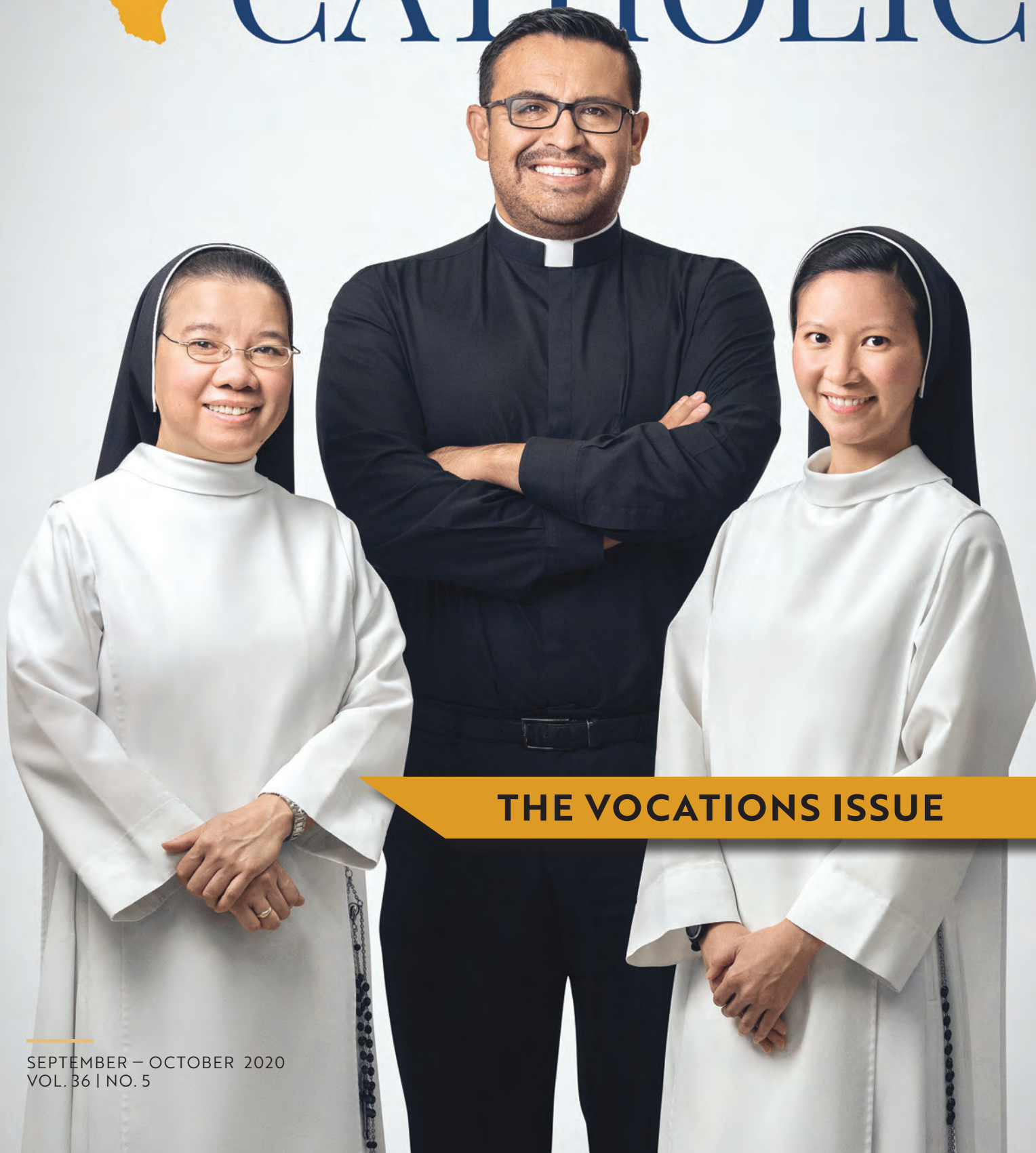


BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



THE VOCATIONS ISSUE

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2020
VOL. 36 | NO. 5

Founded by a Priest
Dedicated to the Church
Beatified on
October 31st, 2020

Father McGivney
created the Knights to
help you and your
Catholic family.



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FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP AND CONSCIENCE FORMATION

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



 @BpOlsonFW

Last January I had the opportunity to travel to Rome with the other bishops of Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas for our *Ad Limina* visit to pray at the tombs of the Apostles and martyrs, to discuss the ongoing mission of the Gospel in our respective dioceses, and to meet with the Holy Father. In that meeting the Holy Father offered us some wise counsel about the formation of consciences of the faithful, especially regarding political responsibility of citizenship.

Pope Francis counseled, “First pray, and then counsel the people to pray for wisdom; then articulate as bishops, who are Successors of the Apostles, what Christ teaches in the Gospel and in the Deposit of Faith handed down faithfully throughout the centuries; pray some more and do not tell people for what party or candidate to vote, especially when they demand that you do so.”

It is my observation that many people frequently omit the first and essential aspect of conscience formation: prayer centered on Christ and within the Holy Spirit. When people omit this essential step, they soon reduce the integrity of the Gospel in its totality to a series of fragmented issues, that while good in themselves, permit the person to rationalize ignoring other issues that are just as essential to the Gospel and inherent to the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of the Triune God. Soon, our partisan preferences begin to take on the characteristic of the religion that grasps our hearts instead of the fullness of the Gospel revealed in Jesus Christ and passed down faithfully by the Church through the Magisterium and the ministry of the college of bishops in union with the Vicar of Christ.

There exists a throne in our heart for Christ to be seated in sovereignty. If we do not invite Him to take His rightful place there, something else will. Without Christ as central to our lives through prayer and study, any other value or issue, no matter how inherently good, can soon become a false idol that will dominate us.

Authentic prayer to Christ as guided by the Holy Spirit saves us from adopting a stance of relativism by developing the virtue

of prudence within our character. It is through prudence that we recognize intrinsically good actions as distinguishable from actions that are intrinsically evil. It is also through prudence that we can recognize when circumstances make an intrinsically good action into a bad one. If we practice prudence, imbued by grace from God, and which we have cultivated and nurtured through prayer and good works, then we can rest assured that every good action has the underlying goal of love of God and neighbor. Therefore, “prudential issues” in politics should never be simplified as being optional or expendable when compared with other issues that are always and everywhere imperative.

We can see that we have the civic responsibility to vote with a well-formed conscience but our civic responsibility also extends beyond simply casting a vote. It is also always our Catholic responsibility to pray charitably for our elected officials — especially if they are not our preference. It includes holding our elected officials accountable; it includes paying our taxes; it includes service on our part in supporting social but non-governmental actions for helping our vulnerable neighbors; and it includes a disposition of gratitude and respect for those people willing to sacrifice by serving the common good through holding elected office.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “It is part of the Church’s mission to pass moral judgments even in matters related to politics whenever the fundamental rights of man or the salvation of souls requires it (2246).” This election concerns so many fundamental human rights: above all the right to life and other essential human rights dependent on the right to life. As your bishop, I ask you to pray for guidance, to visit the USCCB website on Faithful Citizenship [bit.ly/CatholicVoters], and to please vote. 🇺🇸

EDITOR’S NOTE: Read more from Bishop Olson on faithful citizenship and conscience formation in the next issue.

IN THIS ISSUE

September - October 2020

12 BIGGER PICTURE

Donors support the whole diocese in the Annual Diocesan Appeal.

20 LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

The St. Vincent de Paul Society offers material, spiritual support.

24 PATH TO SEMINARY

Seminarian parents accompany sons on journey to the priesthood.

34 RAYS OF HOPE

The Vietnamese Dominicans inspire and educate their students.

38 NURSE NANCY

Catholic School students and infirm priests have a health advocate.

ON THE COVER

Sr. Catherine Mary, Fr. Pedro Martinez, and Sr. Mary Vincent (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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

HAVE A STORY IDEA?

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



46

COVER STORY

For the first time in 11 years, the Diocese of Fort Worth ordained permanent deacons – 24 of them!



16 PADRE PEDRO



30 SCHOOL DAYS



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

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LOST IN TRANSLATION

In 1877, the Italian astronomer and scientist Giovanni Schiaparelli caught the attention of the world when he announced his observation of seas, continents, and *canali* on the surface of Mars.

Unfortunately for science, the term *canali* (meaning “channels” in Italian), was wrongly translated as “canals” by English-speaking astronomers. Canals, after all, are human-made enterprises (think the canals of Venice). This incorrect translation led to decades of speculation and hypothesis about intelligent life on the Red Planet. Eventually, that galactic guffaw was set straight by researchers in the early ‘60s.

What can we learn from this? Many of us, myself included, at times struggle with an inaccurate notion of God. Like the example above, somehow His love and mercy for us gets lost in translation. We can fall into the trap that God does *not* love us but merely *tolerates* us. Father Mike Schmitz discusses this in *How to Make Great Decisions*, his recently released book. That misunderstood, or mistranslated, image of God could not be further from the truth, and it has huge implications for how we live our lives, for how we fulfill our vocation — our universal call to be holy by conforming our wills to God’s will.

“One of the dangers in that way of thinking is we conclude that God always wants us to do the hardest thing,” Fr. Mike states. “Whatever thing I don’t want to do, that must be what God wants me to do. This is a lot of people’s default.”

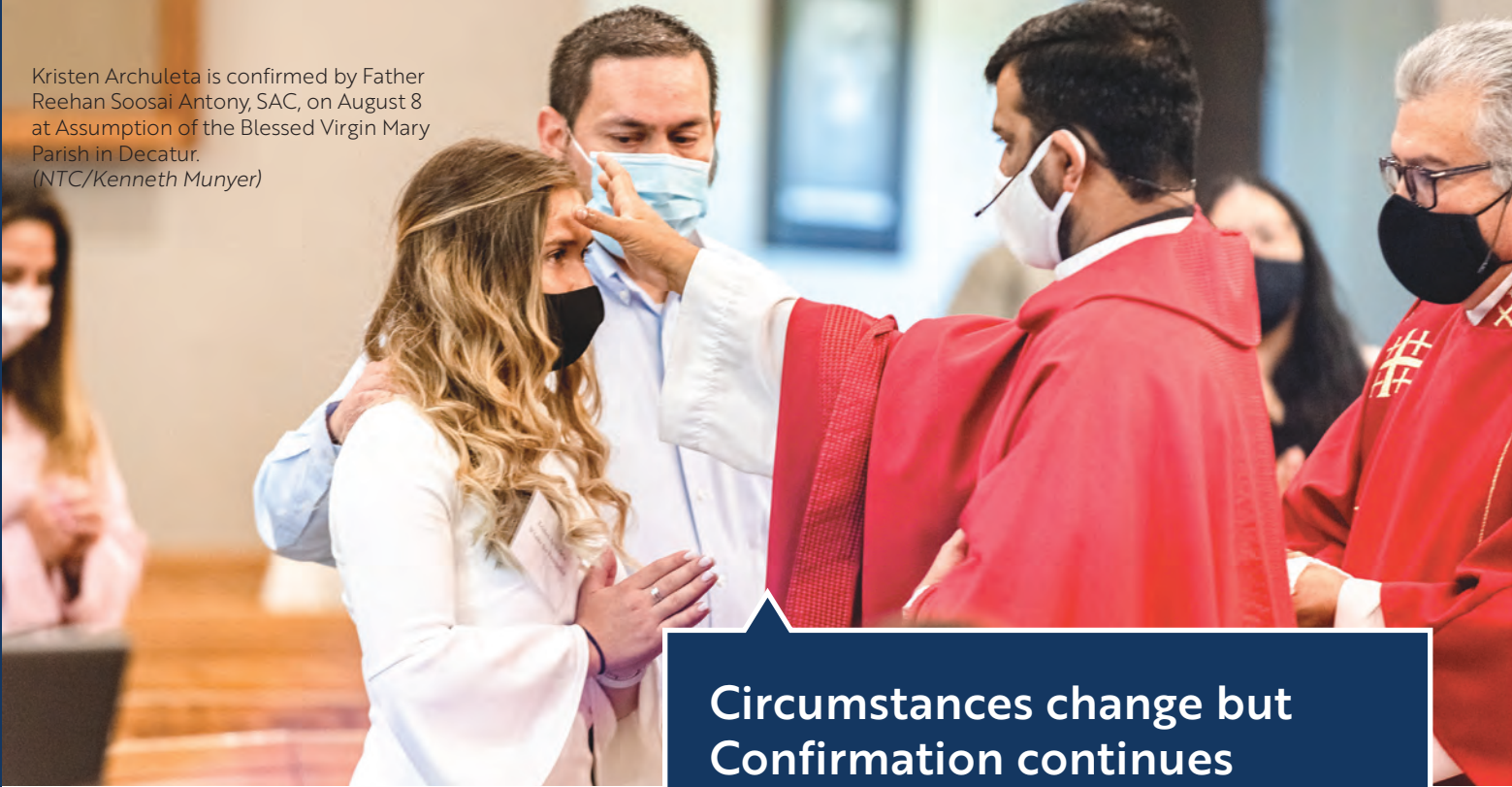
If we’ve miscast God as an angry tyrant rather than a loving father, we make our day-to-day decisions out of fear rather than love and joy. This leads to a life lived with anxiety, mistrust, and dread. God does not want that for us! God, in His true image, is a loving Father, who wants the best for us. We bring Him joy when we take steps that bring us joy. Yes, He might still call us to do something hard or inconvenient, and we may still have to deny ourselves, but with a correct image of God, we’ll want to do it, so as to “please my Father’s heart” as Fr. Mike puts it.

Let us devote ourselves to prayer and steadfast reliance on the Holy Spirit so we can trust and love God as a good Father. That way, each day we’ll be able to ask, “God, what do you want me to do? What would please you?” And we won’t fear that He’ll demand the worst, most difficult, and awful thing from us. No, instead we’ll recognize that the thing that will bring us the most joy, freedom, and fulfillment is what God wants.

Fortunately for us, the Schiaparelli mistranslation was a goldmine, leading the likes of H.G. Wells and Edgar Rice Burroughs to produce some of the earliest great sci-fi works. Similarly, if you find that you have a mistranslation of who God is, don’t worry. Turn the page trusting He will bring a greater good out of it.

Juan Guajardo, Editor

Kristen Archuleta is confirmed by Father Reehan Soosai Antony, SAC, on August 8 at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Decatur. (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)



Tracie Quan promoted to diocesan controller

FORT WORTH — The Diocese of Fort Worth has promoted veteran accountant Tracie Quan to the position of controller, a role that puts her in charge of all accounting functions for the diocese.

Quan, a certified public accountant, said the role of controller brings something new every day, something she enjoys in her work at the diocese.

“There’s always different things going on when you’ve got 91 parishes and 19 schools, the [Catholic] Center, and the Advancement Foundation that you’re trying to keep track of,” Quan said. “And, people coming from all

those different directions asking questions and needing direction, so there’s really not a day that’s the same.”

Quan joined the Finance and Administrative Services staff as an internal auditor in August 2018 and has performed detailed compliance audits of parishes and schools during

that time.

Quan said her auditing background helps her in her new role. She said, “You really need to know what’s in the weeds because whatever’s there is what’s going to be on your financial statements.”

— Lance Murray



Tracie Quan

Circumstances change but Confirmation continues

DECATUR — Despite a few changes due to the coronavirus pandemic, on August 8 at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Fr. Reehan Antony, SAC, confirmed more than 40 teens from the tri-parish community of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Decatur; St. Mary in Jaksboro; and St. John the Baptizer in Bridgeport.

Anna Boyles, the director of religious education for all three parishes, said that when group meetings ceased in March, they distributed a backpack of resources with a Bible, a youth catechism, and other materials to all the Confirmation candidates. Students, their parents, and sponsors, when available, prepared together.

Another adaptation due to coronavirus was to limit attendance to the confirmandi, their sponsors, and their parents due to occupancy restrictions. Others watched the Mass livestreamed on the tri-parish Facebook page.

Often, the bishop

administers the sacrament of Confirmation, but because of the pandemic, Bishop Michael Olson instructed priests to confirm the youth.

“We kept the original date,” said Boyles. “We were a little disappointed, but we reassured the students and parents that the sacrament is still valid [when administered by a priest].”

Keeping the sacramental life of the Church as normal as possible during the pandemic is a sign of hope the Pallottine priest wanted to share with his congregations. “We want to give confidence that the Church is here for you. Be joyful; don’t be anxious or worried,” he said.

Fr. Antony prefers Confirmation with the bishop, explaining, “When the bishop comes, he makes the sacrament even more special.”

Boyles, the director of religious education, said the circumstances were different but the timing was right, because “those confirmed are our present and our future.”



Father Vijaya Mareedu, SAC, gives the Holy Eucharist to a parishioner at St. Francis Xavier in Eastland. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Eastland's St. Francis Parish reaches milestone

EASTLAND — The terms “tight-knit community” and “service minded” arise again and again when Father Vijaya “VJ” Mareedu, SAC, and others at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Eastland are asked about their parish and town.

“During my 20 years here, I’ve always found St. Francis a very welcoming church and everyone here very approachable,” parishioner Janie Ortiz said. “Fr. VJ knows us all and is always there for whatever we’re going through.”

Deacon Ed Ferguson, who has served the parish for about four years, shared similar sentiments in discussing the parish situated in the far-western reaches of the Diocese of Fort Worth.

“Eastland’s a very thriving, very close-knit community,” Dcn. Ferguson said. “It’s a community and parish of hard-working people who do a lot to reach out and help each other. It’s a parish and community of people walking in the footsteps of

Jesus Christ.”

Fr. VJ and others are excited that 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of St. Francis Xavier Parish. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic delayed a planned July 18 Mass to be concelebrated by Bishop Michael Olson.

A simple, white wooden building with a cross atop its steeple, the original church still stands, holding 20 pews and seating for 125. Renovations through the years added side altars, a parish hall, a rectory, a building for classrooms, and a grotto donated by parishioners in 2015 dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

“Still having, essentially, the original building is a source of pride to our parishioners,” Fr. VJ said.

Though the church remains small, its vibrant majority-Hispanic congregation is big in heart, Dcn. Ferguson said, adding that parishioners are very active, with many youth and families.

— Matthew Smith

Rachel Ministries hosts virtual retreat

FORT WORTH — Experts say spiritual trauma caused by abortion affects men and women, young and old, often leading to grief, shame, and depression that can last decades. To help those women and men — even during a pandemic — Rachel’s Vineyard Ministries will host its first ever virtual retreat Sept. 11 – 13.

Lisa Jones, a retreat team member in Fort Worth, is no stranger to that pain. She attended the retreat in 2010 after suffering in silence for years about her decision to abort a baby when she was 18. Today she helps others find relief.

Betsy Kopor, coordinator of Rachel Ministries for the Fort Worth Diocese, has worked with

post-abortive women and men for more than 20 years. Kopor herself went through an abortion and the hell it wrought before finding the healing of Rachel Ministries and making it her life’s work to help other women recover from abortion.

