

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



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EXAMPLES, NOT MODELS

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

 @BpOlsonFW



We have arrived at the time of the year when we are reminded to be attentive to all that is required to go back to school. It's prompted me to consider the modern practices employed by many universities and other institutions of higher education to promote their schools as optimal choices for parents to make on behalf of their children. For this purpose, many universities research how their recent graduates and distant alumni are doing in their careers. They then synthesize the data along with contemporary values of their prospective students or their parents and develop models of what their ideal graduates and alumni look like.

As we begin our school year as Catholics either in Catholic schools or in other forms of education, we might consider two things in light of the practice that I have just described. The first point is that any model is not real and is limited in what it can show us to inform our decisions. Models are synthesized ideals that are abstract and not real nor concrete. Models are entirely up to our interpretation and so they can be presented in a way to coax a desired understanding on the part of the agent offering the model.

In comparison with the conceptual design of a model, God offers us examples. Examples are real people who teach us by how they live and give witness when we engage them in conversation or simply by observing them through our daily contact with them. As Catholics we have the real examples of Christ, the Blessed Mother, and the saints to serve as our guides in word and deed. We also have our educators, chief among them being our fathers and mothers, older siblings, and our teachers — all of whom are real people and not synthesized values and concepts. A quote from Saint Thomas Aquinas seems particularly apt to clarify the importance of this distinction, “Better to illuminate than merely to shine, to deliver to others contemplated truths than merely to contemplate.”

Such examples lead us to the second point for our consideration: the overarching goal of Catholic education is to come to know and to love the fullness of the truth that Jesus taught — the free love of God and neighbor. Jesus set an example for us in this regard by His consistently clear preaching, His compassionate healing through miracles, and His selfless and saving action on the cross culminating in His resurrection and ascension. He has taught us to go and do the same. This overarching goal is our ultimate end and purpose in life and the measurement by which each of us assess our personal priorities that are unique to us but also fused together by our common human nature directed to common excellence and flourishing.

There is a particular challenge today for us entrusted with the mission of authentic and Catholic education: to teach as Jesus taught. That challenge is the false presumption among many in our world today that the highest good to be obtained — the *Summum Bonum*, the overarching purpose of education — is not love of God and neighbor, but the attainment of an affluent lifestyle that affords a person an egocentric self-sufficiency in this world, with Catholic and religious faith as an afterthought or as the mere decoration of one's private familial or cultural history. This affects many of us who are mothers and fathers of children who are returning to school in pursuit of an education, and who feel pressure and anxiety for their children not to have enough of this world's goods to live but rather, to possess more than enough material goods to be completely autonomous.

The start of the new school year is a time for us to examine again our value for education and our responsibility in this apostolate as parents and educators to set a good example. It is a time for us to ask God for clarity of mind and firmness of purpose to set rightly ordered priorities directed to love of God and neighbor and to courageously carry them out with trust in the real providence of the all-loving God. 🇺🇸

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Importance of a “Why”

In mid-August I finished reading two books about our Jewish brethren and their suffering during the Holocaust. It was honestly some of the most painful reading I’ve done in my entire life.

But buried in so many pages of suffering were some important lessons. The books, while hitting on the same subject and being written after surviving similarly tragic circumstances, differ broadly in their conclusions drawn and lessons learned. In *Night*, Elie Wiesel touches on the raw, boundless evil that swallowed up his world, his innocence, and his hope in humanity during his imprisonment at Auschwitz and Buchenwald. For Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* reflects back on his time in Auschwitz, where he, like Wiesel, suffered a torrent of torments, including losing his wife.

Both books, in my estimation, are must-reads. Wiesel’s is an almost poetically written reminder — a plea, even — that we must never let this horror happen again. Frankl’s points us to a truth summed up well by the words of Nietzsche: “He who has a Why to live for can bear almost any How.”

