wrote, "All family life is a 'shepherding' in mercy. Each of us, by our love and care, leaves a mark on the life of others... seeking to bring out the best in them."

The Giovannittis seek to bring out the best in their students, in their parish, and most of all in their sons.

Nicholas' roots are in Italy and Mexico, and Shonta's dad is an immigrant from Liberia and her mother is African-American. United, they live a life of faith and love at the home they share with Nicolas' parents.



SCHOOL DAYS:

Although Shonta' and Nicolas graduated from the same high school — “We were six people apart in the senior class photo,” she said — they didn't meet until they attended the same math lab at Tarrant County College Northeast. “By the grace of God, we met, became friends, and developed a relationship,” she said.

FIRST DATE:

Nicolas invited Shonta' to attend the Easter Vigil Mass with him. “It's not like I was Mr. Church Guy,” he said, but as a college student with limited finances, he appreciated it was a budget date: you dressed up, and the parish served refreshments afterwards.

LEARNING TOGETHER:

The couple married while they worked their way through college — in fact, Nicolas is currently completing a doctorate in health and human performance.

Education is highly valued by them both. Nicolas said, “We're thankful for our education; we're very thankful,” remembering the years he took a bus to his job driving a forklift. “We ate a lot of beans and rice,” he said, laughing.

BOTH TRADITIONS:

Shonta' grew up attending Protestant churches with her mother, but she visited Catholic churches with her father in the summer.

After their first son was born, she joined the Catholic Church because she wanted Santiago “to have a firm foundation in the Catholic faith.”

THREE GENERATIONS:

The Giovannitti's used to live within walking distance of Nicolas' parents, and their children would

go to their grandparents' house after school. About three years ago, the couple and his parents each sold their homes and moved in together.

“We are big with ‘it takes a village’” to raise the children, said Shonta', adding that her mother-in-law is the primary educator for Xavier, who is homeschooled.

For Shonta', buying a home with her in-laws was another example to “trust in the path that the Lord is leading you on. Step out in faith,” a lesson God has reinforced throughout her marriage and career.

FAITH AT WORK:

Nicolas' employment revolves around physical fitness: he works as a kinesiology instructor, a fitness center manager, a strength and conditioning coach for Texas Wesleyan football, a high school basketball coach, and a personal trainer.

Building strength and endurance is like faith, according to Nicolas. “When you do face resistance, it's actually a blessing, because that's how you get stronger. And the Good Lord is helping you when you go through those struggles.”

Understanding that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God helps him communicate with athletes, regardless of their age or background. “If you really believe these are all God's children, no matter what level, then I think you can be a better coach. And still be tough,” he added.

LOVING THE LITTLES:

“Faith goes hand-in-hand” with her job as a kindergarten teacher, said Shonta', who puts a priority on teaching her pupils with and about kindness and respect. “We're all God's children, so we

want to extend that love to everyone we meet.”

TOOLBOX:

With one son already grown and their second a high school junior, their parents are aware the children will choose how to practice their faith as adults, and they want to equip them with the tools of the faith.

One habit is to explain the meaning of the symbols and traditions of the faith. For example, when the family makes the Sign of the Cross as they pass a Catholic church, Nicolas explains the reason is because the Blessed Sacrament is inside the church.

PRIORITY ONE:

Shonta' wants her children to “put God first above all things. Don't let video games and the internet become your god. Give it a break and spend some time with God in prayer. Prayer is powerful.”

CATHOLIC CORE :

Nicolas appreciates “the continuity of the Holy Eucharist, for over 2,000 years. All the things that have gone wrong — wars and popes and crazy things, all the things that people do — the Holy Eucharist is always there. That speaks powerfully to me.”

Shonta' appreciates the universality of the Church and remembers a visit to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. “I like the fact that I can see different people, nationalities, believing in the Catholic faith. All the different depictions of Jesus and Mary — I just love that, and I am part of this Church that is universal.

“And I strongly believe in the Blood and Body of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist,” she added. 🇺🇸

THEY ARE: Our Mother of Mercy parishioners Nicolas and Shonta' Giovannitti, with Miguel, 17, and Xavier, 10. Their oldest son, Santiago, is 23 and lives in Iowa. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Happiness is the Other Kind of Love

I think it is safe to say that we all desire to be happy, but what is the path to happiness? The world around us sells a number of things that it claims will bring this state: wealth, pleasure, power, prestige, love of others, fame, 1,000 likes, lots of friends, and on and on. Each of these things are elements of life, but none bring true and lasting happiness.

So, what does?

I've been reading a book by Peter Kreeft called *The God Who Loves You*. In it he makes a startling claim:

"The way to happiness is self-forgetful love and the way to unhappiness is self-regard, self-worry, and the search for personal happiness. Our happiness comes to us only when we do not seek for it. It comes to us when we seek others' happiness instead."

I am willing to bet that few people reading this would have ever come to this conclusion for the secret to happiness. What, after all, is self-forgetful love? When we look at the full quote, we get some clues. We are not called to forget ourselves, rather to love. Others, not ourselves, should be our focus. Thus, we don't so much "forget" ourselves; we instead choose to take the spotlight off ourselves and shine it on those around us.

This is a radical concept in the

"me-first" and "pull myself up by my own bootstraps" world in which we live. Society would like us to believe that we only get what we can grab ourselves and

that we are the makers of our own happiness. Dr. Kreeft agrees with this, to a point. We make our own happiness by choosing to seek the happiness of others.

We see this concept most perfectly played out in the Pascal Mystery in which we have just participated through the Triduum and

Easter Sunday. The passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus summed up in the famous verse from John: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" (*John 3:16*) exemplifies self-forgetful love.

God embodies other-focused love when He sends His Son to suffer and die so we could be truly and eternally happy. Jesus, too, made a concrete choice in the Garden of Gethsemane when He willingly submitted to the cross.

Self-forgetful love is an act of the will, to give of ourselves for the sake of others. It does not mean that we forsake ourselves to the point of personal harm. It also doesn't mean that others are intrinsically more important than we are. Lastly, it doesn't mean that we are not supposed

to take care of ourselves. It simply means that we are not meant to live by ourselves and for ourselves.

We are created in the image of a God who is Trinity, a community of persons. The relationship between the three Persons of the Trinity is often described this way: The Father gives Himself in a total gift of self to the Son, and the Son gives Himself to the Father in a total gift of self, and the Holy Spirit is found in this eternal exchange of mutual self-gift.