“There is a licensed counselor to help work through the guilt. We also have a priest and a facilitator,” Kopor said.

For more information or to enroll, call a confidential helpline at 817-923-4757. The cost, normally \$150, is reduced to \$50.

“But we want to stress, if someone does not have the money, no one misses it because of lack of money,” Kopor said.

— Susan McFarland

According to the Texas Fair Lending Alliance, from 2012 to 2017 Texans paid \$9.2 billion in fees alone for high-cost loans. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Protections against predatory lending rescinded

FORT WORTH — Forced to retire early from teaching so she could care for an elderly relative, Debbie found herself unable to pay a mounting stack of rent and utility bills. Although the interest rate for borrowing the money was 300 to 400 percent, the convenience and temporary reprieve from late notices was enticing.

Rather than help her finances, the loan only added to her debt load and stress level. Many times, borrowers pay more in interest and fees than the amount they borrow because the loan isn't paid in full when it's due.

It's a predicament facing thousands of U.S. consumers, especially in Texas, where few protections exist.

And relief from predatory practices isn't coming soon. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) issued its final rule on small-dollar lending this summer. The decision, condemned by the Texas Fair Lending Alliance, the Christian Life

Commission, and the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops, rescinds national protections that could help consumers avoid a cycle of debt. Finalized in 2017, "ability-to-pay" safeguards were established after five years of in-depth research by the CFPB. But they were removed in July's amended ruling "to maintain consumer access to credit and competition in the marketplace," the federal agency announced in a press release.

Starting in 2016, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has helped individuals pay off the current balance of a payday or title loan by qualifying for a very low-interest conversion loan.

More than 100 borrowers, including Debbie, have participated in the parish-based Mini Loan Conversion Program since its inception, with some receiving bonus money for repaying the loan and completing financial counseling.

—Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Gabe Gutierrez named TCU campus minister

FORT WORTH — In the Texas Christian University Newman Center, Gabe Gutierrez is getting acclimated to his new office and position as TCU campus minister.

With a passion for reaching out to the marginalized, Gutierrez hopes to help others feel loved by God.

Previously, Gutierrez served 11 years as youth minister at several parishes in the diocese, including St. Ann in Burleson, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller, and Good Shepherd in Colleyville. According to him, "there's a lot of overlap" between youth ministry and campus ministry — but also some

important differences. "The independence that a person in college is learning how to manage is quite different than the independence that a teenager in high school is dealing with."

"Gabe brings really strong organizational skills and also a desire to really get to know the students personally and to help

lead them to a deeper life of faith," said Father Jonathan Wallis, Vicar General. Fr. Wallis worked with Gutierrez at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and will work with him at TCU, where Fr. Wallis was named chaplain.

—Kiki Hayden



Gabe Gutierrez

Fr. Assaad ElBasha blesses the congregation of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Lewisville. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Beirut blast hits close to home for Lewisville pastor

LEWISVILLE — The explosion of ammonium nitrate that leveled Beirut, Lebanon, killing about 180 people and injuring thousands more on August 4, hit close to home for Maronite Father Assaad ElBasha, pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Lewisville.

Members of his immediate family were attending a niece's wedding in a north Lebanon mountain village when the blast, which registered as a 3.3 magnitude earthquake, started toppling buildings. Originally planned as a large celebration with 500 guests, the ceremony had been downsized and moved to a remote location because of the coronavirus pandemic. His relatives escaped injury, but their homes, like most residences in Beirut, were heavily damaged or destroyed.

"My brother, sister-in-law, and nephew work in the American hospital in Beirut, and they use the road where the explosion happened,"

explained the pastor. "This wedding saved my family."

Grateful for the blessing, Fr. ElBasha and his parish are joining an international effort to raise funds for Catholic and Christian families "who lost everything in the beautiful capital city of Beirut." Maronite Catholics are the largest Christian denomination in Lebanon.

"It looks like a nuclear bomb was dropped," said the Lebanese-born priest. "It turned Beirut into an apocalyptic city."

As soon as news of the explosion reached the U.S., Fr. ElBasha began fielding phone calls from worried parishioners with relatives in Beirut.

As Lebanese Catholics struggle to rebuild, assistance from fellow Catholics is particularly important.

Fr. ElBasha explained. "In this time of crisis, we need to be [good] Samaritans and help each other."

— Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

OFFICIAL ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL F. OLSON

REV. MIGUEL ANGEL GONZALEZ-LOPEZ, TOR

Pastor of All Saints Parish in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Jude the Apostle Parish in Mansfield, effective Sept. 5.

REV. ERIC GRONER, SVD

Pastor of St. Rita Parish in Fort Worth, has been recalled by his religious order, effective August 1.

REV. ANGEL INFANTE HERNANDEZ, TOR

Parochial Vicar of All Saints Parish in Fort Worth, has been recalled by his religious order, effective Sept. 5.

REV. MANUEL HOLGUIN

Pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Pastor** of All Saints Parish in Fort Worth, effective Sept. 5.

REV. STEPHEN JASSO, TOR

Remains **Parochial Vicar** of All Saints Parish.

REV. THU NGUYEN

Pastor of St. Jude the Apostle Parish in Mansfield, has been appointed **Director of Liturgy and Worship** for the diocese, effective Sept. 5.

REV. VIJAYA MAREEDU, SAC

Parochial Administrator of St. Rita Parish in Ranger; Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco; St. Francis Xavier Parish in Eastland; and St. John Parish in Strawn, has been appointed **Pastor** of same parishes, effective July 20.

REV. SIPRIANUS OLA ROTOK, SVD

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, appointed **Pastor** of St. Rita Parish in Fort Worth, effective August 1.

STOP HUMAN trafficking



Dallas-Fort Worth is a major hub for human trafficking, and here's how to fight it

By Sandra Engelland

Stopping human trafficking through education and smart interventions is the goal of a new program in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

On July 9, Dr. Kim Robinson, a counseling psychologist and parishioner at Holy Family Church in Fort Worth, gave a virtual presentation, "Innocence Lost to Human Trafficking," to about 40 local faithful via the Zoom platform.

Because of sustained interest, Dr. Robinson has repeated the presentation multiple times. The next videoconference is scheduled on Sept. 17.

"Human trafficking is a modern way to say slavery," said Robinson. "This industry makes \$150 billion a year for traffickers."

Under United States law, human trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts, labor, or service against his or her will. An

exception is made for a minor lured into commercial sex, which is considered human trafficking regardless of the presence of force, fraud, or coercion.

Most victims are found and trafficked within the country where they live, and large metropolitan areas on the coasts and in Texas are the primary hubs, Robinson said.

Sandra Schrader-Farry, Director of Safe Environment for the diocese, said, "I thought it was important to address it because of the problem it is in our community on the I-35 corridor. We're a hub of human trafficking. The more we can spread awareness and inform people, the better able we are to combat it."

Before COVID-19 and the stay-at-home orders, officials planned to offer the informational program at different locations across the diocese, and the intention is to offer it in-person in the future, Schrader-Farry said.

Participants in the July 9 program learned about the drivers behind sex trafficking, what to look for in traffickers and victims, how to talk to others about the dangers, and how to help.

Trafficking increases around conventions and major sporting events. About 15 percent of men buy commercial sex, and most are never prosecuted. More than 40 million people worldwide are victims of trafficking: 80 percent are female, 70 percent are sexually exploited, and half of all victims are children.

Children who run away from home are particularly vulnerable, Robinson said, with one out of three lured into sex trafficking.

Victims often are lured by a romantic partner or the promise of high-paying jobs. Another danger sign is a young person who develops too close of a relationship online with someone they've never met. If things look too good to be true, that should raise a red flag.

Traffickers use false promises, debt bondage, taking earnings, physical or sexual abuse, threats, and psychoactive substances to control victims, Robinson said.

"Methods used to control in domestic violence are also used in trafficking," she said.

Some victims are trafficked within their own communities, still attending school and living at home.

Getting victims out of trafficking can be difficult and dangerous. If you see signs of trafficking, Robinson advised calling police or contacting the National Human Trafficking Hotline, and not attempting to intervene on your own.

She also encouraged parents and adults who work with children to have age-appropriate discussions about trafficking and what situations to avoid, in order to prevent becoming a victim. Teens should also get parents' help to make sure employment opportunities are safe and legitimate.

Parents can make use of apps on their children's phones to track their movements and should monitor internet usage.

Robinson recommended that parishioners donate to organizations dedicated to fighting human trafficking and volunteer for local groups that assist victims. National organizations include Shared Hope International and the National

Human Trafficking Hotline. Locally, Refuge for Women — North Texas, Traffick 911, and Unbound Fort Worth are among the groups working with victims.

Victims need help with immediate protection, safe housing, medical care, food, trauma counseling, long-term employment, legal services, and ongoing mental healthcare, Robinson said.

In addition to programs for parents and concerned adults, Robinson has given presentations to hotel workers, truckers, and others who are likely to come across trafficking. She also has been an instructor in the diocese's "Protecting God's Children" Safe Environment program and was one of the first facilitators trained to educate others on child sexual abuse.

"As I began to look at what was happening in our area, I saw that child sex trafficking is a huge problem," she said.

Nancy Mitchell, Assistant Director of Safe Environment, helped coordinate the new program on human trafficking.

Mitchell said, "I felt it was important that the diocese and the community at large know it's an issue, and that the DFW Metroplex is a hub." 🇺🇸



Dr. Kim Robinson (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Innocence Lost to Human Trafficking

Kim Robinson, Ph.D., licensed psychologist, presents the next Zoom videoconference on stopping human trafficking on **Thursday, September 17 at 6 p.m.** It will cover:

- Why Dallas-Fort Worth is one of the most highly trafficked areas
- Signs of recruitment
- How traffickers control their victims
- What each of us can do to stop human trafficking

Register at fwdioc.org/supplemental-presentations. For more information on future presentations, contact Mitchell at nmitchell@fwdioc.org.

THE bigger PICTURE

Donating to the Annual Diocesan Appeal
keeps rural parishes open,
educates young Catholics,
and takes Christ's love to the margins

By Susan Moses

When Father Joy Joseph, TOR, applied for a parish operating grant from the Advancement Foundation, he wasn't just thinking about his current parish, Holy Cross in The Colony. He also kept in mind his former parish, Holy Family of Nazareth in Vernon.

The pastor asked for a smaller amount for suburban Holy Cross than in the previous three years, because "I know the rural parishes struggle, especially at this time [of the pandemic]. They might not have online giving. They are hurting financially, so we are better off asking for a smaller amount," said the Franciscan friar.

That's the spirit of the Annual Diocesan Appeal — thinking beyond your individual parish to the entire diocese.

Each year, faithful in the Diocese of Fort Worth contribute funds that support the people, programs, schools, and parishes of the diocese as a whole. During the 2020 campaign which ended in June, more than 11,000 families donated over \$3.5 million, the largest amount raised in the Appeal's 37-year history.

More than \$1 million of the funds are disbursed to parishes and schools as operating grants through the Advancement Foundation.

For example, Fr. Joseph requested a grant to pay for part of the salary of his director of religious education (DRE). Having a DRE in the parish of 1,200

families means "parents are happy that their children are taught religious education. Every parent wants their children to be growing in faith and knowing Christ and the teachings of the Church," said Fr. Joseph.

Karen da Costa, the Holy Cross DRE, does much more than coordinate religious education for children. The parish has a lean staff, so da Costa's responsibilities also include preparing children and adults to receive the sacraments, supervising RCIA for children and adults, facilitating Safe Environment sessions and keeping records, scheduling, and maintaining the parish's website, Facebook page, and Flocknote account.

With Fr. Joseph's encouragement, Holy Cross parishioners donated 110



Father Joy Joseph celebrates daily Mass at Holy Cross Parish in The Colony. (NTC/Ben Torres)



percent of the parish's goal to the Appeal in 2020. He urged "everyone to be part of the bigger goal. By giving, you can say 'I am part of the big picture.'"

Last year, 29 parishes received operating grants totaling \$873,000. This year, \$949,200 will be disbursed among 33 rural or needy parishes.

THE NEXT GENERATION

If the Church did not hand on the faith from one generation to the next, she would cease to exist.

To provide a solid foundation for the next generation of Catholics, the Annual Diocesan Appeal makes Catholic education a priority. A large percentage of donations fund seminarian education, the formation of permanent deacons, and

tuition assistance for families at each of the 19 Catholic schools in the diocese.

This year, 12 of the schools, in addition to tuition assistance, received operating grants, including St. Martin de Porres in Prosper and Notre Dame Catholic School in Wichita Falls.

According to Principal Susan Flanagan of St. Martin de Porres, the grant's timing was providential. The newest diocesan school, which opened in 2012, received funds to assist with the salary of a full-time nurse.

Until this school year, the front office staff served as the school's health representative, tracking immunizations and dispensing medication according to instructions, explained Flanagan.

However, a few students had allergies

severe enough to require the school to keep EpiPens in case of allergic emergencies. Also, by earning state accreditation in October 2019, the school became subject to more rigorous documentation of immunization records, including the possibility of an audit.

Last fall, Flanagan began looking at the budget to determine if they could hire a nurse. Part time looked feasible, but a diocesan grant would enable the position to be full time.

Then the coronavirus pandemic struck. "It's a huge weight off of my shoulders to have a knowledgeable medical professional on campus at all times," said the principal.

Continued on Page 14



Cindy Huckabee gets her third grade class ready for students at Notre Dame Catholic School in Wichita Falls. (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)

From Page 13

In addition to routine scrapes and sniffles, the newly hired nurse will track recommendations and guidelines regarding coronavirus from various public health organizations and the Texas Education Agency.

“There’s all these different scenarios: if someone is in contact with someone; if someone’s sick on campus. You really need someone whose job it is to make sure we’re doing things the right way,” said the principal, who noted health advisories are updated frequently.

For a school still establishing a stable enrollment and financial footing, the support of the Annual Diocesan Appeal is essential.

The principal explained, “The diocese, not only with the grant for the nurse but with the Advancement Foundation’s generosity regarding tuition assistance, really helps us.

“We are so grateful to everyone in the diocese who donates to the Annual Appeal. I don’t know if everyone realizes what a great benefit it is to the schools. Catholic education is an important part of our Catholic faith,” Flanagan concluded.

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In addition to \$250,000 earmarked for tuition assistance, the Advancement Foundation will provide at least \$325,000 in operating grants to Catholic schools, almost doubling the \$175,000 given as school operating grants last year.

When school opened for Notre Dame Catholic School on August 10, the Wichita Falls school implemented its plan to restructure the junior high, which was developed over years with input from families, parishes, and the Catholic Schools Office. With a grant from the Advancement Foundation, they purchased a new science and math curriculum for junior high students.

“This is a big plus. It allows us to align our math and science studies from first through eighth grades,” said Daniel Escobedo, president (and alumnus) of Notre Dame. “This strengthens the academic integrity of the program and sets students up for academic success.”

He explained that teaching math and science principles with the same structure over eight years provides repetition that facilitates learning and “gets kids to excel.”

Escobedo acknowledged the “unbelievable expense” of new textbooks, which explains why it’s common for textbooks to be used for 10 or more years, “until they can’t stay together.”

Escobedo appreciates that parents, parishes, priests, Bishop Michael Olson, the Catholic Schools Office, and the Annual Diocesan Appeal have invested in the school, which dates to 1904. “Financially, spiritually, it’s truly a group effort,” he said.

The effort pays off in the years to come, he said. “The future of the Catholic community is in Catholic schools. It’s where the foundation is laid to go on to be faithful Catholics.”

FOUR TIMES THE FAITH

“Televised services will never, never replace being in one’s church and worshipping with others of like faith,” said Ann Mixson of St. John Parish in Strawn. That lesson crystalized for faithful across the diocese during the shelter-in-place restrictions this spring,

“Those of us who live in these tiny communities and love our local churches send a heartfelt ‘Thank You’ to the priests who never give up!”

Ann Mixson
St. John Parish, Strawn

when Mass was celebrated *sine populo* (without the people).

For small rural parishes like St. John, not having a priest to celebrate Mass and provide the sacraments has been a reality at times during its 108-year history.

Since July 2018, Father Vijaya Raju Mareedu, SAC, has brought three sacraments to St. John and three other rural parishes, thanks to funds donated to the Appeal. (Deacon Ed Ferguson and youth formation staff also benefit from the grant.)

The missionary priest, fondly known as Fr. VJ, celebrates the Saturday vigil Mass in Strawn. On Sunday, he celebrates Mass at St. Rita Parish in Ranger at 8 a.m. Next, he’s at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Eastland at 9:45 a.m., and he’ll arrive at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco by 11 a.m. Confessions and blessings may keep him busy until 1:30 p.m. “I never say ‘no’ to that,” said the Pallottine priest.

The pastor embraces the responsibility of four parishes.

He explained that these four parishes are some of the oldest in the diocese, established in their communities a century ago. His parishioners often were baptized, married, and raised their children in that church. “These are faithful, hardworking people,” he said.

Plus, many senior citizens are able to attend only because the parish is nearby, according to Fr. VJ.

Parishioner Mixson concurred, “These citizens are often unable to drive at all or to drive beyond their immediate neighborhoods. Without a church close by, many of the most deserving and devout Catholics would be unable to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.”

Fr. VJ is especially grateful for the grant this year, during the pandemic, when many are suffering economic loss and isolation. “When

Continued on Page 19



Father Vijaya Mareedu elevates the monstrance at Eastland’s St. Francis Xavier Parish, established in 1920. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Father Pedro
Martinez
and Bishop
Michael
Olson pose
for a photo
after the
ordination
Mass on
June 29.
(NTC/Juan
Guajardo)

SERVE LI CHRIS





Father Pedro Martinez is ordained a priest

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Standing before family and friends who gathered inside St. Matthew Church for his first Mass on June 30, newly ordained Father Pedro Martinez explained in Spanish, then English, how his parents supported his seven-year journey to the priesthood.

Bishop Michael Olson conferred the sacrament of Holy Orders on the former transitional deacon in St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church the previous evening, June 29.

“This is an important moment for me,” he said, pausing to look at Maria and Jose Martinez seated in the front pew of the church that was once his home parish. “I’m very grateful to my family for encouraging my vocation. I’ll continue to pray for them, and I hope they will continue to pray for me as well.”

The 34-year-old then presented his mother with the *manutergium* — a linen cloth used to wipe the hands of a new priest after a bishop anoints them with blessed chrism.

According to an old tradition many dioceses are now reviving, the mother is buried holding the hand towel so at the Last Judgment, everyone in heaven and on earth will know she’s the mother of a priest. When the Lord says, “I have given you life, what have you given me?” She responds, “I gave you my son, a priest.”

Jose Martinez was gifted his son’s first confessional stole. During the sacrament of Reconciliation, a person receives God’s justice, mercy, and love.

“Because a priest first learns about mercy and justice from his father, the gift is an appropriate one,” Fr. Martinez explained.