Indeed, both Wiesel and Frankl leaned heavily on their “whys” to overcome the immense odds stacked against their survival. Frankl especially leaned on his to avoid becoming dehumanized or morally deformed after being pushed to his limits in the concentration camp.

So what is a “why?” Frankl defines it simply as our “primary motivation in our lives” — the thing which gives our lives meaning or purpose. Of course, that differs from person to person, from time to time, and there may be more than one. But he suggests that if one wants a “why” that *truly* gives life meaning, that “why” must point and be “directed to something, or someone, other than oneself...by giving [oneself] to a cause to serve or another person to love.”

I submit to you that as Catholic Christians we are blessed and highly favored. We have something greater than any other “why”: God “who so loved the world, that He gave His only Son” (*John 3:16*). To share eternal life with Him is our ultimate purpose.

Like with Frankl and Wiesel, our “Why” helps us overcome and stand against the mind-boggling evil that occurs on a daily basis in our world. Even when we’re the direct victims of injustice or suffering, our Why doesn’t abandon us. He suffers with us, giving our pain purpose. Out of our deaths, He brings new life. Our Why isn’t only a “why.” He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Juan Guajardo
EDITOR



Christ Child Society member Anna Treadway distributed meals and activity kits to families of the Flower Mound Mobile Home Park on July 2. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Love is in the bag: mission of Christ Child Society grows

LEWISVILLE — In 2018, Patricia Gonzalez and her mother planted the seeds for a local chapter of the Christ Child Society by holding an introductory meeting for interested people in her living room.

In less than four years, the apostolate has taken root, grown, and is bearing fruit for children in Denton County.

The nonprofit, aligned with St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Lewisville, has grown from a handful of members to about 55 and has expanded how it fulfills its mission to challenge poverty, one child at a time.

Christ Child Society continues its core service, the LAYETTES and Literacy program which provides infant clothing, diapers, and nursery items to newborn patients at PediPlace in Lewisville. Plus, members of the Christ Child Society strengthen reading skills of elementary students at Central and Mill Street schools in Lewisville with

tutoring and mentoring.

That's where the members started, but they didn't stop there. Through prayer, brainstorming, and planning, the organization has added several other ongoing community service programs, all to improve the lives of children in need in the local community.

The nonprofit brings healthy snacks to families at PediPlace, holds free summer book fairs, distributes early literacy bags for parents at Loreto House, and provides bags of comfort items to foster children.

Along with growth in membership and service has come growth in faith. Gonzalez said, "We are doing God's work. We are trying to spread the love of the Christ Child."

Plans are underway for its second major fundraiser, the Christ Child Fiesta, to be held Sept. 18. Funds raised at that event will support the layette bags, the early literacy bags, and the foster care comfort bags.

Fundraising begins for new Dominican convent

FORT WORTH — The Advancement Foundation has started a capital campaign to raise \$2.5 million to build a new convent for the Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate on the grounds of Nolan Catholic High School in east Fort Worth.

Ground has been broken and construction has begun on the new home for the sisters, scheduled to open for the 2022-23 school year.

It's an undertaking that Bishop Michael Olson has identified as important in improving the lives of the 10 sisters who help educate the Catholic youth of the diocese. Currently, the sisters live in an older facility on the high school campus, and the new convent would help attract more

sisters to come work in the diocese.

The new convent, measuring roughly 11,000 square feet, will include living quarters for 14 and a small chapel.

Renée Underwood, chief development officer at the Advancement Foundation, said the campaign is very important for Catholic education.

"We're really excited because this campaign has so many elements that matter to faithful Catholics. Those of us who were taught by nuns or sisters know that importance," Underwood said. "It's our opportunity to pay that back."

The sisters teach at seven diocesan schools and in parish ministries.

— Lance Murray



Seminarian Michael Marincel leads a Sacred Heart enthronement prayer at a parishioner's home on July 14 in Strawn. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Seminarians grateful for experiences in the field

STRAWN — After not seeing time in parishes last summer due to the pandemic, seminarians for the Diocese of Fort Worth are grateful for the firsthand lessons they experienced this summer throughout the diocese.