Thus, we are most fully ourselves when we give of ourselves to others, for when we do this, we model the love of the Trinity. The more we can embrace this self-giving love, this other-focused love, this self-forgetful love, the more we will find happiness.

The Good Friday of self-giving love is the doorway to Easter Sunday happiness. This is the blueprint for our happiness that Peter Kreeft outlines. When we forget ourselves, we do not lose ourselves; quite the opposite, we find our true selves. For, we were made for love and love has as its object the other, not the self. ✝️



Jeff Hedglen

Season of Rebirth

Easter is here! Throughout Lent, the Triduum, and Easter, we have 93 days to prepare for and remember Christ's surrender, grief, death, and the astonishing resurrection of hope and joy that is the Paschal Mystery. I am not a math wizard, but I think 93 out of 365 days is roughly a quarter of the year dedicated to the contemplation of this beautiful mystery. It's kind of a big deal.

By the time we start singing "Alleluia" in Mass again, springtime is also alive with rebirth. In North Texas, the rebirth is announced with "The Pollening." Live oaks are pushing out old leaves as new ones replace them. Pecan trees dangle their pollen tassels in hopes of a bumper crop. Bluebonnets emerge.

As you notice the expression of the Paschal Mystery around you in nature, do you wonder how Christ might be inviting you to experience death and rebirth in your own life? I believe the Resurrected Christ is among us, helping us find new life after each heartbreak, catastrophe, and devastation. My personal and professional experience with this mystery is why I chose to become a counselor. I feel honored to witness renewal taking place almost daily in people's lives. Every time a client enters my office, I feel anticipation for the possible rebirth that awaits them.

During the first visit, folks have usually accepted change is upon them. They have begun to surrender to the unknown of what lies beyond their comfort zone. I am

outside their comfort zone. They are also quite anxious, perhaps like Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane. Therapy is vulnerable and requires courage. I've seen many people shake and sweat with anxiety as they divulge their feelings and thoughts about their current situation. (I have yet to see

anyone sweat blood, though.)

Those ready for change show up ready to reveal both the light and the dark inside them. We begin sorting through what to nurture and what to prune. Metaphoric dying to self or ego, a natural byproduct of maturation, can be a painful experience. However, when it is moved through rather than seen as the end, clients describe shedding their old ways as liberating and relieving.

Immediately after this pruning phase, clients have incredible access to their inner wisdom and allow new behavior to replace the old. Sometimes, the growth process even happens in reverse order as people choose the change they want, then they let go of what is holding them back. Either way, once they reach the other side of their

dilemma there is a very brief experience of grief.

Grief is a side effect of growth often not discussed. It is natural to feel a twinge of regret when we suddenly see the gap between what we used to know and what we know now. I imagine the Apostles could relate to this feeling. Christ frequently alluded to His impending death, but His Apostles still suffered the pangs of grief when it actually happened, and they fully understood what He meant.

After surrender to the unknown, death, growth, and grief, hope is ignited. People emerge from the ashes of their situation renewed and more fully engaged with life. Quite often, they go forth announcing the hope to others still stuck in distress. Healing and growth can be contagious. I think God designed it that way.

What areas of your life might be ripe for rebirth? Therapy is not always necessary for healing. The Risen Christ is already with us, inviting us to set down our burdensome ways, follow Him out of the darkness threatening to kill us, and bring us into new life. ✝



Amanda Averbeck

Amanda Averbeck is a Marriage and Family Therapist Associate in Fort Worth passionate about helping others navigate life's storms. She also explores and writes about how spirituality and mental health interlace.

Meditation in mind



How can I choose the correct vocation God wants for me? This is an important question every unmarried man and woman should ask themselves. For a little error in the beginning leads to a great one in the end. Aristotle explained, “The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousand fold.” Unmarried men and women need to discern the vocation that God wants for them so that they fulfill His plan.



Fr. Maurice Moon

Now, there are some objective signs of a religious vocation. For example, does the person have the desire to be a priest or religious? Does the person have the ability to do the things a priest or religious does? Is that person accepted by the superior, such as a bishop? If so, these are good signs that one is being called to take the leap of faith and formally discern the priesthood or religious life, either in the seminary or in a religious order.

Although these are some objective signs of a vocation, knowing God's will intellectually is not enough. My experience has been that people need the strength to take that leap of faith. So, what can help with this? Mental prayer or meditation.

Meditation has a couple of effects on one discerning a vocation. First, it unites us more completely to God. When we

sacrifice our time each day for meditation, we are being led by God — instead of the things of this world. “I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart” (*Hosea 2:14*). This daily encounter with God stirs us to holy desires, good acts of the will, humility, confidence, self-sacrifice, resignation, and especially to love and repentance from our sins. St. Teresa of Avila said, “Acts of love are those that keep the soul inflamed with holy love.”

Secondly, meditation obtains grace from God. Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (*Matthew 7:7-8*). When we are persistent in meditation each day, we will receive innumerable graces to do God's will, to have the confidence and fortitude to say “yes” to whatever He wants.

Some might say they can't meditate or it's too difficult. Not true. Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly. Meditation is worth doing poorly. Even if we fidget for 10 minutes, even if we fight distractions the entire time, those 10 minutes are still fruitful because it was offered to God. This is pleasing to Him.

So, how does one practice mental prayer or meditation? One simple way is to begin by going somewhere quiet and to get rid of all unnecessary thoughts. Say a prayer to the Holy Spirit to begin. Having some reading material, like the Gospels or a spiritual book from a saint, can help with the beginning part of the meditation. After we have read a little, put down the book and reflect. We want to ask God to help us put into practice what we just read. We can then make acts of affection, like, “My God, I love you above all things.” We want to then offer Him our petitions. At the end, we thank God for the inspiration received and make a particular resolution to put into practice some virtue or avoid some near occasion of sin. Meditation helps the person discerning a religious vocation because it both inspires and offers graces to do God's will.

Jesus Christ is calling men and women right now to leave everything and to follow Him as a priest or religious. Let us continue to encourage and pray for those unmarried men and women, that they be open to the vocation God wants for them and have the fortitude to pursue it. 🇺🇸

Ordained to the priesthood in 2018, Father Maurice Moon serves as Chaplain at Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth and as Vocations Liaison with the Vocations Office.



Here I am. Send me.

HE IS: Father Anderson Luis de Souza, SVD, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth since July 2020.

GROWING UP: The oldest of four, he was raised in Ponte Nova, a small town in southeast Brazil. Living next door to the parish priest, young Anderson was recruited as an altar server, music minister, and catechist.