After embracing each one of his seven

Continued on Page 18

Brother priests pray over newly ordained Father Pedro Martinez during the ordination Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller. (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)



From Page 17

siblings, the devoted brother handed his five sisters and two brothers boxes containing a piece of his deacon stole.

“I want them to pray to the Lord to make me a servant like Jesus Christ and know that I came to serve and not be served,” he continued.

Many well-wishers who attended Fr. Martinez’ first Mass also came to his June 29 ordination. With social distancing and other safety protocols carefully enforced, more than 475 friends and family members watched from church pews as Bishop Olson raised Pedro Javier Martinez Rodriguez to the Sacred Order of the Priesthood during an ancient rite rich in symbolism. An overflow crowd viewed the ceremony in the parish gym and more than 1,300 people accessed the liturgy, livestreamed on the diocesan website, on home and mobile devices.

During the evening Mass, Bishop Michael Olson shared words of Scripture spoken to him at his ordination 26 years ago. “God’s flock is in your midst. Give it a shepherd’s care” (1 Pt 5:2).

“Protect the flock from both the wolf



Father Martinez celebrates Mass at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, where he was appointed parochial vicar. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

and the hireling,” the bishop advised, addressing the transitional deacon on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. “There is nothing better or more precious I could offer you on this joyful occasion.”

The bishop also encouraged the ordinand to “trust the Lord always,” and reminded him the prayers of the

Church helped bring him to the moment of ordination and his “yes” to the call of Christ.

During the most solemn, essential moment of the ordination rite, Bishop Olson silently laid hands on the head of Dcn. Martinez before offering the Prayer of Consecration to confer an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After receiving a stole

VIEW THE
PHOTOS

View the photo gallery of the ordination Mass. Visit NorthTexasCatholic.org and click on the 'Photo Gallery' tab.

and chasuble from Father Thu Nguyen and Father John McKone — men who played a significant role in his vocation — the newly ordained priest returned to the altar where the bishop anointed his hands with holy chrism. Originating in the Old Testament, the act of anointing with oil signifies a person is set apart for sacred duties.

Jose and Maria Martinez shed tears as their son became a priest forever.

"I'm so glad God blessed me in this way," Maria Martinez said emotionally. "*Estoy muy, muy contenta* (I'm very, very happy)."

Monica and Gisela Gonzalez met Pedro Martinez when they were all members of the youth group at St. Matthew Parish.

"We've known him for eight years and he's a great person and a great friend," explained Monica. "He's always been good with people and someone easy to talk to."

After arriving in the U.S. from Mexico, the sisters were put in the youth group by their mother who hoped the girls would meet people their own age while growing in faith.

"The friends we made then, like Pedro, are family to us," she continued. "This is an exciting day for him. We wanted to be here."

Fr. Martinez' journey to priestly ordination involved years of "praying and discerning," he told the *North*

Texas Catholic before the start of the liturgy.

Born in central Mexico, he came to Texas with his family as a 14-year-old and later earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Texas at Arlington. Before entering the seminary, the St. Matthew parishioner worked for the City of Arlington as a human services specialist.

His late uncle, a diocesan priest in Chihuahua, Mexico, was an early influence but the new padre credits former St. Matthew pastor Father Hector Medina for asking the thought-provoking question, "I see something in you. Would you like to be a priest?"

"The idea comes as a surprise — always, but I saw that priest as a role model and true shepherd," recalled the former parish youth group member. "I saw the way he cared for the people of God and it inspired me."

Assigned to serve as parochial vicar at St. Peter the Apostle in Fort Worth after ordination, Fr. Martinez is enthused about beginning the next chapter in his life.

"I'm really excited to be a priest for the people of God — to take care of their souls, their needs, and just be a representative of Christ to them on earth," he beamed. "Having friends and family here today is a blessing. We're ordained to serve people. Even in the midst of a pandemic, God is always with us." 🇺🇸

From Page 15

the faithful receive the Holy Eucharist, it brings hope. It connects us to God. We receive the sacraments; we receive God; we receive hope."

THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE

During this time when many are suffering financial hardship and social distancing recommendations create a sense of isolation, our hope remains constant, said Advancement Foundation Chief Operating Officer Renée Underwood, explaining this year's Appeal theme: The Reason for our Hope.

"A lot of things change, and a lot of things are uncertain, but Jesus Christ, and what He teaches, and His message — that's the reason for our hope," said Underwood. "We always have hope. It's the one truth. It's a constant."

Our hope in Christ inspires us to respond gratefully and generously in service and love. In this time of suffering, looking beyond ourselves brings us consolation and a feeling of gratitude, according to Underwood.

A case in point is Catholic Charities Fort Worth. More people are requesting help from the nonprofit, which will receive more than \$300,000 from the Appeal this year. "The needs of the people they serve have grown exponentially," said Underwood. "The needs are out there. The good and generous and faithful Catholics we have in the diocese will respond accordingly."

Catholic Charities Fort Worth is a longtime recipient of Appeal funding, along with prison ministry, college campus ministry, retired priests, and marriage and family life ministry. This year, Respect Life ministry, which has always been supported by the Annual Diocesan Appeal, will receive a significant boost over prior years.

With increased material and spiritual needs arising from the pandemic, the Advancement Foundation has added a prayer request form to the reply envelope. The Discalced Carmelite Nuns cloistered in the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity in Arlington will pray for those intentions throughout the year. Additionally, the intentions will be remembered by Bishop Olson during a special Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral.

Underwood encouraged Catholics to send prayer intentions regardless of whether a contribution is made to the Appeal.

Pledge cards will be mailed to all registered households in the diocese in mid-September, and online donations can be accepted currently at bit.ly/ADAdonate.

Fr. Joseph, pastor of Holy Cross, summed up his gratitude for the Appeal when he said, "The Annual Diocesan Appeal is a wonderful, wonderful opportunity for everyone in the diocese to reach out to the poor and the downtrodden in every corner of the diocese. This gives an opportunity for everyone who has a good heart to share the blessings they have received from God with someone who is less fortunate or who needs some help." 🇺🇸

LOVE THY neighbor

St. Vincent de Paul Society offers financial, material, and spiritual support

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Pat McMann listens with compassion as people tearfully explain why they can't pay the rent or fear having their electricity shut off. When the coronavirus pandemic reached North Texas last spring, those anxious calls increased.

"We hear about their needs as a friend in the comfort of their home," said the diocesan council president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, describing the organization's customary personal approach. "You learn so much more about a person than when you're sitting across from them at a desk."

During the pandemic, all conferences in the diocese suspended home visits and now rely on telephone interviews and technology to meet people and listen to requests for help.

Founded in 1833 by French law student Blessed Frederic Ozanam, the society has grown from a local charity reaching out to slum tenants in 19th century Paris to a multifaceted organization with a presence around the world. Remaining true to the society's motto, *serviens in spe* — to serve in hope

— volunteers perform acts of good will that not only help struggling neighbors with bills, food, and housing, but also contribute toward making communities a better place to live. Providing financial, material, and emotional support is always done with the intention of deepening everyone's faith.

"We see the face of Christ in the people we visit and hope they see the face of Christ in us," McMann explained.

The St. Vincent de Paul parishioner, who oversees 11 SVdP conferences in the Diocese of Fort Worth, has encountered various domestic scenarios since joining the society in 2005, but one experience stands out from the rest.

"We walked into the house and the first thing the husband told us was, 'I don't believe in God!'" she said, remembering the hostility that greeted her and a fellow Vincentian.

Unfazed by the cold reception, the visitors continued to ask questions about the couple's financial troubles and provided helpful information. They promised to pay their rent.

Every home visit ends with a short

GOOD NEIGHBORS: Vincentians from throughout the diocese are there when neighbors — Catholic or not — are in need of financial, spiritual, and emotional support. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

prayer and participation is voluntary.

"By that time the husband calmed down, looked at us, and murmured, 'maybe there is a God,'" McMann recounted.

The moment still gives her goosebumps.

"That's the importance of the person-to-person relationship instead of client to benefactor," she added. "The impact of sharing the love of Christ is far greater than any financial assistance we give."

HELPING PEOPLE THROUGH STRUGGLES

When the economic effects of the coronavirus reached Arlington in March, many of the people calling

Continued on Page 22





Ginnie Bucek, president of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference at St. Jude Church, speaks to a driver during a food drive outside of the parish in Mansfield earlier this summer. (NTC/Ben Torres)

From Page 20

Barbara Christoff were already on a financial ledge.

“We have a lot of neighbors who live paycheck to paycheck,” said the SVdP conference president at St. Vincent de Paul Parish. “When the pandemic hit, a lot of them were already behind. So, they became more behind.”

Service industry workers like Uber drivers, restaurant employees, and store clerks were especially affected.

“Some people had difficulty getting their unemployment benefits and were frustrated,” Christoff pointed out. “They had no money to pay rent or utilities.”


Conference guidelines allow Vincentians to provide assistance once a year.

“But if someone has extenuating circumstances, they may be helped again,” she added. “We want to help as many people as possible. That’s why we stick to a once-a-year policy.”

Tragedy introduced Christoff and her husband, Pete, to the parish’s SVdP ministry. A next-door neighbor, suffering

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from mental illness, set his house on fire then committed suicide, leaving behind a wife and two young children.

Although the widow was not Catholic, the Christoffs turned to their parish for guidance.

“We had no idea what the St. Vincent de Paul Society was, but my husband went to a meeting and they gave him \$500 for the family,” the conference president recalled.

When the organization put a notice in the church bulletin looking for volunteers, the couple signed up.

“We stayed with it because there’s a lot of people struggling out there who need help,” Christoff said. “It was a sad situation, but we learned from that

experience with our neighbor.”

One event can change a person’s life.

“The St. Vincent de Paul Society helps people get through those struggles.”

DONATED STIMULUS FUND OUTREACH

When members of the St. Bartholomew finance committee decided the parish needed their government stimulus checks more than they did, the St. Vincent de Paul Society reaped the benefits. Coined the “Pass It On” program, the idea boosted the society’s coffers at a critical time.

“There’s a 20 percent increase in the people coming through our [food] pantry,” cited Ron Thompson, St. Bartholomew



Ron Thompson, president of the SVdP conference at St. Bartholomew Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

ready. We want to help the best way we can with whatever resources we have.”

“SO MUCH NEED OUT THERE”

Many of the Mansfield residents turning to the St. Vincent de Paul Society for support in the early weeks of the pandemic weren’t eligible for a stimulus check. Senior citizens and people already living near the poverty line are most affected by the health crisis.

“We’re getting more new clients. People who never needed aid before,” said Ginnie Bucek, SVdP conference president at St. Jude Parish. “In some cases, both spouses were laid off and they don’t have any income. Or their hours were extremely cut back.”

The SVdP is an organization that undocumented families can go to for food and rent money because there are fewer qualifying criteria than government programs. A monthly special collection at Mass and private donations fund the charitable work.

“Some people we’ve helped in the past became self-sufficient when the economy was good,” she added. “Now they’ve come back. With the COVID crisis many more agencies have come up with extra financing, so if we can’t help them, we refer them to other resources.”

The pandemic also had an impact on St. Jude’s Wednesday and Saturday food pantry. Organizers purchase inventory at a reduced rate from the Tarrant Area Food Bank. When COVID made some products unavailable, two local Walmarts stepped up to supply the pantry with their extras.

“Besides giving financial help and food, we provide friendship and spirituality so it’s an all-encompassing

conference president. “The food pantry got the St. Vincent de Paul Society started here in 1980, and now it’s grown so large, it has its own building.”

Father Karl Schilken, the parish’s pastor, decided 90 percent of the “Pass It On” money would go to the SVdP with the remaining 10 percent slated for the Gabriel Project — a ministry helping women in a crisis pregnancy. Parishioner donations from stimulus checks netted more than \$30,000.

“Because of the stimulus checks, we have more money than ever before for home visits,” said Thompson, who has a team of four people who customarily meet with people asking for assistance. “The bulk of the money we give out is for water, rent, and electricity.”

After experiencing an initial uptick in calls for assistance, requests declined in April and May when households received the stimulus payment. The government also provided temporary mortgage relief with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and a moratorium on unpaid utility bills prevented shutoffs.

“We think there will be a sharp increase when the grace period ends,” Thompson explained. “But we’ll be

Continued on Page 27

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



ENTER THE journey

Parents share their unique experiences
of walking with their seminarians sons

By Kiki Hayden

One evening at a pizzeria, Isaac McCracken announced to his parents that he was applying to seminary.

“It surprised me,” recalled his father, Gary, “but...I was much more accepting of it.” This was not the first time Isaac had spoken of his desire to discern the priesthood.

His mother Joann had what she now describes as an “adverse reaction.” Questions raced through her mind: Who would pay for seminary? Why wasn’t Isaac finishing his economics degree? “I got up and walked out, sat in the car. I was so angry,” she recalled.

Whether the thought of seminary brings joy or heartache, the parents of seminarians receive a unique invitation to surrender to the Lord. Fortunately, in the Diocese of Fort Worth, seminarians and their parents are supported financially, in community, and in prayer.

SURRENDER

Shortly after the “famous dinner,” as Mrs. McCracken described it, Isaac contacted his parents asking when Bishop Michael Olson could come over to discuss their concerns. Mr. and Mrs. McCracken were surprised by Bishop Olson’s quick response and his welcoming demeanor. “He was very unassuming,” said Mrs. McCracken, and “he answered every single question.”

“He drove a very small car,” added Mr.

McCracken.

Over a dinner of Italian food, Bishop Olson emphasized that seminary is a discernment process — not every seminarian becomes a priest. He also told them that the diocese pays tuition for every seminarian.

“Even if he discerns out, he’s still got an education. All that it costs him is time,” said Mr. McCracken.

This was a turning point for Mrs. McCracken. She began encountering families of seminarians and priests. At Mass, she noticed readings about letting go and listening to God’s voice. With each experience, she felt more and more comfortable with her son’s decision. “It’s a shock, it’s a struggle, and you have to accept... it’s their choice,” she told the *North Texas Catholic*. “And then you have to decide: Am I going to work against it, do nothing, or encourage it?”

Now, Mrs. McCracken encourages Isaac’s seminary journey. A ceramic depiction of St. Joseph Seminary College in Louisiana is prominently displayed in the McCrackens’ kitchen. “He’s happy... He seems like he’s in the right place,” Mrs. McCracken said.

Like the McCrackens, Michael and Alana Demma were concerned that their son Jonathan planned to discern his vocation before finishing his engineering degree.

“I didn’t want him to do this. I was thrilled that he wanted to become a priest,” recalled Michael Demma, “but I wanted him to finish school, because I always had a plan.”



Gary and Joann McCracken, parents of seminarian Isaac McCracken. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Seminarian Joseph Hoffschwelle takes notes during a catechesis workshop on July 16 at the Catholic Center. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

“It was my intention to finish my degree first,” wrote Father Jonathan Demma, parochial administrator of Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls. “But after praying before the Blessed Sacrament...I knew I was supposed to leave that year.” With longing in his voice, he told his father, “I can’t wait one more

day to consecrate the Eucharist.”

“I’m done,” said Mr. Demma, and he opened his arms in defeat. “And then I gave him 100 percent support.”

Mrs. Alana Demma felt called to ask Mary to protect her son. In Adoration at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, in Keller, she prayed, “You gave up your Son; I’m

giving up my son — not like you did, but I need you to take care of him.”

At that time, Fr. Demma felt called to discern religious life with a Franciscan order in faraway New York. She gazed at an image of Mary. “The picture I was looking at moved. Mary was holding baby Jesus and she presented Him to me... and I’m thinking, ‘Girl, you are crazy!’ And then I saw this angel.” A friend of hers, also present in Adoration, saw the angel, too. “From that moment on,” Mrs. Demma beamed, “it was whatever Jonathan wanted to do for Jesus.”

SUPPORTING SEMINARIANS

John and Heide Hoffschwelle were concerned about the education provided in seminary. Their son Joseph has learning differences and received extra support in school. The Catholic school his sisters attended lacked the resources Joseph needed for a successful education. “Kids who have learning differences... we forget them,” Mr. Hoffschwelle said. But the Lord does not forget.

“We have to give huge credit to the Diocese of Fort Worth and Bishop Olson... they go out of their way to help him.... During the summer they do special work with the [seminarians],” said Mr. Hoffschwelle.

“And the seminary here is helping me, too,” added Joseph over the phone.

The Diocese of Fort Worth ensures that each seminarian receives financial support, community, and prayer. “We make the commitment for all these men who are on this discernment journey: we [the diocese] pay for it,” explained Renée Underwood, CFRE, Chief Operating Officer of the Advancement Foundation, which fundraises for the diocese. She emphasized the contributions of the St. John Paul II Shepherd’s Guild, which provides opportunities for benefactors to provide financial support to seminarians of the diocese. The diocese covers seminary tuition and even provides health insurance. “That’s a super blessing we have in this diocese because of that commitment that the Bishop of Fort Worth makes.... We only cover it because

Continued on Page 26



Michael and Alana Demma, parents of Father Jonathan Demma. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 25

of the generosity of benefactors: Shepherd's Guild members, grants, the Annual Diocesan Appeal, things like that."

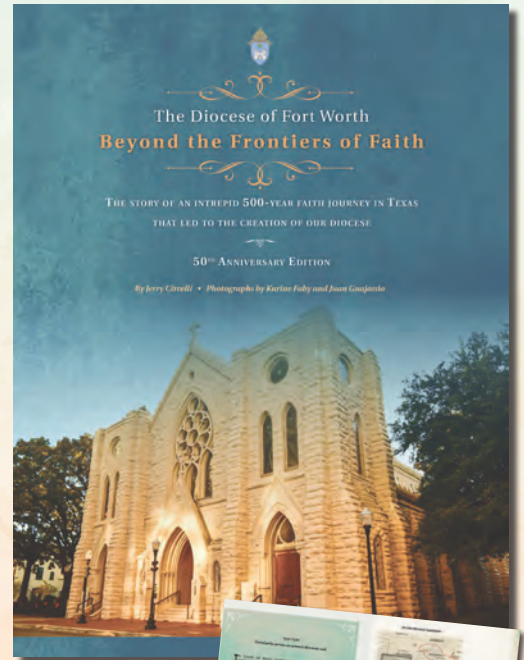
This support is about more than money. Mr. Hoffschwelle has a folder in his phone of prayer cards for the seminarians of Fort Worth. Each day of the month, he prays for his son Joseph, as well as for another seminarian; each seminarian is assigned a day of prayer by the diocese. Mrs. Hoffschwelle offers daily Mass for her son and the other seminarians.

The St. John Paul II Shepherd's Guild also holds several events a year where seminarians, their parents, and other benefactors gather "to walk with [the seminarians] and understand and to love on them and see them as people,"

said Underwood. "It's about a relationship."