For 40 days, four of those seminarians, Michael Marincel, Peter Nguyen, Javier Escutia, and Jacob Zimmerer, assisted Father Vijaya “VJ” Mareedu, pastor of St. John in Strawn, St. Rita in Ranger, Holy Rosary in Cisco, and St. Francis Xavier in Eastland, in his day-to-day pastoral work.

“It was definitely an eye-opening experience into the life of a priest,” Escutia said. “That a priest doesn’t have time to sit around, he is pretty active. Just seeing how Fr. VJ — a lot of his time is taken up with sick calls, taking care of all the pastoral needs of his parishioners and parishes.”

During the summer months, seminarians receive assignments that

expose them to parish life and other ministries.

The four seminarians assigned to Fr. VJ’s parishes stayed busy running two Vacation Bible Schools for youth of the four churches; visiting homes of parishioners to pray the Sacred Heart enthronement and share a meal; and assisting at almost every liturgy in that span (about 50 by one seminarian’s estimate). They also pitched in with odd jobs around the church community, like doing landscape work and feeding cattle.

“It was a really cool experience,” Marincel said of paying pastoral visits to families. “I was amazed at how warmly the families welcomed us. We would show up on their doorsteps and it’s like we were family already.”

Last summer, seminarians were appointed to diocesan departments, such as the Chancery, Catechesis, or Vocations Office.

— Juan Guajardo

Knights show love, life with ultrasound donation

ALEDO — A major fundraiser of the Knights of Columbus Council 17196 got off with a bang.

The Knights based at Holy Redeemer Parish in Aledo hosted a clay shooting tournament this spring. Funds raised from the skeet shoot, plus donations from Knights of Columbus Council 7264 (St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford), Council 4101 (St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth), and seven other local and state councils will purchase an ultrasound machine for Flourishing Tree Family Pregnancy Resource Center in Aledo.

The national Knights of Columbus Supreme Council matches their donation for the \$42,700 machine.

Roxanna Young, the executive director of Flourishing Tree, said it

takes a team effort to eliminate abortion.

According to Young, images of the baby at any stage are the most impactful way to encourage a woman contemplating an abortion to carry her baby to term.

She said, “We can show families, ‘Look at what you have.’”

Flourishing Tree then assists families with material needs, and professionals on staff provide educational, emotional, and spiritual support to the parents.

Jeff Jendel, a trustee for Council 17196, said raising funds for ultrasound machines is an important way for Knights to support the Church’s pro-life initiatives. The Knights of Columbus have donated more than 1,000 ultrasound machines nationwide.

Students dance during a worship song at the Northwest Deanery youth and family night. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

Sister Noelle Marie professes first vows

FORT WORTH— Sister Noelle Marie Bethlehem Haley, daughter of David and Lori Haley of St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth, professed her first vows as a Sister of Life this summer at Sacred Heart Church in Suffern, New York, along with four other women.

Along with vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, Sisters of Life profess a fourth vow: to protect and enhance the sacredness of human life.

Following her first profession of vows, Sr. Noelle spent the summer on a Holy Respite mission team in Manhattan. The sisters invite women who are pregnant to live alongside them, share in

their lives, and begin to build a new life for themselves and their children.

Sr. Noelle entered the Sisters of Life in September 2018, after discerning religious life while attending Augustine Institute in Denver, where she earned a master's degree in leadership for the New Evangelization. Previously, she graduated from Duke University with a B.A. in psychology in 2016.

Founded in New York in 1991, the religious women serve women who are vulnerable to abortion, giving them support and resources to be able to choose life for themselves and their children.



Sr. Noelle Marie

Northwest Deanery resumes youth and family nights

WINDTHORST — The recent gathering of youth from 11 Northwest Deanery parishes for the first time since early 2020 had the feel of a family reunion.