PLAN A: Fr. de Souza's mother is a nurse, and he thought he'd serve the community as a medical doctor and catechist.

GOD'S PLAN: Many people told de Souza he'd be a good priest. "You've gone crazy," he'd respond. "I will never become a priest." But then God put the desire in his heart to be a missionary priest.

He interviewed with the Society of the Divine Word and entered the seminary on his birthday, February 26, in 1998.

COMING TO AMERICA: During his theology studies, his religious order sent him to its college in Epworth, Iowa to master English. To transfer planes at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, he used all five English words he knew ("Please help me. Thank you.").

It was summer when he left Brazil, and he arrived in Iowa to knee-deep snow. He initially thought, "I died and God sent me to hell. But it was a very good experience."

After learning English, he did a pastoral year in Livingston, Texas, where the parishioners helped him pick up Spanish.

ORDAINED: May 1, 2009, in his hometown. He requested his order assign him to locations with no snow, and he has served in diverse parishes in Brazil, Louisiana, Florida, and Texas.

COWTOWN CHALLENGE: Moving to Fort Worth in the early days of the pandemic was "stressful, a very big change," Fr. de Souza said. Despite the disruptive protocols, he visited the sick and celebrated funeral Masses to assure parishioners "the Church was there, at that sad moment in their lives."

DIVINE MERCY: "As a priest, as an instrument of mercy, I have to take my time [during confessions]. To listen, to advise, and to call attention when it's needed. To assure the penitent they will be forgiven by God through the sacrament."

PARTING WORDS:

"[Parishioners] don't need to remember all my homilies, but if they know that God is a loving God, I'm good." 🇺🇸





El Padre VJ Mareedu, SAC, examina los restos de la casa de Evelyn Guillén en Carbon, unos días después de que los incendios arrasaron el pueblo. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

DE ENTRE LAS CENIZAS BRILLA LA

esperanza

Los feligreses alrededor de Eastland reciben ayuda y apoyo de la parroquia St. Francis Xavier y otros en la comunidad después de un incendio masivo

La propiedad de Jackie Juarez fue una pérdida total después de los incendios. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Por Violeta Rocha

En la tarde del 17 de marzo del año en curso residentes de Carbon enfrentaron al que han descrito como el incendio más grande de Texas en los últimos años, dejando a 50 familias sin hogar y un total de 54,000 acres quemados, señala Evelyn Guillén, según los informes que las agencias gubernamentales han dado a los damnificados, que, como ella, perdieron en cuestión de horas el patrimonio que habían construido a lo largo de muchos años.

Guillén es feligrés de la Parroquia de San Francisco Xavier de Eastland, Texas, ubicada a sólo diez minutos de lo que fuera su hogar, ahora reducido a cenizas. Un total de siete familias de la comunidad parroquial se valen de su fe para poder reconstruir pronto.

“Dios nos va a guiar hacia un nuevo comienzo... empezamos de cero cuando llegamos y vamos a volver a empezar. Dios va a proveer” dijo Guillén, originaria de Guanajuato, México, y quien junto a sus padres, se alojan temporalmente con uno de sus hermanos.

Aunque el área fue declarada zona de desastre, la asistencia por parte de FEMA no llegará a menos de que los daños sumen \$47 millones, explicó Guillén.

“No somos personas que pedimos dinero, sólo esperamos que se nos ayude con el material que necesitamos para reconstruir”, ella enfatizó sobre la ayuda

necesaria, destacando que ellos mismos pueden aportar la mano de obra.

“La parroquia pidió donaciones para nosotros y las donaciones nos han llegado”, compartió Guillén. Ella está muy agradecida por la ropa, la comida, los muebles y hasta el pasto que trajeron para el ganado; todo esto ha sido donado para las familias damnificadas. “Ves los restos de las casas en Carbon; luego, ves la iglesia llena de toda la ayuda que ha llegado de otras parroquias, y es cuando te das cuenta de que no estás solo”, aseveró Guillén.

“Amanecimos sin nada, y en poco tiempo hemos recibido mucha ayuda”, dijo María Sánchez, 49, a una semana del incendio. Su familia, que son ocho en total, no sólo perdió la casa que habían comprado hacía sólo seis meses, sino que además dos de sus hijos resultaron con múltiples quemaduras. José Jesús Perales, 21, recibió quemaduras en sus pies y antebrazos, y Ernesto Perales, 23, en su rostro y las manos. Ambos se siguen recuperando ya fuera del hospital.

Eran cerca de las cinco de la tarde y se preparaban para cenar. En cuestión de unos pocos minutos pasaron de percibir el olor a humo a salir corriendo de la casa hacia sus autos, tras el sonido de las alarmas.

“Salimos todos juntos en diferentes autos”, dijo Sánchez, al recordar las cuatro millas que recorrieron entre las llamas mientras que su esposo Jaime Perales manejaba junto a ella, su hija, su

sobrino y la nieta, lamentando que, por la poca visibilidad que había debido al humo, sus dos hijos que iban cada uno en su propio auto, parecían haberse quedado atrapados en el fuego.

“El fuego agarró sus carros, se bajaron y trataron de correr. Fue así que sufrieron las quemaduras”, narró entre lágrimas Sánchez, quien aún hablando con su hijo en el teléfono celular, pidió ayuda una vez que se encontraron a las afueras de Carbon. Sintió que el alma le volvió al cuerpo cuando escuchó a su hijo decir, “la ambulancia ya está aquí por nosotros”.

Sánchez asegura que debe mantenerse fuerte por sus hijos, y “en la iglesia es donde lloro y me puedo desahogar”, dijo afirmando que esta tragedia le ha traído “conversión” para reafirmarse aún más en su fe. Asevera que el fuego consumió su casa, pero su fe se avivó al ver cada día la generosa ayuda de su comunidad parroquial.

“No esperábamos tanta ayuda, pero gracias a eso siento más ánimo de poder salir adelante junto a mi familia porque es muy duro comenzar de nuevo”, dijo Cecilia Hernández, que trabaja limpiando casas y que, por ahora, vive junto a su esposo y dos hijas de 14 y 12 años de edad en una casa rodante, que una de sus empleadoras le prestaron.

El grupo de Texas Baptist Men ha dado su apoyo removiendo los restos de

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metales y cenizas del vecindario. Los damnificados han limpiado los restos de su patrimonio con sólo un pico, una pala y un recipiente que la Cruz Roja les proporcionó.