For the McCrackens, joining communities of other seminarians' parents has been a validating experience. "You could see every walk of life," Mrs. McCracken said. They met families of many ethnicities, educational and spiritual backgrounds, and marital situations; families who were thrilled their children were in seminary and families who were struggling to accept it. "You're not... on an island by yourself," said Mrs. McCracken. "When Bishop Olson came [to our house], it wasn't like, 'We're taking your kid.' It was like, 'We're enfolding all of you.'" In the Diocese of Fort Worth, parents of seminarians are invited to enter that journey together, in community and prayer. 🇺🇸

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From Page 23

approach,” Bucek explained.

Occasionally, the society receives a note thanking it for helping a family through a difficult time.

“That’s what keeps us going. It’s difficult to ask for help, especially the first time, but we’re here to serve,” she assured. “And there’s so much need out there right now.”

THEY’RE NEIGHBORS, NOT CLIENTS

The St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth is relatively new but is already making a difference in the community. Members helped one woman receive emergency surgery and supported another who left an abusive relationship.

But the situation that continues to tug at Bill White’s heartstrings involves the wife of a serviceman who lost his life. She had five children and lived in a duplex

with no furniture.

“We actually set her whole house up in a matter of weeks,” he said, recalling how Vincentians pulled together to find furniture, linens, kitchen utensils, and a television. “After helping someone like that, it really hits the tender spot of your heart.”

White, St. Peter conference president, checks the organization’s hotline five times a day for messages from people in need.

“At the end of March and the beginning of April, our calls probably doubled,” he said, explaining how requests leveled off once stimulus money arrived. “And when other community agencies offering assistance began to advertise, our neighbors started calling them.”

The conference expects another surge of appeals when the school year starts and families need supplies. Ninety percent of SVdP’s funding comes from parishioners.

White and other volunteers refer to the people they assist as neighbors rather than clients because “that’s who they are. Most

of our society is zip-code related. Client sounds business-like. Neighbor makes it personal.”

Along with friendship, Vincentians offer prayer. An Adoration chapel is found on parish grounds and the conference president invites neighbors helped by the society to visit it. Evangelization, carried out with sensitivity, is part of the ministry.

“I remind people that we’re fast about asking God for help but slow about thanking Him,” White pointed out.

IT’S SOMETHING WE LIVE

During its last fiscal year, diocesan SVdP conferences made 1,600 home visits and spent \$645,000 helping 15,000 people in need. McMann credits dedicated volunteers and the support of Bishop Michael Olson for the nonprofit’s successful outreach.

New members are always welcome but becoming part of the St. Vincent de Paul Society requires careful thought, according to the council president.

“It’s not for everyone and involves a great deal of compassion and personal investment,” McMann cautioned.

The society views the work as a vocation.

“It’s not just a volunteer job or something you do in your spare time,” she continued. “It’s something we live.” 🇺🇸

FRIENDS OF THE POOR: Local SVdP President Pat McMann (far left), poses with Vincentians from St. Peter the Apostle Parish (L-R), Angela Redding, Bill White, Serena Strout, David Kaczmariski, and Margie Geiger. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Christ is the LITURGIST

Father Thu Nguyen discusses his new role
as Director of Liturgy and Worship

By Kiki Hayden

Before entering seminary, Fr. Nguyen earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. "My friends, and even I, question: 'Wow, coming from a mechanical engineering mind, how did you survive philosophy and theology?' It went well; I did good in theology." He smiled as he recalled this unique combination of degrees. "Now I know why — because most of the churches where I have [served], I did a lot of renovation, so I used that knowledge," he told the *North Texas Catholic* over video chat. He added, "[The church has] to have meaning... internal and external. The appearance and the internal, how to use it, have to match."

For Fr. Nguyen, this matching of internal and external actions and appearances is just as true of the liturgy itself.

In September, Fr. Nguyen will take on a new role as the director of liturgy and worship for the Diocese of Fort Worth. He will be following Bishop Michael

Olson's visions for the liturgy according to the *Roman Missal*. Fr. Nguyen emphasizes celebrating the liturgy in the right disposition and submitting to Christ.

CHANGING ROLES

"My passion is for liturgy," Fr. Nguyen told the *NTC*. Although he is excited for his new role, he will miss being a pastor as he leaves St. Jude Parish in Mansfield. "I will have no sheep," he said. "Definitely, I will miss the people."

As director of liturgy and worship, Fr. Nguyen will be in charge of diocesan liturgies such as ordination Masses or Confirmation Masses and the annual Chrism Mass. Father Jonathan Wallis, vicar general, described the many responsibilities involved in planning a diocesan event: "Location, music, readers, servers, all of the various things that the bishop would like to see... then coordinating with the pastor of the parish that's hosting the event... and he would serve as the master of ceremonies to keep everything running smoothly to make



Father Thu Nguyen looks forward to his new role as diocesan director of liturgy and worship. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

sure the focus of the liturgy can stay on target, whether it's an ordination or a chrism Mass...."

Additionally, the director of liturgy and worship will communicate with parish priests about changes (such as new translations) to the *Roman Missal*. "He would... catechize the priests as to what the changes are and help them stay current with liturgical practice in the Church," explained Fr. Wallis. Fr. Nguyen will also be a resource for priests, assisting when there are questions about how a particular liturgical form works, such as Baptisms or weddings with multiple rites involved.

Both Fr. Nguyen and the current director of liturgy and worship, Deacon Don Warner, studied at the Liturgical Institute of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Chicago, Illinois. When Fr. Nguyen assumes his role as director of liturgy and worship, Dcn. Warner will focus his energy on his other duties as director of deacons and director of chaplaincy. "Deacon Don Warner is

my colleague; [we] studied at the same Liturgical Institute in Mundelein and we both have the same view that we learned from there," Fr. Nguyen told the *NTC*.

DISPOSITION: THE INTERNAL AND THE EXTERNAL IN SYNC

For Fr. Nguyen, celebrating the liturgy is about having the right disposition. "The word 'disposition' is very important... Disposition, meaning when I come to Mass my mind, my heart, and my gestures have to be in sync with one another. When I make the Sign of the Cross and when I say, 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,' does my mind understand what Father, Son, and Spirit is? Do I respect and give reverence to that name, that holy name?"

Fr. Nguyen emphasized the importance of the *Roman Missal*. "I chant the Mass." His face took on a focused look as he sang, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." In an email, he wrote,

"*The Roman Missal* calls us to chant the ordinary parts of the Mass."

To Catholics who love tradition and liturgy, he issues a challenge: "Here is my challenge to all those... do they understand? Understanding and enriching themselves — that is the key. So that's why I'm... stressing a lot of times: what is your disposition at Mass?"

When asked about the importance of liturgy, Fr. Nguyen said, "We have to redefine understanding what... liturgy means. Most of the time people now say it's the work of the people. We make it likeable or sociable or whatever we feel [is] right. Well maybe that's the wrong thinking." He added, "The work of Jesus Christ is already accomplished and gives us salvation. Our work is joining Him in liturgy."

Fr. Nguyen traced the source of the liturgy: "It's Christ who is the Liturgist... salvation starts from Him, not from us. We can't save ourselves... We have to conform to Christ's mystery... We must conform to Him who is the Liturgist." 🇺🇸

With comprehensive safety plans in place and options for in-person or virtual learning, Catholic schools are

back in the

SWIM

of things

By Sandra Engelland

Beginning a new school year always involves a lot of thought, planning, and preparation. Beginning the school year in the middle of a global pandemic brings many more complicated issues for school officials in the Diocese of Fort Worth to address.

How will schools operate to provide the safest possible environment for students and staff?

What will remote instruction look like for families who choose distance learning?

What happens if someone at school has been diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19?

These are just a few of the questions educational leaders across the diocese are carefully handling as they opened schools, with most of them starting the week of Aug. 10.

“All of the schools in the diocese have provided two different options, either in-person traditional or virtual remote learning,” said Melissa Kasmeier, assistant superintendent of Catholic schools and interim principal at St. Andrew Catholic School.

The in-person option involves a number of adjustments to make school communities safer. Diocesan educational leaders worked directly with infectious disease experts from Wichita Falls, Cook Children’s Health Care System, and UT Southwestern Medical Center and used guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, the American Association of Pediatrics, the Texas Education Agency, the University Interscholastic League, the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department, and the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools.

Leah Rios, president of Nolan Catholic High School, said school and diocese officials began working in May with an infectious disease expert who helped them develop a safety plan for holding campus events over the summer, such as strength and conditioning camp, robotics camp, and summer school for students needing extra help.

Following safety protocols, more than 300 people participated in events on campus over the summer. Measures like wearing masks, physical distancing where possible, keeping

Continued on Page 32



Students began the school year at Nolan Catholic High School on August 12, although sports resumed earlier, including swim team practice in the natatorium, which opened August 5. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)



Kindergartner Arianna Murillo works behind a plastic barrier at St. George Catholic School in Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)

From Page 30

students in small consistent groups for potential contact tracing, implementing strict sanitizing procedures, and practicing frequent hand washing helped keep students and staff safe.

“It was very successful throughout the summer,” Rios said.

That experience helped officials form the practices they are using as school resumes.

“We’re going based on our own data, moving our same protocols to the rest of our campuses,” she said. “Instead of area statistics and media reports, we had our own data: what our local community was experiencing.”

As they were planning for the new school year, officials had ongoing input from the medical experts.

Kasmeier said, “There is no one on the medical team who has said we should not be back.”

When questions have popped up,

officials have gotten rapid feedback from team members, and that practice will continue with school back in session.

KEEPING THE COMMUNITY SAFE

Of all the safety measures, Rios believes that “masking is the key.”

All students and staff at Nolan are required to wear masks. Educators are incorporating lessons on how wearing a mask keeps those in the community safer.

“I love my community, so I wear my mask,” Rios said.

They also physically distance where possible, bring their own water bottles, have one-way hallways, stagger passing periods, and adjust lunch practices.

Another key change is implementing an alternating block schedule with four classes that meet every other day to minimize passing periods. A color-coded cohort system for events like school picture day and fire drills helps with contact tracing in the event of COVID-19 exposure.

Students and staff also are taught

proper hand washing and sanitizing procedures for desks and frequently used surfaces.

“We’ll get our whole campus involved and keep it fun and engaging and not scary,” Rios said.

At St. Andrew, students in fourth through eighth grades are required to wear masks. Kindergarten through third graders wear masks when they can’t physically distance, Kasmeier said.

Students also are instructed in thorough hand washing techniques, and several hand washing sessions are scheduled during the school day. They also eat lunch in classrooms at first and spend time outside as much as possible. The emphasis is on positive instruction for all ages.

Kasmeier said, “Just because it’s different doesn’t mean it’s bad.”

If someone in the school community is diagnosed with COVID-19, each campus has a response team to notify the local health department, families, and staff, while keeping legal confidentiality



In Amanda Taylor's first grade class at Notre Dame Catholic School, each student has an individual bag of blocks. (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)

requirements.

They also will temporarily close off areas used by the infected person for more stringent sanitizing.

Students and staff who have had close contact with a confirmed case of the disease will remain home for 14 days for quarantine.

DISTANCE LEARNING AND WORSHIP

Kasmeier said the distance learning option may look a little different from

campus to campus based on the resources and technology available, but all of them offer the same curriculum and much of the same instruction.

At both St. Andrew and Nolan, about 20 percent of families had chosen remote learning, as of early August. Officials have designed the program so that a student can go from in-person to remote learning if there's a need for quarantine.

"We want to make it a fluid, seamless transition," Kasmeier said.

Remote students at St. Andrew have

a livestream of the classroom so they can see their teachers, be a part of the class, and ask questions, Kasmeier said. Homework due dates and expectations are the same, but adjustments to some assignments may be required.

At Nolan, students engaged in remote learning are assigned an advocate — a staff member who is not a classroom teacher — who ensures the family receives the resources they need. Advocates have virtual meetings with the family 10 times over the course of the semester, Rios said.

Students are required to wear their uniforms during their remote school day and participate in daily prayers and announcements.

Weekly Mass for students is streamed to classrooms and homes. There also are opportunities for Nolan students to participate in livestreamed Adoration and have their confession heard on campus, Rios said.

Kasmeier said, "We're excited to see our students, whether it's in person on campus or through virtual platforms."

A LOOK BACK AT A VIRTUAL SPRING

Laura Behee, principal at St. Maria Goretti Catholic School in Arlington, said the transition from in-person classes to distance learning back in March was pretty seamless.

They used Google Classroom for students in second through eighth grades and Seesaw for pre-K through first grade.

Students in the school's dyslexia program continued to receive individual therapy on Zoom, and teachers checked in often with other students who needed extra help.

One of the keys to student success was a consistent schedule for all classes, Behee said, with a mix of live Zoom meetings and assignments that could be completed throughout the week.

At St. George Catholic School in Fort Worth, some students did schoolwork on the Edmodo online platform while families without devices used packets and

Continued on Page 37

bright rays of HOPE

Dominican sisters bring joy
and love of Christ to the classroom

By Susan Moses

When Principal Diane Price sees the white-robed Dominican sisters bustling down the hallways of St. Joseph Catholic School, she can't help but smile.

"I see them as bright rays of hope as they move about the building," she said.

Their floor-length white habits set them apart, but they are remarkably "normal," the administrator explained.

"They are part of our community. They play volleyball, join the class in PE, and hula hoop at recess," Price described. "The students see that you can devote your whole life to God and still be normal."

The pre-K4 – 8th grade school in Arlington, along with St. George Catholic School in Fort Worth, was the first to welcome the Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate to the classroom when the religious women came to the diocese in 2011.

In the nine intervening years, the number of Dominican sisters living in the Diocese of Fort Worth has grown from four to 10, and the schools served will grow to seven this academic year.

Mary Burns, principal of St. Rita Catholic School in Fort Worth, said the sisters are "a wonderful gift for Catholic schools. They help us remain true to our Catholic identity."

Dominican sisters have taught at the school

for several years. According to Burns, "They model Christ's teachings. They model Christ's love. They challenge me to be better."

Sister Ann Nguyen, OP, teaches third grade at the school, and Burns noted that her gentle manner with the students "lets them know they are loved."

Sr. Ann teaches all the major subjects to her pupils, but both principal and teacher agree that religion class is where the sister excels. Burns said students "build a relationship with Christ and with their faith" due to hands-on lessons from Sr. Ann, who uses kid-sized vessels and diminutive priest garments to spark the children's understanding of Mass. The classroom's miniature saints make the heroes of the faith come alive.

Sr. Ann laughed when she described why religion is her favorite subject to teach. "I have no lesson plan; it just comes out," she said. "Everything else I have to prepare." Burns laughed, too, although she suspects that Sr. Ann has a plan, even when she follows the Holy Spirit's lead.

In teaching, "I have found the vocation within my vocation," explained Sr. Ann. She weaves religion into every subject she teaches, especially science, where she can explain that God established and maintains the natural order.

The Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate, known informally as the



ABOVE: Sisters Anna Imelda Nguyen, Maria Le, Mary Catherine Do, Catherine Mary Duong, Elizabeth Nguyen, Ann Nguyen, Mary Vincent Pham, Immaculata Therese Nguyen, Theresa Mai, and Marie Savio Dinh are Dominican Sisters at Blessed Imelda Convent.



Sister Mary Catherine Do, OP, plays the ukelele with her fellow Dominican Sisters on July 21, 2020. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Vietnamese Dominicans, have a provincial house in Houston of about 100 women.

The order established a presence in the U.S. in 1975, when seven sisters fled their war-torn homeland of Vietnam and eventually made their way to the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

The U.S. province often bridges the culture between the old and new homelands for Vietnamese immigrants. The sisters are bilingual, and they preserve the culture and cuisine of their Southeast Asian heritage.

Principal Price appreciates their connection to both cultures at St. Joseph, where a Dominican sister has served as an aide in the kindergarten class for several years. The Arlington

school has many families of Vietnamese origin.

“For some of our youngest students and their families, it provides comfort to see a Dominican sister. Some of the kids have been raised speaking Vietnamese, and kindergarten is the first time they are setting foot in a classroom. It’s helpful that the sisters can speak Vietnamese and understand the culture,” Price said.

Whether in the U.S. or Vietnam, the Dominican sisters structure their days around prayer, study, community life, and their apostolate, or ministry. For most, that ministry is teaching.

“I love teaching,” said Sr.

Continued on Page 36



Sister Mary Vincent Pham and the Dominican Sisters at Blessed Imelda Convent pray together July 21, 2020. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

From Page 35

Ann. “St. Dominic [who founded the Dominican Order in the 13th century] taught that contemplation and the active life go hand in hand. We are to share the fruit of our contemplation with others.”

Nine of the ten sisters in the Diocese of Fort Worth teach in Catholic schools. The tenth serves as the elementary formation director at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield.

Although students are the primary beneficiary of the sisters’ apostolate, both principals acknowledged the quiet guidance they provide the faculty and staff. Burns said the religious women are humble and meek, but they “help us redirect” when daily concerns become distracting.

Price said, “They bring a sense of peace and calm to the school, like guiding lights at times when we are struggling with anything. They bring us back to ‘All things are for God. Why are you worrying? Do all that you do for God.’”

One of those struggles was after spring break, when schools shifted to virtual learning because of the coronavirus pandemic. At

Blessed Imelda Convent, where the sisters live on the campus of Nolan Catholic High School, eight religious women taught classes on web-based platforms, often simultaneously. “It was loud,” said Sr. Ann, who is the prioress. “We were all in different rooms, but we learned to cope with it,” she said.

Sr. Ann calls it a privilege to serve the Diocese of Fort Worth and appreciates the opportunity first given by former Bishop Kevin Vann and expanded by Bishop Michael Olson.

She gratefully listed what the sisters have been provided to help in their ministry, from teaching materials to a chaplain (previously Father Anh Tran, and now Father Thu Nguyen). “The bishop gives us the tools and means to work. We try to behave,” she said, bursting into laughter again.

Laughter is common for the prioress.


“Even when we are doing different tasks, our responsibilities, we find joy in our work,” she said. “Jesus is the source of our joy. We believe Jesus is our bridegroom. We hope the faithful can see the joy of consecrated life.” 🇺🇸




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From Page 33

textbooks, said St. George Principal Nikki Leafgreen.

Teachers also provided extra help to students by phone or via Zoom, often in the evening, because they required a parent to be present during the tutoring session, Leafgreen said.

Lam Tran of Keller, parent of a sixth-grader at St. George, said she was concerned when she learned the school was going to distance learning but soon became impressed with the creativity and responsiveness of her son's teachers.

"What the school did in such a short time with creating meaningful lessons on digital platforms was amazing," Tran said.

Schools also incorporated virtual spiritual opportunities with daily prayers, weekly Mass, and special events.

Jim Riney, parent of two St. Andrew students, said that one of the unexpected blessings of having groups online showed up in a Saturday morning Men's Bible

Study of dads from St. Andrew.