Gathering for the Northwest Deanery Youth and Family Worship Night, teens and their families greeted each other with smiles, hugs, and laughter while enjoying lawn games, dinner, and music by praise and worship band Veritas.

"We decided to have something where the praise band could come together, and the kids could come together and just have fun. They could eat, blow off some steam, and enjoy each other's company before school started," said Cheyenne Marrinan, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry at Holy Family of Nazareth Church in Vernon, St. Joseph Church in Crowell, and St. Mary Church in Quanah.

Marrinan and Shelley Schlumpf, youth minister

for St. Boniface Church in Scotland and St. Mary Church in Windthorst, as well as youth and families present at the reunion Aug. 1, all expressed their joy in being able to finally have a large gathering in person after the shutdown because of COVID.

"We're used to having monthly deanery Masses with fellowship. And in two years we haven't been able to do that," Schlumpf said.

Bryanna McRae, 17, her sister Mercedes McRae, 18, and Reina Quilodran, 17, said they all wanted to attend the Northwest Deanery Youth and Family Worship Night because they haven't been able to gather with Catholic teens from other parishes in the deanery since COVID-19 hit. They all attend Holy Family of Nazareth Church.

"It just felt good to go back out again with all these churches together," Quilodran said.

— Jenara Kocks Burgess



The Knights of Columbus present Bishop Olson with funds for seminarian education and deaf ministry. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Knights of Columbus gives clergy appreciation, funds

FORT WORTH — Fort Worth Diocese Knights of Columbus members praised a return to togetherness Aug. 11 during their Religious Appreciation Dinner at Nolan Catholic High School, an annual event canceled last year because of COVID-19.

Numerous priests, seminarians, and other religious joined the Knights in the celebration.

The Knights also presented a check for \$212,815 to Bishop Michael Olson.

The Knights surpassed the \$92,000 goal for the Diocese of Fort Worth, thanks in part from \$147,000 raised in Wichita Falls.

Bishop Olson has designated those annual funds to seminarian education and the diocese's Deaf Ministry program.

Deaf Ministry Director Connie Martin praised Bishop Olson for setting up livestream Mass feeds with interpreters during the pandemic.

Bishop Olson spoke of opportunities for gratefulness

despite COVID-19.

"The last 18 months we've been able to more readily pay attention to what God offers us," Bishop Olson said. "The graces we have that we otherwise overlook, take for granted."

Bishop Olson praised priests in the diocese for their role in the return of in-person Mass in May 2020. "They went to great lengths to celebrate the Eucharist, anoint the sick in adverse conditions, in hospitals that would not be readily willing to allow them in.

"Our priests, our religious, and leadership have stood up, and in no small measure so have members of the Knights."

Knights' State Program Director Patrick Henz thinks an influx of Knights would benefit contemporary society.

"We need to be in the Church," Henz said. "And the Church needs to be in us."

— Matthew Smith

Bishop Olson baptizes, confirms inmates

FORT WORTH — On Sunday, August 1, Bishop Michael Olson and seminarian Ed Hopkins celebrated Mass in two units of Federal Medical Center - Carswell Prison in Fort Worth.

During the two Masses, a total of five women were baptized and four women were confirmed. Approximately 60 inmates attended.

Hopkins called it a "day of excitement, of hope, of redemption" for the women who entered the Church, and they responded like anyone else coming into the Church, with tears of joy. Receiving the sacraments of initiation is "a beautiful thing to see, whether it's at St. Patrick Cathedral, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, or at the women's prison," he said.

Although Bishop Olson has visited the prison previously, this was Hopkins' first experience. The seminarian observed, "Prison doesn't change the effectiveness of the sacraments. The Holy Spirit is just as powerful inside."

Hopkins remarked that the bishop could have delegated Confirmation to the chaplain that regularly serves the prison, but instead he spent most of the day at the prison. After each Mass, Bishop Olson blessed rosaries they brought for the inmates.