“La esperanza siempre está” les recuerda el Padre VJ Mareedu, párroco de San Francisco Xavier, quien desde las primeras horas del incendio los ha acompañado con sus oraciones y acción y les ha facilitado toda la ayuda posible.

El Padre VJ dijo que espera que la resiliencia que muestran estas familias llenas de fe, “sea un signo” de esperanza para otras familias que también necesitan de esa fortaleza para salir adelante después de esta tragedia.

La presencia del Obispo Michael Olson en su parroquia fue para Sánchez como un ungüento de alivio en su profundo dolor, “me sentía decaída y preocupada por mis hijos; fue una gran bendición que el Obispo haya venido”, dijo Sánchez.

Las siete familias dieron “gracias a Dios por estar vivos” el domingo después del incendio, según Evelyn. Ella además recalcó el gran apoyo que el Padre VJ les ha estado dando desde el primer momento. “Llegamos a Misa junto a él, tristes y llorando, pero juntos”.

Evelyn señaló que “el gesto del Obispo Olson de visitarlos y celebrar Misa en español con ellos, y que más tarde les dijera que ‘siempre van a estar en mis oraciones’ les dio ánimo y motivación a todos”. Ella agregó que, “Monseñor Olson se tomó el tiempo para conocernos y nos sentimos acompañados en nuestro sufrimiento”.

“Estamos muy unidos...tenemos esperanza de poder reconstruir, no creo que nadie se quiera ir de Carbon. Éste ha sido nuestro hogar por muchos años”, apuntó Evelyn Guillén. Resaltó además que “la ayuda ha sido extraordinaria” y que el apoyo que existe no sólo como vecinos y paisanos, sino también como feligreses de la comunidad parroquial de San Francisco Xavier, los hará “comenzar de nuevo como una familia y con la gracia de Dios”.



El Padre VJ Mareedu consuela una de las familias que perdió su casa en los incendios de Carbon. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Para un 90 por ciento de la población de Carbon, ha empezado el difícil trabajo de limpieza. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

“Trabajaremos en una casa, aunque sea solamente en un cuarto pequeño y de ahí nos iremos a otra casa... Todos lo perdimos todo, entonces todos vamos a estar ahí para todos”, apuntó Evelyn. Dice además que en los últimos dos años ella ha estado involucrada y activa en su parroquia gracias al Padre VJ, “pues el verlo cómo siempre está pendiente de todos, me da ánimos de servir,” aseguró.

El Padre VJ enfatiza que son precisamente los lazos de comunidad lo que mantiene a las familias fuertes y unidas en la fe. “Cuando tienes fuertes lazos en la comunidad, no te vas”, señaló. 🇺🇸

**DONA
HOY**



Para ayudar a las víctimas de los incendios de Eastland, escanee el código QR de arriba.

estamos ESCUCHANDO

Sínodo 2023 es un llamado a llevar nuestros corazones y mentes de vuelta a Dios

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Devastador. Así describió Marla Trevino el impacto que tuvo la pandemia durante los pasados dos años en su parroquia en Mineral Wells.

“Muy pocas personas venían a Misa”, recordó la feligrés de Nuestra Señora de Lourdes. “Mucha gente se enfermó y perdimos a muchos de nuestros ancianos”.

El aislamiento, causado por la crisis de salud, pareció amplificar la separación entre la comunidad de habla inglesa y la comunidad hispana de la parroquia rural. Varios grupos se unieron para recaudar fondos para ayudar a las familias de la parroquia, pero no se hizo ninguna otra actividad en comunidad, según observara la contable de la parroquia.

Recientemente, se celebraron dos sesiones para escuchar las opiniones de los feligreses como parte del proceso consultivo global previo a la asamblea de obispos de 2023 en Roma, el Sínodo sobre la Sinodalidad. Estas sesiones ayudaron a los feligreses a reconectarse y descubrir puntos en común.

“Todo lo que se dijo en la sesión de inglés se repitió en la sesión de español”, dijo Treviño, que facilitó cada discusión con una serie de preguntas proporcionadas por la diócesis. “Al escucharse unos a otros, los feligreses se dieron cuenta de que querían estar unidos y no separados. Las sesiones fueron muy



El Padre Tim Thompson, en el centro, escucha mientras otros comparten pensamientos durante una sesión de escucha en All Saints Parish en Fort Worth el 23 de marzo de 2022. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

valiosas y enfatizaron la importancia que tiene el escucharse unos a otros”.

Al ser desafiada por el Papa Francisco a enfocarse en el significado de la sinodalidad, que consiste en “escuchar las preguntas, las preocupaciones y las esperanzas de cada iglesia, pueblo y nación”, la Diócesis de Fort Worth animó a los feligreses a reflexionar y dialogar entre sí basados en dos preguntas fundamentales: ¿Cómo yo estoy escuchando a Dios para servir

Su voluntad? ¿Cómo escucho a mis hermanos y hermanas para saber de qué manera Dios les habla?

Más de 70 parroquias y comunidades de fe participaron de un proceso que permitió a los participantes compartir sus experiencias de adoración, discipulado y evangelización. Guiados por el Espíritu Santo, las conversaciones se diseñaron con el fin de ser colaborativas, inclusivas

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y sin enfrentamientos. Se hizo un resumen de todas las notas tomadas durante las sesiones, se entregó el informe a la Diócesis de Fort Worth y luego todas las notas se sintetizaron en un documento de 10 páginas que será enviado a la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los EE. UU. El proceso de antesala al Sínodo, que dura tres años, continuará a nivel nacional y norteamericano y concluirá en octubre del 2023 con la reunión de todos los obispos en Roma.

Reunir a las personas y desarrollar la capacidad de escucharse activamente entre sí es clave para la fase de consulta del Sínodo, según Paola Quintero-Araújo. La Directora del Instituto de San Junípero Serra encabeza el proceso sinodal diocesano junto con el Padre Jonathan Wallis, el Vicario General de la Diócesis.

“El resultado que buscamos es simplemente tener la experiencia de volver a estar juntos para aprender, escuchar a Dios y a los demás”, explicó. “La llamada del Sínodo no es para producir documentos. Lo más importante es la vivencia de la jornada durante este proceso. El hecho de embarcarse en este viaje es por sí solo un resultado que nos permite comenzar de nuevo a cambiar mentes y corazones”.

Encontrar nuestra identidad en Cristo es lo que está en juego, enfatizó Quintero-Araújo, y agregó: “Eso es lo que se ha perdido. Vemos hoy día que más personas encuentran su identidad en los partidos políticos y los grupos comunes que les gustan o en sus propios intereses personales”.