Shortly after the group began meeting online for a virtual Rosary, kids started showing up to pray the Rosary with their fathers. One week, the group included 50 men and their kids, a much bigger crowd than they would have had at an in-person meeting.

His wife Summer Riney said, "I'm always thankful we are in Catholic school with Catholic values."

At St. George, faculty members printed out a photo of every student and taped them to the pews for the May Crowning of Mary Mass led by Father Ronaldo Mercado.

Tran, who watched the service online with her son, said the Mass was truly special.

COVID-19 also affected the way schools conducted fundraisers.

After schools closed, in-person events moved online.

Kasmeier said St. Andrew was scheduled to have a gala in late March. They

shifted to a live virtual event in May run by a school committee. Their auction raised \$294,000, plus another \$50,000 was raised for tuition assistance. The auction amount was the second highest in school history.

"I would have never expected in a million years it would be that successful," she said.

Most schools also participated in North Texas Giving Day on May 5.

Behee at St. Maria Goretti School said the event replaced the Boosterthon Fun Run the campus had planned for May.

The school raised \$14,500, all of which went to tuition assistance.

Kasmeier said that schools in the diocese are working to increase their tuition assistance programs to help families impacted by COVID-19 job loss or illness.

The Annual Diocesan Appeal has also upped the amount it will contribute to needy schools from \$175,000 during the 2019-2020 fiscal year to \$325,000 for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. 🇺🇸



Keeping its tradition of May Crowning, St. Andrew Catholic School livestreamed Rebeca Pierce-Kondratowitch as she placed flowers on a statue of the Blessed Mother on May 1. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



start STRONG *finish* WELL

Nancy Eder, RN, serves as health advocate for school children and priests in the diocese

By Susan Moses

The title is long, and her days can be longer. Nancy Eder, RN, serves as the diocesan school nurse consultant and diocesan health advocate to the priests, an 11-word title that poses a challenge to squeeze on a business card. Her responsibilities can be difficult to fit into a day, too, but Eder loves her job.

Eder is particularly well suited for the apparent dichotomy of caring for both school children and infirm priests. She is compassionate yet efficient. Energetic yet calm. Methodical yet adaptable. Not to mention knowledgeable and curious.

And in caring for students and aging shepherds, she is a health advocate for those who most need it.

Her work for the Diocese of Fort Worth began 29 years ago, when she volunteered as a nurse at Holy Family Catholic School after enrolling her son, followed by her daughter the next year.

Her knack for organization led her to create forms for medication dispensation, accidents, school physicals, and more, which soon became standard forms for all diocesan schools. By 1995, the Holy Family parishioner began working as a nurse consultant for all 19 schools.

Superintendent of Catholic Schools Jennifer Pelletier appreciates Eder's work in the Catholic schools. "There's nobody in the

world as kind and good," she said. "She does things we don't even know."

What is known is that Eder pays particular attention to the nine schools that do not have a nurse on staff, ensuring they have the same medical supplies and equipment as those facilities with a nurse.

For example, while visiting one of the schools without a nurse, a student with a history of seizures had an episode. The parent was on campus, and they had to use a desk chair to wheel him out of the building to see his physician. "I told them, 'You will have a wheelchair next week,'" she recalled. "Every school has a wheelchair now."

Her expertise is also valued by Catholic schools beyond the diocese. For 25 years, Eder — sometimes with a team, sometimes with a partner, and sometimes alone — has published the 167-page *Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Health Manual for Catholic Schools in Texas* that is used in more than 250 Catholic schools across the state.

She has also helped develop safety protocols for the Catholic parishes and schools to operate during the coronavirus pandemic. She has equipped each priest with personal protective equipment and helped make accommodations to allow priests into hospitals to anoint COVID-19 patients.

Superintendent Pelletier believes Eder's work with infirm priests, which began in 2012, impacts her work in the schools. "She uses the same compassion, the same focus,

Nancy Eder checks seminarian Diego Soto-Deniz's temperature at the seminarian convocation earlier this summer. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



and the same respect for the dignity of the human person” whether she’s working with an elderly priest or a student, according to Pelletier.

When a tragedy, such as the sudden death of an administrator, has occurred, Eder assisted Pelletier. “In very difficult situations, she knows how to be the hands and mouth of Christ,” Pelletier observed. “In sickness, tragedy, or fear, she’ll stand right next to it. She never leaves when things get hard.”

Eder’s work as a health advocate for the clergy begins when they do, at seminary. She speaks with seminarians and priests each year about the importance of healthy habits and preventative medical care. She takes blood pressure readings, arranges an annual flu shot, and encourages them to make regular dental and medical appointments.

As the priests age, she provides support as they request, from helping them enroll in Medicare to accompanying them to appointments. She’ll research the best

rehab facilities and assist with medication or insurance. In their last days on this side of heaven, she might just sit quietly at their bedside.

Sometimes, her phone rings at 2 a.m. “I will go whenever I’m called. I will do whatever it takes,” the nurse said matter-of-factly.

“They are our shepherds, and in times when their health is failing, they need someone to walk with them on their journey.” Some have outlived close friends and family members, she explained.

“I love what I do. I love serving the clergy. I love being present for them. They have given so much to the people; it’s time for us to take care of them,” she continued.

Her medical knowledge can be useful in some cases, but her empathy is always employed. According to Eder, it’s important to be present for them and thank them for their ministry.

Monsignor E. James Hart, chancellor and moderator of the curia, values Eder and the behind-the-scenes work she does.

He said, “She possesses the no-nonsense approach of a good and competent nurse; which means she doesn’t tell you what you want to hear but what you need to hear. But with this straight-forward approach comes a caring person, possessed of a compassionate heart.

“Her contribution to the local Church flows from this compassionate strength of character. And where I’ve seen this displayed most poignantly is in her untiring care of our retired and often ailing, elderly priests. She is, without exception, an angel of mercy to each of them in their time of need,” he continued.

Eder, in turn, said spending time with clergy in their sunset days is a gift to her. “I have become a better Catholic. I’ve been given many graces from working with the clergy.”

She said, “The clergy taught me [that] we are waiting to go to our eternal home, and that’s where we’re going to be. ‘I’ve waited all my life,’ as one of them put it to me, ‘to go home with the Father.’” 🇺🇸



Strong and United

RELAX AND RECONNECT:

Married 16 years, Paul and Robin make communication and shared decision-making a priority “to make sure that we continue to have a strong marriage, not for our own sake anymore, but for the children’s sake,” said Paul. The five children have set bedtimes so the couple can reconnect and talk in the evening.

BEST FOR THE FAMILY:

Paul said, “Staying united and really talking helped strengthen our marriage even more than before having children. It also inspired us to want to become better, not only as individuals, but as a family. Having children meant that we wanted to be the best we could be for their sake and provide them with a strong foundation. We found this foundation when we made our way to the Catholic Church. This really grounded us and provided us with tools and guidance to become a strong family.”

RAISING CATHOLICS:

Robin, who is a lector, catechist, and co-leader of the St. Stephen Mom’s Group, begins the children’s day with a devotion. Mass, Scripture, and prayer are essential, and she has quotes from the saints around the house. “As conflicts occur, we come back to virtues that we strive for to become saints,” she said. 🇺🇸

THEY ARE: Paul and Robin Sonderer and their children Olive, Ada, Tyson, Eleanor, and Virginia, parishioners at St. Stephen Church in Weatherford. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



A man gets tested for coronavirus at a COVID-19 testing center on July 7 in Austin. (Getty Images/Sergio Flores)

Pandemic Increases CCFW Cases, Planning

By Mary Lou Seewoester

“When you work with a genuine passion to help others and to give hope to whomever you serve, you’ll never go wrong. This is our focus here at Catholic Charities,” said Antonietta Amendolara, Catholic Charities Fort Worth short-term case manager.

Amendolara was one of eight panelists at the second annual Inclusion Forum, a virtual event hosted by CCFW on July 13. The panelists, local community leaders serving vulnerable and diverse populations, spoke to this year’s forum topic: Impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable Tarrant County community members. They addressed a virtual audience of 230 and answered questions submitted before and during the event. Christopher Plumlee, chairman of the CCFW board of directors, who served as forum moderator, said, “We have readied ourselves to provide crisis case management, emergency assistance, gift cards, and referrals to thousands of new

clients, who we predict will reach 7,000.”

Though CCFW has a long history of providing long-term case management as a holistic approach to eradicating poverty, the increase in clients due to the pandemic gave birth to a new program — short-term case management.

Amendolara said case managers served many clients who “found themselves out of work overnight” and who had never applied for benefits such as food stamps.

She reported that in the two months beginning April 6, four short-term case managers worked with 45 to 50 families each, serving 238 clients. She said they primarily needed assistance with housing, utilities, and transportation.

The keynote speaker, Tarrant County Commissioner Devan Allen, said over 30 percent of Tarrant County deaths from COVID-19 are related to persons in retirement and long-term care facilities, and nearly 40 percent of coronavirus cases have come from the Hispanic community.

“Our communities of color are seeing higher rates of infection and

hospitalization,” she continued. “Based on history, initial data, and anecdotal evidence, we know that structural racism and bias in our health care and other systems have led to poor health and other outcomes.”

Allen said the Tarrant County Commissioners Court adopted a “four-pillared approach” to the pandemic: funding for testing, economic stimulus, rental assistance, and direct relief to residents, which sent funds to Tarrant County cities to distribute to their residents.

Panelist Catherine Oliveros, Ph.D., vice president of community health improvement for Texas Health Resources, said her department is committed to engaging the community in reaching out to vulnerable and isolated persons.

“Churches and faith leaders are so important in our efforts,” she said. “Parishes are trusted sources of information and have access to diverse populations. As partners, you can serve as champions of health and provide access to resources that otherwise would be potentially difficult for some communities to access.” 🇺🇸





Generous Gardener

HE IS: Monsignor Francis Boakye Tawiah, a diocesan priest for the Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana, and parochial vicar of St. Philip the Apostle in Lewisville since 2016. Msgr. Tawiah came to the diocese in 2012 and has also served at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington and St. Patrick Cathedral.

LEARNING FROM THE ELDER: Francis attended the parish and Catholic school where his grandfather worked, and he even lived part-time with the “prayerful, peace-loving man.” His grandfather’s influence began when Francis was an infant, listening to his grandfather pray the Rosary, a habit the priest has embraced. Although Francis considered becoming a physician, his grandfather’s example in faith led the young man to the priesthood.

FAMILY UNIT: Msgr. Tawiah has three siblings, plus cousins too numerous to count (his grandfather had 12 children). An uncle is a priest, and the family has three religious sisters. “No matter where we are, we are a cohesive family,” he said. His near daily phone calls with his mother keep that relationship strong despite the miles.

A SEED IS PLANTED: Msgr. Tawiah loves the parable of the sower. “It’s unthinkable for someone to generously cast seeds. That is the generosity of God. God is not always looking for results and payback. It’s what He generously can give and will give that makes meaning in life.”

Msgr. Tawiah keeps a flower garden at home and tends the plants at the parish. “I love anything that comes from the earth and brings life.”

EUCCHARISTIC JOY: Seeing the community gathered at Mass brings a smile to his face. “God Himself is kind enough to offer Himself as food, and whenever I give food to the hungry, it brings joy to my heart.”

A GLOBAL PANDEMIC:

“Unfortunately our world today is losing our sense of community, of care and concern. At this moment, we should be thinking about how to reach out to others, not only about ourselves.” Msgr. Tawiah said COVID-19 has tested our humanity and provides the opportunity to appreciate how precious life is and to improve how we relate to one another.

ONE CHURCH: He is grateful to this diocese for giving him the opportunity to serve here and comprehend firsthand the universality of the Church. The Liturgy reminds Msgr. Tawiah that “anywhere I go, I have a family.” 🇹🇽



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Mother Love

NTC/Ben Torres



I had the opportunity to go to Japan this past November to see family, visit the sites of the Japanese martyrs, and, most especially, visit the Church-approved site of Our Lady of Akita.

“Each day recite the prayers of the Rosary.” These words from the Blessed Virgin Mary were said to Sister Agnes Sasagawa on October 13, 1973.

This summer I was planning on visiting another Church-approved site — Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal — but because of the pandemic, it had to be rescheduled. Mary performed a miracle there in 1917 before a crowd of 70,000 people and she had a similar message: “Say the Rosary every day to bring peace to the world and an end to the war.”

For the Catholic, especially one discerning priesthood and religious life, praying the Rosary daily is necessary. Why? We live in calamitous times; thus, we need the help of Our Lady, who loves us dearly and desires us to know our vocation more than we do.

First, a few words about the times we live in. COVID, riots, widespread disinformation — all these things have led many to despair and to believe it is too difficult to follow Jesus Christ unreservedly at a time like this. Don't worry: such thoughts do not

come from Almighty God. Does He not say to the prophet Isaiah: “Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” (*Isaiah 41:10*)



Fr. Maurice Moon

Yes, these are difficult times, but so was being Catholic in ancient Rome before Constantine, in 17th century Japan, or during the French Revolution. It will always be difficult times for a Christian but “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (*Romans 8:31*)

Since we live in calamitous times, we need help! We call Mary “*Advocata Nostra* (Our Advocate)” because Mary loves us more than we can ever imagine, and she will never stop loving us and advocating for us — even if we stop loving her! She promises us help when we seek her intercession in the Rosary; just read those messages from her in Akita and in Fatima. They are very powerful!

Mary especially helps those discerning their vocation. Since she magnifies the Lord in all that she does (*Luke 1:46*), Mary most powerfully magnifies the Lord by helping souls follow their God-given vocation. When we follow the path God traces for us, we become a sweet aroma (*2 Corinthians 2:15*), giving God great honor

and glory through the intercession of Mary.

How many souls are saved — or greatly helped — when a man or woman discerns the correct vocation in life? The priest offers numerous souls the sacraments; consecrated religious men and women offer numerous prayers, sacrifices, and good works, drawing down a torrent of blessings on Holy Mother Church.

Although we live in tumultuous times, we have no cause for despair or melancholy — such thoughts do not come from God, but from the Evil One. Our job as Catholics, especially those discerning their vocation, is to stay close to Our Lady, and she will help us remain on the path that God has traced for us. Mary does this by her constant prayers and protection.

According to Pope Francis, devotion to this most gracious mother of ours is not an option: “Devotion to Mary is not spiritual etiquette; it is a requirement of the Christian life,” (*Homily*, St. Peter's Basilica, Jan. 1, 2018). 🇺🇸

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.



LET US LECTIO

Favored in His Eyes

MEMORIAL OF ST. PETER CLAVER, PRIEST
September 9, 2020



Painting by Raul Berzosa

Start by using the steps below to reflect on the Scripture verse. Then read Callie's meditation, reflecting on it slowly.

LECTIO



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

MEDITATIO



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

ORATIO



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

CONTEMPLATIO



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

THE SCRIPTURE

GOSPEL READING FOR SEPTEMBER 9
The Memorial of St. Peter Claver

Raising his eyes toward his disciples Jesus said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice and leap for joy on that day!

Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way."

— Luke 6:20-26

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved.

THE REFLECTION

St. Peter Claver was born in 1581 and raised in what is now Catalina, Spain. He spent most of his priestly life heroically seeking out and ministering to the least among him, particularly the slaves who were being offloaded from Africa to the ports of Cartagena, Colombia.

He would even frequently board the ships while the slaves were still shackled in darkness to minister to their immediate needs. Once he had established himself as a person they could trust, he reportedly baptized around 300,000 individuals and would hear the confessions of 5,000 yearly. Beyond that, he would advocate on their behalf to the local political officials and landowners; he spoke against a culture that regarded them as less than human. In these souls, he saw the lost, afraid, abused, abandoned.

Today's Gospel from Luke is a lesser-known version of the beatitudes, which we typically read from Matthew's Gospel. Unlike in Matthew's account, Luke places this teaching immediately after the calling of the disciples. Thus, Luke's beatitudes are presented as instructions on what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Once called, the disciples freely follow Him. Christ now makes clear that discipleship entails a reversal of values from what is expected.

The Gospel writer warns

against the one who seeks their consolation in earthly comforts, those who do not "set their sights on heaven." In a biblical context, "blessed" is a term that refers to someone who is "happy" or "fortunate" in God's sight — close to the heart of Christ and favored in His eyes. This is why so many, out of love of Christ and imitation of Him, have left everything to follow Him. They seek to rely on God in all things to unite themselves more closely to His holy heart.

Those who embrace "holy poverty" have come to profoundly depend on God and rely on Him for their deepest needs. They are also keenly aware that the world does not provide for their needs, but the One who sends the sun and the rain to shine on "the righteous and the unrighteous" (*Matthew 5:45*).

Beyond this, St. Peter Claver understood the tremendous truth that the beatitudes demand of the disciple: to regard the poorest among us with our greatest care and concern. This pastor demonstrated that to be an imitator of Christ means to look upon others as God would, to see beyond their worth according to the world.

Blessed are they who realize that regardless of their material needs or financial security, it is the Lord and His providential love that provides all for those who seek Him and the Kingdom of God first. ✝




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


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Bishop Michael Olson invokes the Holy Spirit as he prays over deacon candidate Gustavo Garcia August 10, 2020. (NTC/Ben Torres)

a heart of CHARITY

Se confiere el Orden del Diaconado Permanente a veinticuatro hombres

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Diverse. Enthusiastic. Self-giving. Talented.

That's how formation leaders describe the 2020 class of permanent deacons ordained by Bishop Michael Olson during an August 10 Mass in St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church.

The evening liturgy was concelebrated with Tyler Bishop Joseph E. Strickland and several diocesan priests on the Feast of St. Lawrence, deacon and martyr.

Coming from a variety of backgrounds and professions, the 24 men completed five years of intensive pastoral, liturgical, and scriptural training before ordination.

It is the fifth class of candidates raised to the Order of Deacon in the diocese and the first in 11 years.

Following social distancing and mask mandates because of the pandemic, more than 600 clergy and invited guests attended the ordination with other North Texas Catholics participating in the celebration through live-streaming on the diocesan website, fwdioc.org.

After welcoming the congregation to the much-anticipated occasion in the life of the diocese and Church, Bishop Olson praised the soon-to-be deacons for their courage and perseverance in saying "yes" to the Lord.

"I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the wives of these candidates for supporting and accompanying their husbands in the journey of formation," he continued. Many encouraged their husband's faith life, "some even introducing them to Christ and the Catholic Church."

Linda Asebedo said both she and her husband, Rodney, grew spiritually during the deacon formation

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

Diversa. Entusiasta. Generosa. Talentosa.

Así es como los líderes de su formación describen la clase del 2020 de los diáconos permanentes que fueron ordenados por el Reverendísimo Obispo Michael Olson durante la Misa del 10 de agosto celebrada en la Parroquia de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

La liturgia de la noche fue concelebrada por el Obispo de Tyler Joseph E. Strickland y varios sacerdotes diocesanos en el día de la Fiesta de San Lorenzo, Diácono y Mártir.