Hopkins, who just began his pastoral year at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, concluded, "For me, it was affirming to see that the Church is working in a lot of different ways in the Diocese of Fort Worth. God is working in places we don't always think of."



A Dominican nun takes notes during the Diocesan Convocation for Catholic Schools. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

All-school assembly

KELLER — On August 11, when teachers could have been sharpening pencils and labeling cubbyholes in preparation for the first day of school less than 24 hours away, they assembled at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church for the Diocesan Convocation of Catholic Schools.

The annual event began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson. The pews of the large Keller

church were filled with teachers, administrators, staff, and pastors from the 17 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

After the Mass, the faculty were addressed by Bishop Olson and by Mary Pat Donoghue, the executive director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education for the USCCB. Both of them reflected on the importance of a classical Catholic education.

Who's ready for school?



NTC/Jayme Donahue

ARLINGTON — Iliá Lara raises her hand during the first day of school at Saint Maria Goretti Catholic School August 12.

PRIEST ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL F. OLSON

REV. LUIS GERARDO ARRAIZA, OFM CAP

From outside the diocese, to **Pastor** of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, effective July 15.

REV. PEDRO GUTIERREZ, OFM CAP

From Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, has been transferred outside of the diocese at the proposal of his superior, effective July 15.

REV. JESURAJ, SAC

From outside the diocese, to **Parochial Vicar** of St. Michael Parish in Bedford, effective June 22.

Catholic Charities names Plumlee CEO

FORT WORTH — Catholic Charities Fort Worth named Christopher Plumlee as President and Chief Executive Officer, effective September 7.



Christopher Plumlee

Plumlee is currently the Chair of the Board at Catholic Charities Fort Worth.

Bishop Michael Olson said, "Christopher Plumlee holds a compassion and understanding of how Catholic Charities Fort Worth serves God

and our neighbor, a compassion and understanding he learned by accompanying his father's work for Catholic Charities of Dallas and in his own experience as a board member and chair of Catholic Charities Fort Worth."

Plumlee has 25 years' leadership experience with several major American corporations, including Bank of America, Hewlett Packard, and Dell. He also started a sales consultant firm and has served on corporate advisory boards.

Deb McNamara, interim president and CEO, will take Plumlee's board position for a year to ensure a smooth transition.

MAKING A GREATER impact on students



Diocesan Learning Specialist Jennifer McNulty leads a workshop for principals on July 22 at Nolan Catholic High School. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Grant supporting learning specialists in Catholic schools called “an investment in the future success of our students”

By Sandra Engelland

More students in diocesan Catholic schools will receive the tools they need to succeed, thanks to a \$176,000 grant from the Advancement Foundation.

The funds, which come from the Annual Diocesan Appeal, will hire two new dyslexia therapists for the 2021-22 school year and will train six diocesan teachers to help children with dyslexia — both part of a three-year plan to have trained dyslexia teachers on every campus in the diocese.

“We’re able to identify students that have learning difficulties and want to provide appropriate learning support to meet their needs,” said Melissa Kasmier, Interim Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

Diocesan Learning Specialist Jennifer McNulty agreed, “Across the board — not just in private schools but in public schools, too — the identification of students with learning differences has more than doubled in the last decade.”

In the most recent round of grant requests to the Advancement Foundation,

several schools in the diocese requested funds for learning support specialists, said Renée Underwood, Chief Development Officer for the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth Advancement Foundation.

Underwood said she reached out to Kasmier to see if the foundation’s resources could be pooled to impact more campuses. As it turned out, Kasmier and McNulty were already working on getting training for a group of diocesan teachers to

Continued on Page 14

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

faithful

Bishop Michael Olson assures parishioners at St. Benedict that Latin Mass will continue

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Parishioners of St. Benedict Church in Fort Worth may continue to celebrate the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, also known as the traditional Latin Mass, in accordance with the 1962 Roman Missal.