La pandemia, además de otros problemas nacionales divisivos, causó estrés y separación.

“Entonces, uno de los resultados inmediatos de este proceso es el gozo de reunirnos unos con otros, aprender a escucharnos y encontrar nuestra ancla en Cristo para poder seguir adelante”.

Pedir a los párrocos que supervisarán las sesiones de escucha les dio a ellos la oportunidad de interactuar con los feligreses. El eslogan del Sínodo es “viajar juntos”.

“Todos estamos llamados a



Padre Joy Joseph prepara el Santísimo Sacramento para la Adoración ante una sesión parroquial de escucha en preparación para la asamblea del Sínodo de Obispos de 2023, el 15 de marzo en la parroquia de Holy Cross. (NTC/Ben Torres)

participar”, explicó la directora. “Este camino se hará a través de la escucha y el discernimiento que serán guiados por el Espíritu Santo. Estamos discerniendo cómo Dios nos está llamando a trabajar y caminar juntos”.

EXPRESAR LAS INQUIETUDES Y FORTALEZAS

El Padre Tim Thompson, párroco de la Parroquia de Todos los Santos desde diciembre del 2021, agradeció la oportunidad de organizar las sesiones de escucha en inglés y español en la histórica parroquia de Northside de Fort Worth.

“Me gusta el proceso. Me gusta que la gente se reúna para pensar sobre su fe y la Iglesia”, comentó al *North Texas Catholic*. “Creo que ayudará a la Iglesia no sólo con miras al futuro, sino a reconocer además las fortalezas que tiene y cómo puede crecer y construir a partir de ahí”.

El párroco ve gran pasión por la fe en las personas a las que sirve.

“Eso no ha muerto”, aseguró. “La gente tiene un sentimiento esperanzador y positivo hacia la fe y eso los guiará e inspirará en su camino”.

Una de las mayores preocupaciones

expresadas por muchos participantes de Todos los Santos que asistieron a la sesión en inglés de la mañana fue cómo mantener a los jóvenes involucrados en la Iglesia. Las sesiones de escucha proporcionaron un foro importante para discutir lo que las personas sienten en su corazón”, dijo el Diácono Ricardo De León.

“Queremos que la gente vuelva a la Iglesia”, explicó. “Tenemos que escuchar a nuestros feligreses para saber por qué tantas personas se están yendo de la Iglesia”.

Las personas tienen un fuerte deseo de ser escuchadas y de sentir que pertenecen. Es por eso que a veces los extraños llaman a la oficina de su parroquia con la esperanza de hablar con alguien.

“Los invito a entrar”, agregó el diácono, recordando cómo un hombre abrió su corazón y le habló durante dos horas. “Hay mucha gente por ahí que quiere ser escuchada. Escuchar a la gente ahora tendrá su efecto en el futuro”.

LA COMUNICACIÓN CONSTRUYE COMUNIDAD

Antes de que comenzara la sesión de escucha en la Parroquia de Santo Tomás

Apóstol los diáconos Mike Handler y Humberto Serrano dirigieron a los participantes en la capilla de la parroquia en un servicio bilingüe que se centró en las Escrituras, la oración y la meditación. Los presentes compartieron sus puntos de vista en discusiones de grupo francas e informales sobre cómo una mejor comunicación puede construir una comunidad parroquial más involucrada y unida.

“Todos estamos muy ocupados. Si no nos tomamos intencionalmente el tiempo para detenernos, escuchar y orar, continuaremos haciendo lo que estamos haciendo”, dijo el Coordinador de Ambiente Seguro de la parroquia, Bruce Mallory. “Creo que este ejercicio es una gran oportunidad para que nos detengamos y nos concentremos en el Santísimo Sacramento y escuchemos lo que el Espíritu Santo nos dice”.

Muchos feligreses tienen la esperanza de que las sesiones de escucha se conviertan en un ejercicio continuo en la parroquia. Una mayor interacción entre los ministerios y las personas permitiría que la parroquia crezca más unida como comunidad.

“A las personas de nuestra mesa les gustó esta idea y quieren que suceda más a menudo”, comentó Ricardo Báez, uno de los participantes de habla hispana. “Hablamos de que la Iglesia es sensible y que está dispuesta a prestar más atención a las necesidades de los fieles”.

ESCUCHANDO A TODOS

Con la esperanza de llegar a la mayor cantidad de personas posible, la diócesis invitó a participar a católicos

pertenecientes a pequeñas comunidades de fe. El Padre Ken Robinson asistió a las sesiones de escucha con otros sacerdotes jubilados en St. Francis Village. Asistió también a sesiones de escucha con la comunidad sorda, un grupo al que lleva sirviendo por 25 años.

“Cada grupo tiene una perspectiva diferente, pero no hay diferencias radicales”, observó el sacerdote que usó el lenguaje de señas estadounidense al celebrar la Misa para el grupo antes de la sesión de escucha del 3 de abril en la Parroquia de Santa Rita de Fort Worth. La forma en que escuchamos a Dios y las tentaciones que nos impiden escucharlo serán las mismas en todos los ámbitos”.

Los participantes, que fueron asistidos por la Coordinadora Diocesana del Ministerio para Sordos e intérprete Connie Martin, recordaron la época en que los católicos sordos se contentaban con sentarse y observar las liturgias desde los bancos. En ese entonces había poca participación o conciencia de las personas con discapacidad auditiva en la diócesis.

Al haber en los últimos años más miembros de la comunidad sorda que sirven como monaguillos, sacristanes y ministros de la Eucaristía, eso ha ido cambiando poco a poco. No obstante, se puede hacer mucho más por la comunidad sorda.

“Hay muchos más católicos sordos en la comunidad”, señaló David Cassanova. “Necesitamos encontrarlos e invitarlos a nuestra Misa para que se unan a nuestros amigos y familiares. Compartir nuestra fe puede ser difícil, pero es importante hacerlo”. 🇺🇸



Los miembros del coro utilizan el lenguaje de señas al cantar durante la Misa celebrada antes de una sesión de discusión para los feligreses sordos en la Parroquia de Santa Rita, en preparación para la Asamblea de 2023 del Sínodo de Obispos. (NTC/Roger Mallison)



El Padre Prakash Dias habla con miembros de la Iglesia del Sagrado Corazón en Breckenridge mientras participan en una sesión de escucha parroquial para el sínodo el 19 de marzo de 2022. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



El Diácono Humberto Serrano dirige una discusión durante una sesión de escucha en la Parroquia de Santo Tomás Apóstol el 26 de marzo. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

JUNTOS, GRACIAS AL AMOR A DIOS

Como la Jornada Familiar es un beneficio
para muchas familias y matrimonios

Por Violeta Rocha

“¿Vamos a vivir así toda la vida?”, le preguntó un día Cipriano, 41, hace diez años a su esposa Lidia, 36. Estaban cansados de las constantes peleas entre ellos y, tras vivir en unión libre por más de una década, deseaban recibir el Sacramento del Matrimonio en la Iglesia.