Este grupo de diáconos posee una rica diversidad con respecto a sus orígenes y las profesiones que ellos ejercen. Los veinticuatro hombres completaron cinco años de vasta formación pastoral, litúrgica y bíblica antes de ser ordenados como diáconos.

Ésta es la quinta clase de candidatos que han sido elevados al Orden del Diaconado Permanente en la Diócesis de Fort Worth y la primera desde hace 11 años.

Más de 600 clérigos e invitados asistieron a la ordenación siguiendo los mandatos de distanciamiento social y el uso de mascarillas debido a la pandemia. Participaron además de la celebración muchos otros católicos del norte de Texas a través de la transmisión en vivo en el sitio web diocesano, fwdioc.org.

Luego de dar la bienvenida a la congregación en esta gozosa ocasión tan esperada en la vida de la Diócesis y de la Iglesia, el Obispo Olson elogió a los futuros diáconos por su valentía y perseverancia al decir "sí" al Señor.

"Me gustaría expresar también mi más sincero

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 49

FROM PAGE 47

process. The couple often spent mornings together in the family's prayer garden.

"I always knew this is where he was headed," she said, referring to the diaconate. "He has a servant's heart."

Her spouse took care of his ailing mother-in-law, Ernestine, before she passed away — a kindness noticed by the mother of three.

"And when he saw other people in the nursing home struggling, he'd help them," the proud wife added. "That's his calling — to serve."

During the Mass, Bishop Olson explained that deacons, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, assist the bishop and his priests in the ministry of the Word, of the altar, and of charity, "showing themselves to be servants of all."

"They will preside over public prayer, administer Baptism, assist and bless marriages, bring Viaticum to the dying, and conduct funeral rites," he said.

Consecrated by the laying on of hands that comes down to us from the Apostles, deacons also perform acts of charity in the name of the bishop or pastor. These duties are performed in a way that recognizes them as disciples of Him, "who came not to be served, but to serve."

As deacons and ministers of Jesus Christ, "Do the will of God from the heart," the prelate urged. "Serve the people with love and joy as you would the Lord."

The Tolentino family met Dr. Bradley Samuelson, now Deacon Samuelson, first as a medical doctor, then through his charismatic faith.

"You could see his love for the Lord," said Rosalie Tolentino, a Queen of Peace parishioner whose husband, Davy, is part of the 2022 deacon formation class. "We always felt he had a lot to offer the Church."

When the Wichita Falls couple participated in a Bible study group with the cardiologist, they became close friends.

"We learned a lot from him. Our family dealt with some difficult issues over the past few years and he's been a consultant," she added. "He's a physician of the soul, as well as the heart."

The newest cadre of permanent

deacons join 80 men currently serving the Diocese of Fort Worth in that role. It is one of the ranks of the sacrament of Holy Orders along with priests and bishops.

Transitional deacons are those men preparing for the priesthood. The permanent diaconate, restored by the Second Vatican Council, can be conferred on married men and is a lifelong commitment. Deacons are marked with an imprint which configures them to Christ and cannot be removed.

Two classes of deacon candidates are currently in formation and there are plans to begin the application process for a third.

Juan Rendon, who developed the diocese's current program, described the newly ordained deacons as a "very dynamic" group.

"They are enthused for the Lord, on fire to do God's will, and ready to serve the needs of His people," he said.

During the formation process, deacon candidates study from a curriculum similar to one designed for seminarians. Every year, the men are given dual assignments to a parish and to a charity or outreach agency like a hospital, homeless shelter, or Catholic Charities.

"They are a very talented pool of candidates — not only because of their professions — but because of who they are. All of them have a heart for service," Rendon observed.

Before beginning the Liturgy of Diaconal Ordination, which includes the Laying on of Hands, Prayer of Ordination, vesting with stole and dalmatic, and Handing on of the Book of Gospels, Bishop Olson cautioned the candidates in his homily that the diaconate is not a ceremonial, outreach, or social action ministry.

"It is a ministry of charity," he instructed. "Charity is the very life of God into which we are baptized and will enter into fully after we have passed from this world."

There is a difference between compassion and charity, the bishop cautioned. Compassion is assisting a poor or suffering person and thinking, "there but

CONTINUED ON PAGE 51





Bishop Michael Olson recites the Prayer of Ordination as 24 deacon candidates kneel at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish. (NTC/Ben Torres)

DE LA PÁGINA 47

agradecimiento a las esposas de estos candidatos por apoyar y acompañar a sus esposos en su jornada de formación durante los últimos años”, agregó el Obispo Olson.

Muchas de las esposas alentaron la vida de fe de sus esposos, “incluso, algunas fueron las que les presentaron a Cristo y la Iglesia Católica”.

Linda Asebedo dijo que tanto ella como su esposo, Rodney, crecieron espiritualmente durante el proceso de formación de los diáconos. La pareja a menudo pasaba las mañanas rezando juntos en el jardín de la familia.

“Supe siempre hacia dónde se dirigía”, dijo ella, refiriéndose al diaconado. “Él

tiene un corazón de siervo”.

Su esposo se hizo cargo de la mamá de ella, Ernestine, mientras convalecía antes de que falleciera, una acción que denota la amabilidad de Rodney y que es muy apreciada por la madre de tres hijos.

“Y cuando veía a otras personas en el asilo de ancianos con sus luchas, él las ayudaba”, agregó la orgullosa esposa. “Ése es su llamado: servir”.

Durante la Misa, el Obispo Olson explicó que los diáconos, fortalecidos por el Espíritu Santo, asisten al obispo y a sus sacerdotes en el ministerio de la Palabra, del altar y de la caridad, “mostrando ser servidores de todos”.

“Presidirán la oración pública, administrarán el Bautismo, ayudarán y bendecirán los matrimonios, llevarán el

viático a los moribundos y llevarán a cabo los ritos funerarios”, dijo.

Consagrados por la imposición de manos, ritual que ha sido transmitido desde los Apóstoles, los diáconos han de realizar también actos de caridad en nombre del obispo o el párroco. Estos deberes se realizan de una manera que los reconozca como discípulos de Aquel “que no vino a ser servido, sino a servir”.

Como diáconos y ministros de Jesucristo, “hagan la voluntad de Dios de corazón”, instó el prelado. “Sirvan a la gente con amor y gozo, como lo harían con el Señor”.

La familia Tolentino conoció al Dr. Bradley Samuelson, ahora el Diácono

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 51

To serve, not be served

Meet the 2020 Class of Deacons for the Diocese of Fort Worth



DEACON RODNEY ASEBEDO
From: St. Joseph, Arlington



DEACON DAVID BINDEL
From: Sacred Heart, Wichita Falls



DEACON RICARDO DE LEON
From: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Keller



DEACON STEVEN DIXON
From: St. Stephen, Weatherford



DEACON THOMAS DORAN
From: Good Shepherd, Colleyville



DEACON GARY ENDRES
From: Sacred Heart, Muenster



DEACON MARK GANNAWAY
From: St. Bartholomew, Fort Worth



DEACON GUSTAVO GARCIA
From: St. Jude, Mansfield



DEACON MICHAEL HANDLER
From: Good Shepherd, Colleyville



The 24 deacon candidates lie prostrate as the congregation and Bishop Olson pray the Litany of the Saints. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FROM PAGE 48

for the grace of God, go I.”

“Charity is when a Christian encounters a poor or suffering person, experiences empathy, assists the person, and recognizes, ‘there by God’s grace goes Christ,’” the prelate explained. “It is focused on Christ alone in the poor, who are people — not ideas or problems.”

The Wright family gathered to see their father and grandfather, a retired businessman, ordained a deacon. Rick Wright’s faith journey was a blessing for everyone, said son Ryan Wright, who traveled from San Antonio for the occasion.

His father’s study of moral theology, dogma, and sacred Scripture prompted some interesting phone conversations.

“We had more talks about religion and our faith than I’ve ever had in the past,” he pointed out. “I could see the Holy Spirit working in him in a different way. It helped my formation.”

Six of Wright’s eight grandchildren watched in awe as Bishop Olson laid hands

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52

DE LA PÁGINA 49

Samuelson, primero como médico y luego a través de su fe carismática.

“Se podía palpar su amor por el Señor”, dijo Rosalie Tolentino, feligresa de la Parroquia de la Reina de la Paz, cuyo esposo, Davy, es parte de la clase de formación de los diáconos del 2022. “Siempre sentimos que tenía mucho que ofrecer a la Iglesia”.

Cuando la pareja de Wichita Falls participó en un grupo de estudio bíblico con el cardiólogo se hicieron muy buenos amigos.

“Aprendimos mucho del Diácono Samuelson. Nuestra familia ha tenido que enfrentarse a varios problemas difíciles y él nos ha ayudado como consejero”, ella agregó. “Él es médico de las almas, así como del corazón”.

El grupo recién ordenado de diáconos permanentes se une a 80 hombres que actualmente sirven en ese papel en la Diócesis de Fort Worth. El diaconado permanente es

uno de los grados del Sacramento del Orden Sagrado para realizar el ministerio apostólico de la Iglesia junto con los obispos y los sacerdotes.

El diaconado de transición se otorga a los hombres que se preparan para el sacerdocio. El diaconado permanente, restaurado por el Concilio Vaticano II, se puede conferir a hombres casados y es un compromiso de por vida. Los diáconos están marcados con una huella indeleble que los configura en Cristo y que no se puede quitar.

Hay actualmente dos clases de candidatos al diaconado permanente que están en el proceso de formación y se tienen planes para comenzar el proceso de solicitud para una tercera clase.

Juan Rendón, quien desarrolló el programa diaconal actual de la Diócesis, describió a los nuevos diáconos como un grupo “muy dinámico”.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 53



CLASS OF 2020



DEACON STEVEN HOLTON
From: Holy Family, Fort Worth

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON ERIC HUNSBERGER
From: St. Mark, Denton

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON RALPH LIRA
From: St. Peter, Lindsay

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON PAUL MAHONEY
From: Good Shepherd, Colleyville

FROM PAGE 51

on their grandfather's head to invoke the Holy Spirit.

"It's always good to have a vocation in the family. It sets an example for the rest of us, especially the younger kids," Ryan Wright said. "Hopefully, one day, they'll follow in their grandfather's footsteps."

HIS DIVINE PLAN

There aren't too many people who can find a silver lining in the economic woes generated by today's coronavirus pandemic. Deacon Rodney Asebedo is one of those few.

Like thousands of other Americans ordered to shelter at home during the health crisis, the telecommunications engineer was laid off by his employer in March. But instead of wallowing in self-pity, the St. Joseph parishioner used the quarantine to prepare for his ordination to the permanent diaconate.

"That quiet time was a saving grace," admitted Dcn. Asebedo, who developed a Holy Hour every morning. "When I was employed, I asked God to remove all barriers from my path keeping me from being ordained. Losing my job was part of His divine plan."

Sitting in a small prayer garden fashioned in the backyard, the former parish RCIA director found more time to pray and listen to the needs of others. Assigned to St. Maria Goretti Church during his formation, he also assisted the priest at daily Mass when public health orders banned public worship.

"I took that very seriously and felt I was bringing the community's prayers forward to the altar," Dcn. Asebedo said.

As an ordained deacon, he hopes to encourage church attendance. The Arlington resident fears people will stay away from Mass after the pandemic subsides.

"I want to remind them why

the Church is still alive after 2,000 years," Dcn. Asebedo enthused. "If I point people to the Eucharist, I'll be doing what God wants me to do."

TRUSTING IN GOD

Deacon Thien Ta first witnessed permanent deacons in action at a diocesan synod 20 years ago.

"I saw what deacons do — proclaiming the Word of God and leading people in prayer," said Dcn. Ta, who was a delegate for his former parish, Christ the King. "That was the beginning of my call to the vocation."

But a series of decisions and delays kept the Lockheed Martin engineer from starting the formation process until 2015.

"For me it was a long, long journey but you have to trust in God's plan," the St. George parishioner said thoughtfully. "Sometimes we think it's the right time but it's not."

After studying canon law and learning about the marriage tribunal process during formation, the deacon candidate looks forward to helping parishioners prepare for the sacrament of Matrimony.

"I see a need," Dcn. Ta explained. "I think a lot of broken families and failed marriages have to do with preparation. By spending more time preparing couples before they take their vows, we could avoid annulments and the suffering that goes with that."

The deacon formation process offered times of reflection, prayer, and meditation as the St. George parishioner discerned his calling.

"The formation process really molded and humbled me to be God's instrument," Dcn. Ta said.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH PEOPLE

Deacon Terry Timmons credits a Baptist professor at Baylor University for making him a better

CONTINUED ON PAGE 54



Bishop Olson hands the Book of the Gospels to Deacon Michael Handler during the ordination Mass. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Newly ordained Deacon Thein Ta bows toward Deacon Don Warner during the ordination Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

DE LA PÁGINA 51

“Están llenos de entusiasmo por el Señor, ardientes para hacer la voluntad de Dios y listos para servir las necesidades de Su pueblo”, dijo.

Durante el proceso de formación, los candidatos al diaconado se acogen a un plan de estudios similar al programa que siguen los seminaristas. Se les asignan a los hombres cada año tareas duales en una parroquia y en una organización benéfica o

agencia de asistencia como un hospital, un refugio para personas sin hogar o Caridades Católicas.

“Son un grupo de candidatos muy talentosos, no sólo por las profesiones que tienen, sino por quiénes son como personas. Todos ellos tienen un corazón dedicado al servicio”, observó Rendón.

Antes de comenzar la liturgia de la Ordenación Diaconal, que incluye la imposición de manos y la Plegaria de la Ordenación, y en la que se revisten los candidatos con la estola diaconal y la dalmática, y se hace la entrega del Libro de los Evangelios, el Obispo Olson advirtió a los candidatos en su homilía que el diaconado no es un ceremonial o ministerio de asistencia o acción social.

“Es un ministerio de caridad”, instruyó. “La caridad es la misma vida de Dios en la cual somos

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 55



CLASS OF 2020



DEACON JUAN MOLINA
From: St. John the Apostle, N. Richland Hills

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON DAVID POOLE
From: St. Jude Thaddeus, Burkburnett

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON PATRICK QUINN
From: St. Philip the Apostle, Lewisville

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON BRADLEY SAMUELSON
From: Queen of Peace, Wichita Falls

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON JESUS SERRANO
From: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fort Worth

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON MICHAEL SUTTON
From: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Keller

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON THIEN TA
From: St. George, Fort Worth

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON TERRY TIMMONS
From: Immaculate Heart of Mary, Abbott

FROM PAGE 52

Catholic. The world history teacher would turn to the young college student when something involving the Church came up in class.

“Explain to us the Catholic teaching on that,” Dcn. Timmons said, remembering how he was put on the spot. “I was a very uncatechized Catholic, so it inspired me to find the answer or be embarrassed. My eyes were opened to the faith in a way which I was never challenged to before.”

Years later, an ACTS retreat strengthened his relationship with Christ even more. The parishioner at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Abbott applied to become a permanent deacon after two people encouraged him to look into the diocesan program.

“God doesn’t speak in burning bushes or singing angels much anymore,” Dcn. Timmons observed. “He uses people, so you better pay attention to what they say.”

A religion and theater arts teacher who shares the faith with students at St. Mary’s Catholic School in West, Texas, the veteran educator hopes to volunteer in hospice ministry after ordination.

“I know a couple of times my prayers and words were the last thing a person heard before they died,” Dcn. Timmons said. “To be with someone at the end of life’s journey is a great gift — a great blessing.”

HUNGRY FOR CHRIST

Always an enthusiastic parish volunteer, Jesus Humberto Serrano never considered becoming a deacon.

“Even as a 15-year-old, I was always doing something at church whether it was as an altar server or part of the youth group or choir,” said the self-made business owner. “Then I came to a point in my life when I asked the Lord, ‘What do you want me to do besides helping at the parish?’”

The answer came a short time later when his pastor at Our Lady of

Bishop Michael Olson invokes the Holy Spirit as he lays hands on Jesus Humberto Serrano Aug. 10. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth told him the diocese was looking for permanent deacons.

“He told me I had all the requirements, so I prayed and decided to go for it,” he added. “As a deacon, you’re ordained for the Church — not a particular parish.”

Dcn. Serrano, who came to the United States from Mexico when he was 13, believes God has a purpose for the rest of his life. People are hungry for Christ — something he recognized while visiting the sick during his pastoral formation.

“I want to help people get closer to God, so catechizing is something I’d like to do,” he explained. “With everything going on in the world, it’s a challenging time, but I’m ready, God willing.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56

DE LA PÁGINA 53

bautizados y de la que participaremos plenamente después de haber dejado este mundo”.

Hay una diferencia entre la compasión y la caridad, señaló el Obispo. La compasión es ayudar a una persona pobre o que sufre y pensar, “allí, por la gracia de Dios, voy yo”.

“La caridad es cuando un cristiano se encuentra con una persona pobre o que sufre, experimenta empatía, ayuda a la persona y reconoce que “allí, por la gracia de Dios, va Cristo”, explicó el prelado. “Se centra en Cristo en los pobres, que son personas, no meras ideas o problemas”.

La familia Wright se reunió para asistir a la ordenación al Diaconado Permanente de su padre y abuelo, un

empresario jubilado. La jornada de fe de Rick Wright fue una bendición para todos, dijo su hijo Ryan Wright, quien viajó desde San Antonio para la especial ocasión.

El estudio de su padre de la teología moral, el dogma de la Iglesia y de las Sagradas Escrituras dio lugar a interesantes conversaciones por teléfono.

“Conversamos más sobre la religión y nuestra fe que lo que nunca habíamos hablado antes”, señaló. “Pude ver al Espíritu Santo obrando en él de una manera diferente. Eso ayudó a mi formación”.

Seis de los ocho nietos de Wright vieron con asombro cómo el Obispo Olson impuso las manos sobre la cabeza de su abuelo para invocar al Espíritu Santo.

“Es siempre bueno tener una vocación en la familia. Nos da un buen ejemplo al resto de la familia, especialmente, a los chicos más jóvenes”, dijo Ryan Wright. “Espero que con suerte algún día ellos sigan los pasos de su abuelo”.

SU PLAN DIVINO

No hay muchas personas que puedan encontrar un lado positivo en los problemas económicos causados por la pandemia actual del coronavirus. No obstante, el Diácono Rodney Asebedo es uno de esos pocos.

Al igual que miles de estadounidenses a quienes se les ordenó refugiarse en sus casas durante la crisis de salud, el ingeniero de telecomunicaciones fue despedido por su empleador en marzo. No obstante, en lugar de quedarse amilanado por la autocompasión, el feligrés de la Parroquia de San José utilizó la cuarentena para prepararse para su ordenación al diaconado permanente.