“Nos sentíamos fatigados de andar por la vida sin rumbo y festejando. Nos dimos cuenta que nuestros hijos estaban creciendo y no les estábamos enseñando nada”, compartió Prado, agradecido de que en ese entonces, el retiro de Jornada Familiar era requerimiento para la preparación pre-matrimonial.

El matrimonio Prado es ahora parte de la junta directiva del ministerio diocesano de la Jornada Familiar.

“Viví un cambio grande”, aseguró Cipriano, “solo queríamos casarnos, pero Dios tenía Su propio plan para servirle aquí”, dijo, y reconoce al mismo tiempo que esto lo llevó a la conversión para ser mejor católico, mejor esposo y mejor padre de sus seis hijos.

“Uno va valorando más en cada momento la paz que da a la familia la presencia de Dios en el hogar”, enfatizó Lidia Prado.

Lidia vivió el proceso de RICA para recibir

el Sacramento del Matrimonio, y está muy agradecida de poder ser “la primera catequista en el hogar para sus hijos” para que “no crezcan con un vacío como yo crecí”. Y agregó que sus tres hijos mayores “vivieron nuestra conversión. A ellos les tocó ver muchos pleitos y distanciamientos, pero ahora al vernos unidos, ellos se sienten también más cerca de nosotros”.

“El retiro de la Jornada Familiar fue una guía para empezar por el buen camino y vivir en familia bajo los ojos de Dios. Sin esa guía nuestra vida en familia hubiera seguido igual, aún con el Sacramento del Matrimonio”, dijo Lidia y explicó que ahora enfocan su fe en su matrimonio, su familia y en su servicio a otras parejas.

La misión de la Jornada Familiar como ministerio diocesano “es un encuentro con Nuestro Señor, que comienza primero con cada individuo y sigue luego con la pareja para ser la Iglesia Doméstica que nuestra fe nos pide”, dijo Noé Rosales, quien junto a su esposa, Lupita, coordinan la Jornada Familiar.

“Los testimonios de las parejas nos hicieron recapacitar”, comentó Rosales al recordar su experiencia del retiro que hicieron hace diez años mientras buscaban ser mejores padres.

“El Señor nos llama a dar fruto y el primer fruto son nuestros hijos”, señaló Rosales acerca



◀ Parejas casadas oran de rodillas durante el retiro de Jornada Familiar, el 26 de marzo en el Centro de Formación Diocesana en Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Jornada Familias “nos cambió la vida completamente”.

“Me di cuenta que como mamá y como esposa estaba fallando”, dijo recordando que “pedir perdón” entre sí como pareja fue la primera lección del retiro.

“Existe la luz al final del camino, y esa luz viene por medio de Jesucristo”, dijo Lupita sobre el mensaje que comparten a las parejas que llegan buscando ayuda.

Tanto en tanto en los retiros, las charlas y los talleres, la Jornada Familiar cuenta con el apoyo de los sacerdotes, los diáconos y las religiosas como es el caso del Diácono Marcelino Carranza, de la Parroquia del Inmaculado Corazón de María.

“La Jornada Familiar realiza una labor muy importante porque trabaja a nivel diocesano y es un beneficio para muchas familias”, dijo el Diácono Carranza, que fue ordenado al diaconado en el 2009 en la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

La Jornada Familia tiene muy claro el ejemplo de la Sagrada Familia de Nazaret, en la que Jesús, María y José son modelos de hijo, madre y padre a los que todos estamos llamados a seguir, agregó el Diácono Carranza.

En junio del 2021, con motivo del seminario en línea sobre El Año de la Familia *Amoris Laetitia*, que transcurre del 19 de marzo de 2021 al 25 de junio de 2022, el Papa Francisco resaltó a través de un video mensaje el trabajo de las familias en la pastoral familiar.

“Necesitamos la ayuda de las propias familias, de su experiencia concreta de vida y de comunión para llevar el amor de Dios a las familias y a los jóvenes que construirán las familias del mañana”, dijo el Papa Francisco en esa oportunidad, y agregó que esa experiencia anuncia “que también en las dificultades Cristo se hace presente en el Sacramento del Matrimonio para dar ternura, paciencia y esperanza a todos en cualquier situación de la vida”. 🇺🇸



◀ Mary Martínez y su esposo Jaime Martínez platican sobre la historia de su matrimonio durante el retiro. (NTC/Ben Torres)

de sus tres hijos, cuyas edades son de 18, 13 y 9 años.

Tras asistir al retiro, las parejas muchas veces se unen a la Jornada Familiar o a cualquier otro ministerio de sus propias parroquias. “Vemos el amor en el servicio de los que llegaron antes de nosotros y los que van llegando y quieren continuar compartiendo eso que a ellos les ayudó”, explicó Rosales sobre el comité de la Jornada Familiar que incluye 30 parejas.

Lejos de Dios el amor es “egoísta y superficial”, afirma Guadalupe “Lupita” Rosales, 44, que está celebrando 21 años de casados gracias a que el retiro de

APRENDA
MÁS



Obtenga más información sobre la Jornada Familiar escaneando el código QR arriba.

Ore Por Ellos!