“Ese tiempo de tranquilidad fue una gracia salvadora”, admitió el Diácono Asebedo, que comenzó a dedicar una Hora Santa todas las mañanas. “Cuando estaba empleado,

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 56



CLASS OF 2020



DEACON MANUEL VASQUEZ
From: Sacred Heart, Wichita Falls

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON RICHARD WRIGHT
From: St. Mark, Denton

CLASS OF 2020



DEACON DANIEL ZAVALA
From: Holy Redeemer, Aledo

FROM PAGE 55

A CHANGE OF PLANS

During his formation to become a permanent deacon, Mark Gannaway volunteered in a much-needed ministry. He found helping grieving families, as they struggle with painful, intense emotions, a difficult but necessary work of mercy.

“I’ve assisted Father Hoa [Nguyen] with funerals at Holy Family [in Fort Worth] and would often go to the funeral home with the family,” said the St. Bartholomew parishioner. “I found that it’s one of my gifts — working with people in that situation.”

Advice on how to help the bereaved navigate through tragedy and loss came from his mother-in-law who buried three of her eight children.

“She was an incredible resource in teaching me how to approach families,” Dcn. Gannaway added. “What do you say when someone dies? You don’t have to say anything. The important thing is just being there, hugging them and listening.”

Continuing to reach out long after the funeral is over and the guests have gone home is key. Life goes on and even those with the best intentions forget the loss.

“Call instead of emailing,” advised the deacon. “Grieving people want you to talk to them and bring up those wonderful memories.”

It’s those acts of kindness and charity that form the heart, he said. 🇺🇸

DE LA PÁGINA 55

le pedí a Dios que quitara todas las barreras de mi camino que me impedían ser ordenado. Perder mi trabajo fue parte de Su plan divino”.

Sentado en un pequeño jardín de oración diseñado en el patio de su casa, el ex-director parroquial de RICA encontró más tiempo para orar y escuchar las necesidades de los demás. Fue asignado a la Parroquia de Santa María Goretti durante su formación y ayudó al sacerdote en la Misa diaria cuando las órdenes de salud pública prohibieron el culto público.

“Me lo tomé muy en serio y sentí que estaba llevando las oraciones de la comunidad al altar”, aseveró el Diácono Asebedo.

Como diácono ordenado, espera alentar a los feligreses a volver a acudir a la iglesia y asistir a Misa. El residente de Arlington teme que la gente se mantenga alejada de la Misa aún después de que la pandemia disminuya.

“Quiero recordarles por qué la Iglesia sigue viva después de 2,000 años”, exclamó entusiasmado el Diácono Asebedo. “Si invito a la gente a la Eucaristía, estaré haciendo lo que Dios quiere que haga”.

HAMBRE DE CRISTO

Pese a que ha sido siempre un voluntario parroquial entusiasta, Humberto Serrano nunca consideró

convertirse en diácono por muchos años.

“Incluso cuando tenía 15 años, siempre estaba haciendo algo en la iglesia, ya fuera como monaguillo o como parte del grupo de jóvenes o del coro”, dijo el dueño de negocio que lo logró por sí mismo. “Entonces llegué a un momento de mi vida en el que le pregunté al Señor: ‘¿Qué quieres que haga además de ayudar en la parroquia?’”.

La respuesta llegó poco tiempo después, cuando su párroco de la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Fort Worth le dijo que la Diócesis estaba buscando diáconos permanentes.

“Me dijo que tenía todos los requisitos, así que oré y decidí hacerlo”, agregó. “Como diácono, eres ordenado para la Iglesia, no para una parroquia en particular”.

El Diácono Serrano, quien llegó a los Estados Unidos desde México a los trece años, cree que Dios le tiene un propósito para el resto de su vida.

La gente tiene hambre de Cristo, algo que reconoció mientras visitaba a los enfermos durante su formación pastoral.

“Quiero ayudar a la gente a acercarse a Dios, por eso quisiera catequizar”, explicó.

“Con todo lo que sucede actualmente en el mundo, vivimos en un tiempo de grandes desafíos, pero estoy listo, con la gracia de Dios”. 🇺🇸

HASTA LOS MÁS LEJOS Se Alcanzan



La parroquia de Eastland celebra 100 años con gran agradecimiento del apoyo diocesano

Por Matthew Smith y Susan Moses

Los términos “comunidad muy unida” y “mentalidad de servicio” surgen una y otra vez al preguntarle al Padre Vijaya (“VJ”) Mareedu, SAC, y a otras personas de la Parroquia de San Francisco Xavier de Eastland acerca de su parroquia y la ciudad.

“Durante los 20 años que llevo aquí he considerado siempre que San Francisco es una parroquia muy acogedora y que todos los feligreses son muy amables”, dijo la feligrés Janie Ortiz. “El Padre VJ nos conoce a todos y siempre podemos contar con él, no importa la situación que estemos pasando”.

El Diácono Ed Ferguson, que ha servido en la parroquia durante

aproximadamente cuatro años, compartió sentimientos similares al hablar sobre la parroquia que está situada en el extremo occidental de la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

“Eastland es una comunidad muy próspera y unida”, dijo el Diácono Ferguson. “Es una comunidad y parroquia llena de personas trabajadoras que se esfuerzan por comunicarse y ayudarse mutuamente. Es una comunidad de feligreses que siguen los pasos de Jesucristo”.

El Padre Mareedu y los fieles de la parroquia están emocionados de que se celebre el centenario de San Francisco Xavier en el 2020. Debido a la actual pandemia de COVID-19 se retrasó la Misa planificada para el 18 de julio

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 58



Padre Vijaya "VJ" Mareedu, SAC, celebra misa en la Parroquia de San Francisco Xavier de Eastland. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

DE LA PÁGINA 59

que hubiera sido concelebrada por el Obispo Michael Olson. Tal giro de los acontecimientos, aunque desafortunado, sirve también para enfatizar el verdadero propósito de la parroquia, explicó el Padre Mareedu.

San Francisco Xavier remonta sus comienzos al auge petrolero de la década del 1920 durante la cual la población de la pequeña ciudad creció de menos de 1,000 personas en el 1910 a aproximadamente 10,000 al final de la década. La ciudad sigue siendo pequeña hoy en día con sólo 3,960 residentes, según los números reportados en el censo del 2010.

Los católicos de Eastland comenzaron a celebrar la Misa en el 1920 en el edificio de la Corte del Condado de Eastland. El Padre Rudolph Aloysius Gerken, el párroco de Santa Rita de Ranger, era el celebrante.

La iglesia original, un edificio sencillo

de madera blanca con una cruz en lo alto de su campanario, aún se mantiene en pie. Tiene 20 bancos y caben sentadas 125 personas. Se han hecho varias remodelaciones y se agregaron altares laterales, un salón parroquial, una rectoría, un edificio con salas de clases y una gruta donada por los feligreses en el 2015, que está dedicada a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

"El tener todavía esencialmente el edificio original, es fuente de orgullo para nuestros feligreses", comentó el Padre Mareedu.

Es una especie de milagro que la iglesia original aún exista.

"Eastland es una iglesia muy pequeña y hubo dudas de su existencia en un momento dado, y hasta se pensó en combinar la parroquia con la de Cisco o Ranger", dijo el Padre Mareedu. "Pero Dios tenía otros planes".

Aunque la parroquia se ha mantenido pequeña, su vibrante congregación, que es mayormente hispana, tiene un gran

corazón, señaló el Diácono Ferguson, y agregó que los feligreses son muy dinámicos y activos.

"El énfasis de la comunidad está en la juventud y la familia", dijo. "En cuanto a la edad predominante de los feligreses, San Francisco Xavier es una parroquia joven con muchas familias y niños que la mantendrán próspera por muchos años".

El Padre Mareedu bromeó diciendo que apenas sabía una palabra de español al llegar a la Parroquia de San Francisco Xavier, en la que las Misas son en español, pero afirma que aprendió el idioma bastante rápido.

El Padre Mareedu y el Diácono Ferguson señalaron que prefieren la vida parroquial de los pueblos pequeños y la oportunidad que brindan para conocer mejor a los feligreses e interactuar con ellos. Ambos sirven también en la Parroquia de Santa Rita de Ranger, la Parroquia de San Juan de Strawn y la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora del Santo Rosario de Cisco.



Una maestra se prepara para clases en la Escuela Católica de Notre Dame. Las escuelas católicas reciben fondos de la Campaña Diocesana Anual (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)

Las cuatro parroquias reciben subvenciones operativas de la Campaña Diocesana Anual para ayudar a pagar los salarios del Padre Mareedu, el Diácono Ferguson y el personal de la formación de la juventud.

El Padre Mareedu se siente profundamente agradecido por la subvención de este año, especialmente durante la pandemia, pues muchas personas están sufriendo por la crisis económica y el aislamiento en que están viviendo. “Cuando los fieles reciben la Santa Eucaristía se sienten llenos de esperanza. La Eucaristía nos conecta con Dios. Recibimos los sacramentos; recibimos a Dios; recibimos esperanza”.

APOYO GENEROSO

Cada año, los fieles de la Diócesis de Fort Worth aportan fondos que apoyan a las personas, los programas, las escuelas y las parroquias de toda la diócesis. Durante la campaña del 2020 que finalizó en junio, más de 11,000 familias donaron

sobre \$3.5 millones, la mayor cantidad recaudada en los 37 años de historia de la Campaña.

Este año, 33 parroquias rurales o necesitadas recibirán subsidios por un total de \$949,200. La mayoría de este dinero se utilizará para pagar sueldos, como en la Parroquia de San Francisco Xavier.

Otro receptor de los fondos de la Campaña es Caridades Católicas Fort Worth. Cada día más personas solicitan ayuda de la organización sin fines de lucro, que recibirá \$300,000 de la Campaña de Apelación este año. “Las necesidades de las personas a las que sirven han crecido exponencialmente”, dijo Renée Underwood, Directora de Operaciones de la Fundación de Avance de la Diócesis. “Hay muchas necesidades en nuestra diócesis. Los católicos buenos, generosos y fieles que tenemos en la diócesis responderán como se necesita”.

Hay varios ministerios que se benefician de la Campaña Diocesana

Anual, tales como el ministerio carcelario, el ministerio universitario, los sacerdotes jubilados y el ministerio de matrimonio y vida familiar. Este año, el ministerio de Respeto a la Vida, que siempre ha sido respaldado por la Campaña Diocesana Anual, recibirá un aumento significativo de fondos con respecto a los años anteriores.

La educación es otra prioridad de la Campaña Diocesana Anual. Para proporcionar una base sólida para la próxima generación de católicos, un gran porcentaje de las donaciones aportan fondos a la educación de los seminaristas, la formación de los diáconos permanentes y proveen asistencia de matrícula para las familias en cada una de las diecinueve escuelas católicas diocesanas.

Además de los \$250,000 destinados a la asistencia de matrícula, la Fundación de Avance proporcionará al menos \$325,000 en subsidios operativos a doce

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 63

ELEGIDO PARA EL MINISTERIO SAGRADO

El Padre Pedro Martínez es ordenado como sacerdote por el Obispo Olson

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Ante sus familiares y amigos que se reunieron en la Parroquia de San Mateo de Arlington para su primera Misa el 30 de junio, el recién ordenado Padre Pedro Martínez relató en español, y luego en inglés, cómo sus padres lo apoyaron en su jornada de siete años hacia el sacerdocio.

El Obispo Michael Olson confirió el Sacramento del Orden Sacerdotal al diácono de transición en la Parroquia de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton la noche del 29 de junio. “Éste es un momento muy importante para mí”, dijo el Padre Martínez, e hizo una pausa para dirigirse a sus padres, José y María Martínez, quienes estaban sentados en el banco delantero de la iglesia, la que había sido una vez su parroquia. “Estoy muy agradecido de mi familia por alentarme en mi vocación. Seguiré



José y María Martínez, los padres del Padre Pedro Martínez. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

rezando por ellos, y espero que sigan rezando por mí también”.

Durante la ceremonia de la ordenación el joven de 34 años le regaló a su madre el *manutergio* (manutergium), un paño de lino blanco que se utiliza para limpiar y atar las manos de un nuevo sacerdote después de que el Obispo las unge con el Santo Crisma. Según una antigua tradición, que muchas diócesis están reviviendo actualmente, la madre desata las manos de su hijo y conserva el manutergio por el resto de su vida. Tras su muerte, este manutergio se coloca en las manos de la madre



para que así todos en el cielo y en la tierra sepan que ella es la madre de un sacerdote. Cuando el Señor le diga: “Yo te di la vida, y ¿qué me has dado tú?” Ella entrega el manutergio y le responde: “Te di a mi hijo como sacerdote”.

José Martínez recibió la primera estola confesional de su hijo. En el Sacramento de la Reconciliación una persona recibe la justicia, la misericordia y el amor de Dios.

“Un sacerdote aprende primero de su propio padre acerca de la misericordia y la justicia, por eso este regalo es muy apropiado”, explicó el Padre Martínez.

Después de abrazar a sus siete hermanos, el devoto hermano le entregó a cada uno de sus dos hermanos y a sus cinco hermanas una caja que contenía un pedazo de la estola que usó como diácono.

“Les pido que recen al Señor para que sea un verdadero siervo como Jesucristo y quiero que sepan que vine a servir y no a ser servido”, añadió.

Muchos de los feligreses que

asistieron a la primera Misa del Padre Martínez lo acompañaron también en su ordenación. Más de 475 familiares y amigos, que guardaron estrictamente el distanciamiento social y otros protocolos de seguridad, observaron desde los bancos de la iglesia cómo el Obispo Olson confirió el Sacramento del Orden Sacerdotal a Pedro Javier Martínez Rodríguez durante un antiguo rito lleno de hermoso simbolismo. Un grupo grande de personas pudo ver también la ceremonia de la ordenación en el gimnasio de la parroquia y más de 1,300 personas accedieron a la liturgia en línea, que fue transmitida en vivo en el sitio web diocesano, desde sus hogares y con el uso de los dispositivos móviles.

Durante la Misa celebrada por la tarde, el Obispo Michael Olson compartió las palabras de las Escrituras que le fueron dichas a él en su propia ordenación sacerdotal hace 26 años. “Apacienta el rebaño de Dios que se te ha encomendado. Y cuídalo como su pastor”. (*I Pedro 5, 2*)

“Protege al rebaño del lobo y del asalariado”, aconsejó el Obispo y se dirigió al diácono de transición en el día de la Solemnidad de San Pedro y San Pablo. “No hay nada mejor ni más valioso que yo pueda ofrecerte en esta gozosa ocasión”.

El Obispo Olson también alentó al nuevo sacerdote a “confiar siempre en el Señor”, y le recordó que fueron las oraciones de la Iglesia las que ayudaron a llevarlo al momento de su ordenación y a responder “sí” al llamado de Cristo.

Durante el momento más solemne y esencial del rito de ordenación, el Obispo Olson silenciosamente impuso las manos sobre la cabeza del Diácono Martínez antes de recitar la Oración de Consagración para implorar la efusión del Espíritu Santo sobre el ordenando. Luego de recibir una estola y una casulla del Padre Thu Nguyen y del Padre John McKone, quienes desempeñaron un papel importante en su vocación, el Padre

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 62

DE LA PÁGINA 61

Martínez regresó al altar donde el Obispo ungió sus manos con el Santo Crisma. El acto de la unción con el Crisma, cuyo origen se encuentra en el Antiguo Testamento, significa que una persona está consagrada para ejercer su ministerio sagrado.

José y María Martínez se emocionaron mucho y derramaron lágrimas en el momento en que su hijo se convirtió en sacerdote para toda la vida.

“Estoy muy contenta de que Dios me haya bendecido de esta manera”, dijo María Martínez llena de gran emoción. “Estoy muy, muy feliz”.

Mónica y Gisela González conocieron a Pedro Martínez cuando ellas eran miembros del grupo juvenil de la Parroquia de San Mateo.

“Lo conocemos desde hace ocho años y el Padre Martínez es una gran persona y un gran amigo”, explicó Mónica. “Siempre ha sido muy amable con la gente y es alguien con quien es fácil de hablar”.

Después de llegar a los Estados Unidos desde México, las hermanas fueron llevadas al grupo de jóvenes por su madre, para que las niñas conocieran a personas de su misma edad mientras seguían creciendo en la fe.

“Los amigos que hicimos entonces, como Pedro, son como familia para nosotros”, continuó. “Éste es un día muy emocionante para él. Queríamos estar aquí para compartirlo con él”.

La jornada del Padre Martínez que lo llevó hasta su ordenación sacerdotal comprendió años de “oración y discernimiento”, según comentó a *North Texas Catholic* antes del comienzo de la liturgia.

El Padre Martínez nació en el centro de México y vino a Texas con su familia cuando tenía sólo 14 años. Al pasar los años, obtuvo una licenciatura y una maestría de la Universidad de Texas en Arlington. Antes de ingresar al seminario, el feligrés de la Parroquia de San Mateo trabajó para la Ciudad de Arlington como especialista de servicios



El Padre Pedro Martínez eleva el Precioso Cuerpo de Cristo durante la consagración el 12 de julio en la Parroquia de San Pedro Apóstol. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

humanos.

Su difunto tío, un sacerdote diocesano en Chihuahua, México, tuvo una gran influencia temprano en su vida, pero el nuevo sacerdote acredita al ex pastor de San Mateo, el Padre Héctor Medina, por haberle hecho la pregunta que invita a la reflexión: “Veo algo en ti. ¿Te gustaría ser sacerdote?”

“La idea sorprende siempre, pero veía a ese sacerdote como un modelo a seguir y un verdadero pastor”, recordó el ex miembro del grupo juvenil de la parroquia. “Vi la forma en que se preocupaba por el pueblo de Dios y eso me inspiró”.

El Padre Martínez ha sido asignado para servir como vicario parroquial de San Pedro Apóstol de Fort Worth después de su ordenación. Está muy entusiasmado por comenzar el próximo capítulo de su vida.

“Estoy realmente emocionado de ser sacerdote para el pueblo de Dios, para cuidar de sus almas y sus necesidades; y ser un representante de Cristo para ellos en la tierra”, expresó. “Tener mis amigos y familiares aquí hoy es una gran bendición. Somos ordenados como sacerdotes para servir a las personas. Incluso en medio de una pandemia, Dios está siempre con nosotros”. 🇺🇸

DE LA PÁGINA 59

escuelas católicas, lo que representa casi el doble de los \$175,000 otorgados como subsidios operativos escolares el año pasado.

LA PRÓXIMA GENERACIÓN

Cuando se abrió el nuevo curso escolar del Colegio Católico de Notre Dame el 10 de agosto, la escuela de Wichita Falls implementó su plan de reestructuración de la escuela intermedia, que se desarrolló a lo largo de los años con el aporte de las familias, las parroquias y la Oficina de las Escuelas Católicas. Con una subvención de la Fundación de Avance, la escuela compró un nuevo plan de estudios de ciencias y matemáticas para los estudiantes de intermedia.