LA DIÓCESIS CATÓLICA DE FORT WORTH
ANUNCIA LA MISA DE ORDENACIÓN AL DIACONADO
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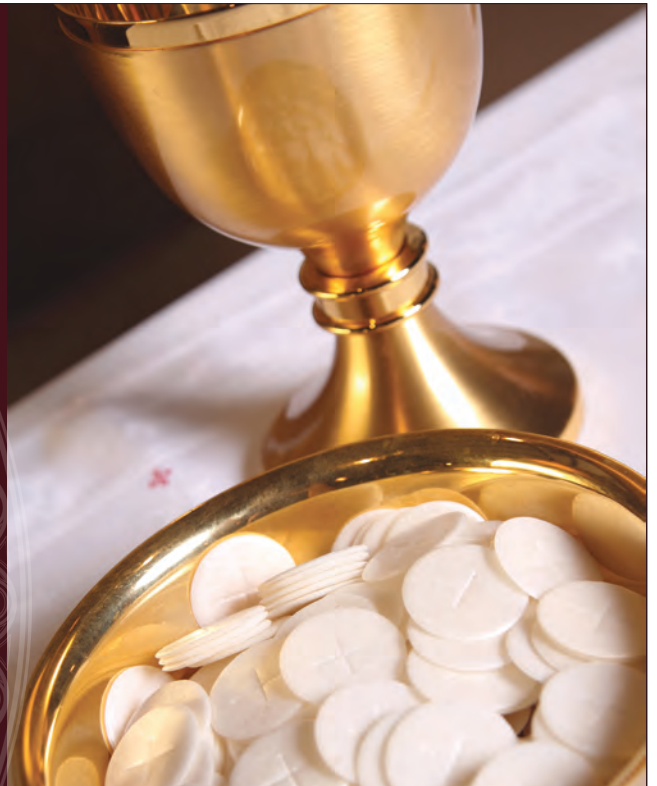
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Aparta la Fecha!

El relicario de Santa Bernardita Soubirous visitará la Diócesis de Fort Worth del 20 al 23 de julio como parte de su gira por los Estados Unidos. Las reliquias estarán en la Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Lourdes en Mineral Wells.

Busque más información en la próxima revista del *North Texas Catholic* o en FWDioc.org



DEBEMOS PREDICAR EL EVANGELIO CON CLARIDAD Y GOZO

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

 @BpOlsonFW



“El espíritu del Señor está sobre mí, porque el Señor me ha unguido. Él me envió a llevar la buena noticia a los pobres, a vender los corazones heridos, a proclamar la liberación a los cautivos y la libertad a los prisioneros, a proclamar un año de gracia del Señor, un día de venganza para nuestro Dios; a consolar a todos los que están de duelo; a cambiar su ceniza por una corona, su ropa de luto por el óleo de la alegría, y su abatimiento por un canto de alabanza”.

Jesús leyó estos versos de las Escrituras en la sinagoga de Nazaret, e inmediatamente después de hacerlo, San Lucas describe el rechazo que sus amigos y familiares le dieron a Jesús tras reaccionar a su proclamación de que en Él se cumple la profecía de Isaías.

El anuncio de Jesús llama al pueblo a salir de una apatía espiritual, de un letargo de cinismo e indiferencia que prefieren al óleo de la alegría y al manto glorioso del Evangelio. Este óleo de alegría es Jesucristo, quien es la plenitud de la revelación y el propio Hijo de Dios.

Es importante que recordemos que Jesús está hablando en medio de los miembros de Su sinagoga local, que tenían sus propias experiencias personales de Jesús. Su familia extendida y los vecinos lo daban por sentado porque pensaban que sabían todo acerca de Él. Él es el hijo del carpintero. Sin embargo, cuando Jesús les revela que Él es el cumplimiento universal de la profecía de Isaías, lo rechazan. Jesús los llama a salir de su visión privada de Él y de sus interpretaciones espirituales personales de la profecía de Isaías. Cada uno de ellos prefería imponer a los demás su experiencia personal de Él y sus propias interpretaciones de Isaías sobre los demás.

Esto no difiere de la práctica actual entre los líderes gubernamentales, los activistas políticos, los líderes económicos

de las corporaciones multinacionales y los ideólogos dentro de los principales medios de comunicación y las redes sociales para incitarnos a cada uno de nosotros como individuos a universalizar la experiencia privada e imponer esta agenda a las religiones organizadas y sus adeptos bajo la rúbrica de lo que ellos llaman “globalismo”. Esto resulta en la absolutización del relativismo, la tiranía del pensamiento y expresión, que se impone como una cultura de cancelación (“cancel culture”) sobre los miembros ungidos y fieles del Cuerpo de Cristo, la Iglesia por la cual Cristo derramó Su sangre y murió.

Esta melancólica incompreensión de la realidad ha suplantado también el estado de derecho en nuestra sociedad con un nihilismo que engendra ideologías políticas que reemplazan a la religión en la vida de muchos. Este nihilismo ha sido promovido por la élite de este mundo con fervor mesiánico, incluso entre los católicos bautizados que se presentan para recibir la Sagrada Comunión. Ellos han creado una doctrina peculiar de narcisismo que los exime de las obligaciones de la caridad y los vínculos de la verdadera comunión.

Se pueden citar otros ejemplos. Visiten cualquier campus universitario (incluidas las universidades católicas) donde el Evangelio no se defiende como la verdad liberadora de la redención del mundo, y es probable que encuentren lo siguiente: la incoherencia intelectual, la degradación moral, la intolerancia a la auténtica libertad de pensamiento y de expresión, la incitación al odio entre personas de diferentes razas, la ideología disfrazada de ciencia, la promoción del aborto como un derecho humano esencial y un bien positivo, el afán misionero por la anarquía y la persecución creciente del

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cristianismo en el centro mismo de la vida institucional. Todo esto se impone con implacable eficiencia por los maestros y administradores que han comprometido sus vidas con la proposición de que no existe tal cosa como la verdad y que, por todos los medios disponibles, buscan persuadir o coaccionar a sus alumnos para que repudien las supuestas supersticiones de su infancia, comenzando con la fe. De alguna forma, y hasta cierto punto, esta misma desintegración está operando en cada institución de nuestra vida nacional, incluidas las fuerzas armadas y nuestras agencias nacionales de inteligencia.

Sin embargo, predicamos con alegría a Cristo Jesús crucificado como el cumplimiento pleno de la Antigua Alianza. Él es el óleo de la alegría que impregna nuestro ministerio sacerdotal. No podemos conformarnos con la mera familiaridad con Jesús como el hijo del carpintero. Lo que predicamos es el carácter universal del Evangelio y de la misión mesiánica de Jesucristo de que todos somos asimismo humanos, igualmente sujetos a la ley de Dios, e igualmente y eternamente responsables ante Dios que nos ama y nos ordena amar a nuestro prójimo, así como amarlo a Él. Esta verdad nos lleva a reconocer que nuestra humanidad creada está medida y estructurada por la ley natural; y que mediante la gracia es responsable de lo que la enseñanza auténtica del Evangelio de la Iglesia llama las cuatro últimas cosas: la muerte, el juicio, el cielo y el infierno. Estas últimas cuatro cosas fijan el horizonte eterno de la responsabilidad del amor incondicional.