“Ésta es una gran ventaja. Nos permite alinear nuestros estudios de matemáticas y ciencias desde primer grado a octavo grado”, dijo Daniel Escobedo, Presidente (y exalumno) de Notre Dame. “Esto fortalece la integridad académica de nuestro programa y prepara a los estudiantes para obtener el éxito académico”.

Explicó que enseñar los principios de matemáticas y ciencias con la misma estructura durante ocho años seguidos proporciona una repetición que facilita el aprendizaje y “hace que los niños sobresalgan”.

Escobedo reconoció el “increíble gasto” que implica la compra de los nuevos libros de texto, lo que explica por qué es común que las escuelas utilicen los libros de texto durante diez años o más, “hasta que no puedan seguir con ellos”.

Escobedo aprecia que los padres, las parroquias, los sacerdotes, el Obispo Michael Olson, la Oficina de las Escuelas Católicas y la Campaña Diocesana Anual hayan invertido en la escuela, que data del 1904. “Es realmente un esfuerzo grupal desde el punto de vista económico y espiritual”, dijo.

“El esfuerzo rendirá sus frutos en los próximos años”, añadió. “El futuro de la comunidad católica está en las escuelas

católicas. Es donde se establecen los cimientos para ser católicos fieles”.

LA RAZÓN DE NUESTRA ESPERANZA

Durante este tiempo cuando muchas personas sufren dificultades económicas y las recomendaciones de distanciamiento social crean una sensación de aislamiento, nuestra esperanza permanece constante, dijo Underwood, al explicar el tema de la Campaña de este año: La razón de nuestra esperanza.

“Muchas cosas cambian, y muchas cosas son inciertas, pero Jesucristo, y lo que Él enseña y Su mensaje, son la razón de nuestra esperanza”, dijo Underwood. “Siempre tenemos esperanza. Es la única verdad. Es una constante en nuestras vidas”.

Nuestra esperanza en Cristo nos inspira a responder con gratitud y generosidad en el servicio y el amor. En este momento de sufrimiento, mirar más allá de nosotros mismos nos trae consuelo y un sentimiento de agradecimiento, según lo declaró Underwood.

Con el aumento de las necesidades materiales y espirituales derivadas de la pandemia, la Fundación de Avance ha incluido en el sobre de respuesta de la Campaña una hoja para pedir oración por las intenciones de los que así lo deseen. Las Monjas Carmelitas Descalzas enclaustradas en el Monasterio de la Santísima Trinidad de Arlington rezarán por esas intenciones durante todo el año. Además, el Obispo Olson recordará esas intenciones durante una Misa especial en la Catedral de San Patricio.

Underwood alentó a los católicos a enviar sus intenciones de oración independientemente de si se haga o no una aportación a la Campaña.

Las tarjetas de compromiso se enviarán por correo a todos los hogares registrados de la Diócesis de Fort Worth a mediados de septiembre, y se aceptan actualmente donaciones en línea en bit.ly/ADAdonate. 🇺🇸

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



BUENAS ALTERNATIVAS

Las protecciones nacionales contra las prácticas de préstamos abusivos se rescindieron, pero la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paul ofrece alternativas

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

“Como maestra, sabía que no era lo mejor, pero en ese momento, era todo lo que podía hacer”.

Así es como Debbie O. describió la crisis económica que la llevó a un negocio de préstamos de título muy conocido para obtener rápido el dinero que necesitaba.

Debbie se vio obligada a retirarse temprano de su trabajo para poder cuidar a un familiar anciano, pero esto conllevó que no pudiera hacer el pago del alquiler de su vivienda y que se fueran acumulando las facturas de los servicios públicos. Aunque la tasa de interés para pedir prestado el dinero era de entre un 300 a 400 por ciento, la conveniencia y el alivio temporal de los avisos constantes por el retraso de los pagos la tentaron.

“Fue muy fácil obtener el dinero”, admitió la residente de Arlington que salió de la tienda con un cheque de \$1,500 en su bolsillo. “Sabían que yo era una maestra sustituta y que tenía un auto. Si no pagaba el préstamo, tomarían mi automóvil”.

En lugar de ayudarla con sus finanzas, el préstamo sólo aumentó la carga de su

deuda y su nivel de estrés. A menudo, los prestatarios pagan más en intereses y comisiones que la cantidad de dinero que toman prestada porque no pueden hacer los pagos a plazo del préstamo cuando se vencen.

Ésta es la difícil y triste situación para miles de consumidores estadounidenses, especialmente en Texas, donde existen muy pocas protecciones para ellos.

En el futuro cercano no se ve ningún alivio de las prácticas depredadoras. La Agencia de Protección Financiera del Consumidor (CFPB, por siglas en inglés) emitió el 7 de julio su norma final respecto a los préstamos de pequeña cantidad. La decisión, que fue condenada por la Alianza de Préstamos Justos de Texas (TFLA, por siglas en inglés), la Comisión de Vida Cristiana y la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Texas, rescinde las protecciones nacionales que podrían ayudar a los consumidores a evitar un ciclo de deuda. En el 2017 se establecieron salvaguardas de la “capacidad de pago”, luego de haberse realizado por cinco años una amplia investigación por parte de la Agencia de Protección Financiera del Consumidor. Sin embargo, estas protecciones han sido eliminadas en la

enmienda del fallo recién emitido en julio con el fin de “mantener el acceso al crédito del consumidor y la competencia en el mercado”, anunció la agencia federal en un comunicado de prensa.

Según la Alianza de Préstamos Justos de Texas, del 2012 al 2017, los tejanos pagaron \$9.2 billones en tarifas cobradas por préstamos de alto costo. Durante el mismo período, 218,347 familias perdieron un automóvil a causa de un préstamo de título. El año pasado los equipos de préstamos de títulos de automóviles y los prestamistas de día de pago recuperaron 42,878 automóviles de tejanos necesitados. Los prestamistas de título de auto y día de pago tienden a atraer clientes de las poblaciones de bajos ingresos y otras poblaciones vulnerables que están desesperadas por obtener crédito.

Liderados por los Obispos de Texas, Faith Leaders 4 Fair Lending, en colaboración con la Alianza de Préstamos Justos de Texas, están abogando por reformar las prácticas abusivas del día de pago y la finalización de préstamos de título de automóviles a nivel local, estatal y federal.

“Las reglas propuestas podrían limitar el número de préstamos que los



(NTC/Ben Torres)

prestatarios puedan hacer seguidos y exigirían que los prestamistas verifiquen primero que sus clientes tengan los medios para pagar la deuda”, dijo Rozanne Veaser, la administradora del Programa de Conversión de Mini Préstamos (MLCP, por siglas en inglés), que se ofrece en el área local por La Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl.

Esta organización sin fines de lucro comenzó en el 2016 y tiene su sede en la parroquia. Su misión es ayudar a las personas a pagar el saldo actual de un préstamo de título o día de pago al calificar para un préstamo de conversión a un bajo interés. Más de 100 prestatarios han participado de este programa de conversión desde que se inició, y algunos de ellos recibieron un dinero de bonificación por pagar el préstamo en su totalidad y completar las sesiones de asesoramiento financiero.

El análisis de costo-beneficio citado por la Agencia de Protección Financiera del Consumidor en su decisión final predice que la industria de préstamos de título de auto y día de pago podría ver unas ganancias adicionales de entre \$3.9 y \$4.1 mil millones al año.

“Esta regla va a resultar en el aumento de las ganancias de los prestamistas de alto costo en un momento en que los tejanos y todos los estadounidenses están pasando por dificultades económicas sin precedentes”, declaró un comunicado de prensa del 8 de julio que fue emitido conjuntamente por la Alianza de Préstamos Justos de Texas y Texas Faith Leaders 4 Fair Lending. “Por el contrario, la protección del consumidor se debilitaría al derogar los estándares de garantía de su capacidad de pago”.

Shannon Rosedale, analista de políticas de Caridades Católicas Fort Worth, está de acuerdo. Ella califica la decisión de la Agencia de Protección Financiera del Consumidor (CFPB) de rescindir las protecciones de préstamos de día de pago como una “noticia devastadora”, y dijo que el resultado tendrá un impacto negativo en detrimento de las poblaciones vulnerables de la comunidad, “incluidas las familias a las que servimos”.

“La decisión de eliminar el mandato de garantía permitirá que los prestamistas depredadores busquen y atrapen a los

prestatarios en un ciclo de deuda perjudicial que sería casi imposible de terminar”, dijo Rosedale. “Al renunciar a cualquier verificación de la capacidad de pago, las familias en su momento más desesperado estarán expuestas a las duras condiciones de los prestamistas de título de auto y día de pago, lo que va a perpetuar aún más su pobreza”.

Un estudio de Pew Charitable Trusts mostró que el 69 por ciento de los que toman préstamos de día de pago usan el dinero para deudas recurrentes. El prestatario promedio obtiene ocho préstamos al año, y

gasta \$520 en intereses y comisiones por un préstamo cuya cantidad promedio es de \$500. La mayoría de los prestatarios carecen de un título universitario y ganan menos de \$40,000 al año. Muchos de los prestatarios son mujeres entre las edades de 25 y 44 años.

Con la ayuda de La Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl, Debbie O. pudo convertir su oneroso préstamo de título de \$1,500 en un pago mensual de \$79 hecho a una cooperativa de crédito local. Los trabajadores de la compañía de préstamos de título se sorprendieron cuando ella entregó un cheque con el monto del pago total del préstamo.

“Ahorré probablemente de \$700 a \$800 en intereses”, dijo la agradecida participante del Programa de Conversión de Mini Préstamos. “La Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl confió en mí para hacer responsablemente el pago mensual a la cooperativa de crédito y así lo hice. Cuando pagué el año pasado, mi puntaje de crédito aumentó 30 puntos o más”.

Ella declara que el mayor beneficio fue el alivio que sintió. “Pagar ese préstamo de título habría sido una verdadera lucha para mí”, agregó Debbie. 🇺🇸

Paz en la Tormenta

En tiempos como los que vivimos hoy, me viene a la mente una historia de Jesús que podemos leer en el Evangelio de San Mateo. He aquí el pasaje bíblico a que me estoy refiriendo: *“Jesús subió a la barca y sus discípulos le siguieron. Se levantó una tormenta muy violenta en el lago, con olas que cubrían la barca, pero él dormía. Los discípulos se acercaron y lo despertaron diciendo: ‘¡Señor, sálvanos, que estamos perdidos!’ Pero él les dijo: ‘¿Qué miedosos son ustedes! ¿Qué poca fe tienen!’ Entonces se levantó, dio una orden al viento y al mar, y todo volvió a la más completa calma. Grande fue el asombro; aquellos hombres decían: ‘¿Quién es éste, que hasta los vientos y el mar le obedecen?’”* (Mt. 8:23-27)

Podemos ver en el relato de San Mateo que, aún cuando Jesús se encontraba físicamente en medio de ellos, temieron. Hoy, aún con Jesús en medio de nosotros, tememos, las olas que baten nuestras barcas y llevan como nombre COVID-19, racismo, marchas/protestas violentas, cuarentenas, inestabilidades migratorias, aborto, ataque al núcleo familiar y muchas otras olas de problemas que atacan y perturben nuestra paz.

Buscamos la paz, pero no la hayamos y nos preguntamos, ¿de dónde viene nuestro auxilio? Podemos contestar como el Salmista proclamando juntos el *Salmo 121, 1-8*: *“Mi auxilio me viene del Señor, que hizo el cielo y la tierra. No deja que tu pie dé un*

paso en falso, no duerme tu guardián; jamás lo rinde el sueño o cabecea el guardián de Israel. El Señor es tu guardián y tu sombra, el Señor está a tu diestra. Durante el día el sol no te maltratará, ni la luna de noche. Te preserva el Señor de todo mal, él guarda tu alma. Él te guarda al salir y al regresar, ahora y para siempre.”



Joel Rodríguez

Si puedes pronunciar estas palabras del salmista, entonces te pido que ores por nosotros, pero si encuentras que estas palabras no reflejan tu relación con Jesús, entonces es tiempo de discernir.

Podemos mirar las tormentas en nuestras vidas de dos maneras, como un evento desafortunado o como un medio para Dios manifestarse en tu vida, si sólo permites que Su voluntad te guíe, pero para reconocer Su voluntad, tienes que en primer lugar conocerlo. Muchos nos preguntamos ¿Cómo puedo yo llegar a conocer a Dios?

El Padre desde el momento que nos creó se nos revela y se nos da a cada uno de nosotros desde el momento de nuestra concepción, dotados por su voluntad, con razón y libre albedrío. Él nos regala, por medio de Cristo, acceso a Sí mismo. Por lo tanto, nuestra identidad descansa en Él, pues por Él fuimos creados y nunca nos abandonará pues como nos dice San Mateo: *“¿Acaso un par de pajaritos no se venden por unos centavos? Pero ni uno de ellos cae en tierra sin que lo permita vuestro Padre. En cuanto a ustedes, hasta sus cabellos están todos contados. ¿No valen ustedes más que muchos pajaritos? Por*

lo tanto, no tengan miedo.” (Mt. 10, 29-31).

Así que les pregunto, ¿ante las tormentas y crisis de hoy, ¿a qué le tienen miedo? El creyente que tiene su fundamento establecido en Dios, no teme a las tormentas y crisis terrenales.

Queda de parte nuestra desarrollar una relación íntima con nuestro Dios, pues como nos dice el *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*: *“Dios quiere hacer a los hombres capaces de responderle, de conocerle y de amarle más allá de lo que ellos serían capaces por sus propias fuerzas.”* (CIC 52)

Preguntemonos, ¿realmente conocemos al Señor? Somos llamados a ser testigos de Su amor en medio de las tormentas y las crisis que nos ha tocado vivir. Dejemos que Su luz brille a través de nosotros atrayendo las almas moribundas a recibir vida y paz en Él.

Les extiendo una invitación hoy a conocer a nuestro Señor Jesucristo, a desarrollar una relación íntima con Él para que en medio de la tormenta nos acompañe en nuestra barca y acojamos Su promesa: *“Les he hablado de estas cosas para que tengan paz en mí. Ustedes encontrarán tribulación en el mundo. Pero, ánimo, yo he vencido al mundo.”* (Jn 16, 33) ✚

Francisco Joel Rodríguez es el Director de la Oficina de Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis de Fort Worth.



CIUDADANOS FIELES Y LA FORMACIÓN DE LA CONCIENCIA

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



 @BpOlsonFW

En enero tuve la oportunidad de viajar a Roma con los otros obispos de Texas, Oklahoma y Arkansas para nuestra visita *Ad Limina*, durante la cual fuimos a orar a las tumbas de los apóstoles y mártires, nos reunimos para discutir la realización de la misión del Evangelio en nuestras respectivas diócesis y nos encontramos con el Santo Padre. En ese encuentro el Santo Padre nos ofreció sabios consejos sobre la formación de la conciencia de los fieles, especialmente con respecto a la responsabilidad política de los ciudadanos.

El Papa Francisco aconsejó, “primero oren y luego aconsejen a la gente que oren por sabiduría; entonces, articulen como Obispos, siendo los Sucesores de los Apóstoles, lo que Cristo enseña en el Evangelio y la doctrina según el Depósito de la fe, transmitida fielmente a lo largo de los siglos. Continúen rezando y no le digan a la gente por qué partido o candidato votar, especialmente cuando les exijan que lo hagan”.

Mi observación es que muchas personas omiten con frecuencia el primer y esencial aspecto de la formación de la conciencia: la oración centrada en Cristo y bajo el Espíritu Santo. Cuando las personas omiten este paso esencial, reducen rápido la integridad del Evangelio en su totalidad a una mera serie de cuestiones fragmentadas que, si bien son buenas en sí mismas, llevan a la persona a racionalizar e ignorar otras cuestiones que son igualmente esenciales para el Evangelio e inherentes a la dignidad de la persona humana, que ha sido creada a imagen y semejanza del Dios Trino. En poco tiempo nuestras preferencias

partidistas comienzan a adquirir la característica de la religión que se apodera de nuestro corazón, en lugar de la plenitud del Evangelio revelado en Jesucristo y transmitido fielmente por la Iglesia.

En nuestro corazón existe un trono para que Cristo se sienta con soberanía. Si no lo invitamos a Él a ocupar el lugar que le corresponde allí, otra cosa lo hará. Sin Cristo como el centro de nuestras vidas a través de la oración y el estudio, cualquier otro valor o asunto, sin importar cuán inherentemente bueno sea, puede convertirse pronto en un ídolo falso que nos dominará.

La auténtica oración a Cristo, guiada por el Espíritu Santo, nos salva de adoptar una postura de relativismo al incorporar la virtud de la prudencia dentro de nuestro carácter. Es a través de la prudencia que podemos reconocer las acciones intrínsecamente buenas como distinguibles de las acciones que son intrínsecamente malas. Es también a través de la prudencia que podemos reconocer cuando las circunstancias convierten una acción que era intrínsecamente buena en una mala. Si ponemos en práctica la prudencia, que hayamos nutrido a través de la oración y las buenas obras, entonces podemos estar seguros de que toda buena acción tenga como objetivo fundamental el amor a Dios y al prójimo. Por lo tanto, las “cuestiones de prudencia” en la política nunca deben simplificarse como opcionales o prescindibles al compararse con otras cuestiones que son siempre y en todo lugar imperativas.

Podemos ver que tenemos la

responsabilidad cívica de votar con una conciencia bien formada, pero además no se puede perder de vista que nuestra responsabilidad cívica se extiende más allá de simplemente emitir un voto. Es siempre también nuestra responsabilidad como católicos de orar con caridad por nuestros funcionarios electos, especialmente si no son de nuestra preferencia. Esto incluye responsabilizar a nuestros funcionarios electos de sus acciones; incluye pagar nuestros impuestos y contribuciones; incluye que estemos dispuestos a servir para apoyar las acciones sociales, pero no gubernamentales, y ayudar a nuestro prójimo, en particular a nuestros hermanos y hermanas vulnerables; e incluye una disposición de gratitud y respeto por aquellas personas que están dispuestas a sacrificarse y a servir por el bien común al ocupar cargos electos.

El *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* declara, “Pertenece a la misión de la Iglesia emitir un juicio moral, incluso sobre cosas que afectan al orden político cuando lo exijan los derechos fundamentales de la persona o la salvación de las almas”. (CIC 2246)

Esta elección concierne a muchos derechos humanos fundamentales: ante todo, el derecho a la vida y otros derechos humanos esenciales que dependen del derecho a la vida.

Como su Obispo, les pido que oren por la guía del Espíritu y que visiten el sitio web de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos para leer su declaración sobre la formación de la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles [bit.ly/catholicvoters] y, por favor, voten. 🇺🇸



**Hope for
Our Parishes**



Let us hold unwaveringly to our
confession that gives us hope, for He who
made the promise is trustworthy. We
must consider how to rouse one another
to love and good works.

Letter to the Hebrews 10:23-24

The Reason

FOR OUR **HOPE**
2021 ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL



**Hope for
Those in Need**

bit.ly/ADADonate



**Hope for
Our Children**