Nuestro ministerio sacramental y nuestra predicación sacerdotal, para los que fuimos ordenados y ungidos con el

santo crisma, proporcionan los medios de gracia para reorientar nuestra mente, nuestro corazón y nuestros hábitos de conducta, y los del pueblo que pastoreamos en la persona de Cristo, Cabeza y Pastor de la Iglesia, hacia la bienaventuranza del cielo.

La ley natural pone un cerco contra nuestros deseos desordenados de lujuria e ira. Las últimas cuatro cosas nos hacen responsables eternamente de nuestra obediencia amorosa o nuestra desobediencia egoísta a los Diez Mandamientos y al Sermón de la Montaña de Cristo. Los seres humanos son creados a imagen y semejanza de Dios no como ángeles atrapados en cuerpos, sino como una unidad de cuerpo y alma de tal manera que ambas dimensiones de esta unidad, el cuerpo y el alma, están intrínsecamente relacionadas entre sí y son esenciales para la naturaleza humana que todos compartimos independientemente de nuestra raza, etnia, idioma o de si nuestro sexo biológico es masculino o femenino. Estas verdades esenciales se han subestimado por demasiado tiempo en nuestra predicación y otros aspectos de nuestra vida y en el ministerio sacerdotal, incluso en nuestros ministerios de caridad y ayuda, en nuestras escuelas y los planes de estudio de nuestra catequesis.

Nos reunimos en la Misa Crismal para bendecir los óleos sacramentales: el Óleo de los Catecúmenos, el Óleo de los Enfermos y el Santo Crisma. Éstos serán utilizados en nuestro ministerio sacerdotal para unguir al pueblo de Dios con el gozo del Evangelio de Jesucristo. Las distintas unciones con estos tres óleos bendecidos impartirán primero fuerza a los catecúmenos para renunciar al pecado y al espejismo del mal. En segundo lugar, aliviarán a los enfermos



y dolientes del temor, para poder recibir el consuelo de la fe. Y, en tercer lugar, impregnarán a los fieles del olor fragante del Evangelio, de la bendita presencia del Ungido, nuestro Señor Jesucristo.

Nos reunimos en la Misa Crismal como hermanos, sacerdotes y obispo, presentes con los fieles a los que servimos, para renovar las promesas de nuestra ordenación cuando fuimos ungidos e imbuidos del óleo de la alegría y la dulce fragancia de la santidad. Lo hacemos como sacerdotes, tanto diocesanos como religiosos consagrados, miembros del presbiterio de esta Iglesia local de Fort Worth y miembros en comunión con la Iglesia Universal fundada por Cristo mismo sobre la Roca de Pedro, no como seguidores ciegos seculares de una organización global y multinacional. Nos reunimos como obispo y presbíteros que tenemos diferentes procedencias nacionales y que hablamos distintos idiomas, pero todos unidos como hermanos por el hecho de que Jesucristo nos llamó a cada uno de nosotros y nos sigue dando su gracia para perseverar a lo largo de nuestros años de servicio sacerdotal. Como el presbiterio de esta Iglesia local, es esencial y digno de elogio que nos reunamos con frecuencia y nos animemos unos a otros con la palabra, las obras y, muy especialmente, con la oración, para escuchar y servir a la comunidad del Pueblo de Dios que se nos ha confiado.

El Papa San Juan Pablo II escribió a sus hermanos sacerdotes en el 1987: “La oración es esencial para mantener la sensibilidad pastoral a todo lo que viene del Espíritu, para discernir correctamente y emplear adecuadamente los carismas que conducen a la unión y están vinculados al servicio sacerdotal en la Iglesia. Porque es la tarea de los sacerdotes “reunir” al Pueblo de Dios, no dividirlo... el sacerdote, administrador de los misterios de Dios, es verdaderamente él mismo cuando lo es para los demás. La oración le da una sensibilidad especial hacia estos otros,

haciéndolo atento a sus necesidades, a sus vidas y a su destino. La oración le permite también al sacerdote reconocer a aquéllos que el Padre le ha dado. Éstos son, en primer lugar, los que el Buen Pastor ha colocado en el camino de nuestro ministerio sacerdotal y bajo nuestro cuidado pastoral”.

Hermanos sacerdotes, queridos diáconos y religiosos, y fieles laicos católicos, todos bautizados y ungidos como pueblo sacerdotal de Dios, estamos entrando en un tiempo oscuro en el que la injusticia se llama libertad y la blasfemia se toma como una señal de sofisticación. Un tiempo en el que los proponentes de estos puntos de vista exigen no nuestro respeto y tolerancia, sino nuestra capitulación moral y espiritual, y donde figuras públicas e incluso eclesiales con alta responsabilidad ya no están dispuestas a admitir la diferencia biológica entre el hombre y la mujer, y mucho menos, el propósito y la dignidad del matrimonio entre un hombre y una mujer.

Estamos en un tiempo oscuro que exige que admitamos que la civilización cristiana pertenece al pasado, y en que los que creen que Jesucristo es el Hijo del Dios viviente son ridiculizados como fanáticos ignorantes. Es nuestro privilegio y responsabilidad proclamar y enseñar la plenitud del Evangelio con claridad y caridad. Así, la Iglesia en la que hemos sido ordenados y ungidos para servir, vuelve a las circunstancias del primer siglo como minoría perseguida. Esto también es gracia de Dios para que con valentía demos testimonio de la Luz en las tinieblas y prediquemos con alegría la verdad del Evangelio mediante nuestra imitación de Jesucristo, que vino no a ser servido sino para servir. ✝

Esto fue adaptado de la homilía del Obispo Olson en la Misa Crismal del 12 de abril de 2022.

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,

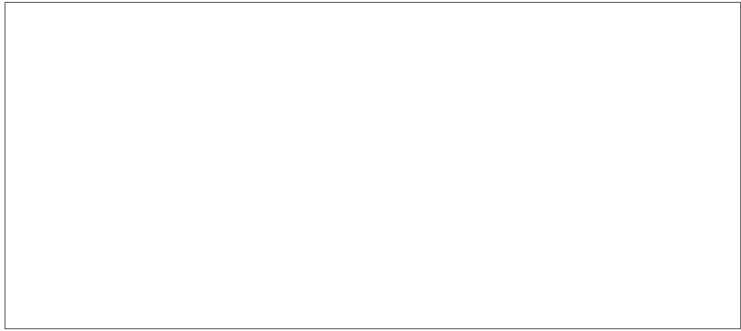
Si alguien está en peligro
▶ inmediato, llame al 911

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





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