That assurance, offered by Bishop Michael Olson during a homily given July 25 at the parish's 11 a.m. Sunday Mass, answered concerns arising from Pope Francis' newly imposed restrictions on the Tridentine (Latin) Mass. In a July 16 Apostolic Letter titled *Traditionis Custodes* ("Guardians of Tradition"), the Holy Father made sweeping changes to Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 "*Summorum Pontificum*" decree allowing regular celebration of the Latin Mass. The new guidance gives bishops "exclusive competence" to grant permission or refusal for the traditional Latin Mass to continue in their dioceses. Added oversight, and a mandate to ensure groups attached to the traditional liturgy don't deny the validity of Vatican II and its liturgical reforms, are also part of the document.

The Diocese of Fort Worth is already compliant with many of the provisions articulated in *Traditionis Custodes*, Bishop Olson told the congregation.

St. Benedict will serve as the designated location where the Latin Mass will be

regularly offered in the diocese.

"I have the assurance of your pastor, and from my own judgment as ascertained through my pastoral visits, that St. Benedict Parish 'does not exclude the validity and legitimacy of the liturgical reform of the dictates of the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of the Supreme Pontiffs,'" he said, authorizing the celebration of the Mass using the 1962 Missal of Pope Saint John XXIII.

The bishop also voiced support for Father Karl Pikus, of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, who will continue as St. Benedict's pastor. Praising Fr. Pikus' pastoral charity and sense of ecclesial communion, Bishop Olson deemed him suitable for the position of pastor, citing the priest's knowledge of the Latin language that allows him to fully understand the rubrics and liturgical texts of the Tridentine Mass. A member of the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, Fr. Pikus serves on the bishop's College of Consultors.

"The pastoral leadership and service of Fr. Pikus and the assistance of Father J. Peter Byrne, as members of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, have protected you from the wolves of dissidence and chaos," the bishop pointed out. "These good priests helped you grow as a parish through the preaching of the authentic Gospel, the celebration of the Mass and each of the sacraments with reverence,

A young woman prays during the Latin Mass on July 25, 2021 at St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



true piety, and love.”

Established in 2015 by Bishop Olson to serve the Latin Mass community, St. Benedict started with 35 registered families at its founding and has grown to 140 families today. All reside within the geographical territory of the diocese in accordance with Canon Law, the bishop stated.

“As St. Benedict is canonically erected

for the benefit of these faithful, I have carried out an appropriate assessment of its actual usefulness for spiritual growth and judge it should be maintained and it should flourish,” the bishop asserted.

The leader of North Texas Catholics asked parishioners to resort to prayer — not social media — for comfort during these challenging times.

Prompted by fears and distractions,

“we can run the risk of succumbing to the temptation not to recognize gratefully what God has given us in His Son and His Son’s presence in the celebration of the Mass both in the *Usus Antiquior* (the ancient usage) and in the Ordinary Form of the Rite,” the bishop said.

In addition to mandating bishops

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From Page 11

become learning support coordinators and certified dyslexia therapists.

“We realized we could make a greater impact for all our schools, not just a few,” Underwood said.

The proposal to use funds for learning support coordinators and training current teachers received “an overwhelmingly positive response” from both the grant committee and the foundation board, Underwood said.

“We’re using this money to invest in the future success of our students,” she said.

LEARNING SUPPORT SPECIALISTS ARE “A GAMECHANGER”

While several diocesan schools have learning support specialists already on staff, 13 of 17 campuses still have a need for a dyslexia therapist, McNulty said.

The grant will fund two additional dyslexia therapists to share between schools and will pay for six teachers to receive dyslexia training at Key School, a private school in Fort Worth with a mission to serve students with learning differences. The training is a two-year program to certify teachers as dyslexia therapists.

It’s estimated that one in five students in the U.S. have learning and thinking differences like dyslexia and ADHD, McNulty said. Adding more therapists is key, but training teachers to identify students with language-based challenges like dyslexia (primarily reading) and dysgraphia (primarily writing) is also of high importance, she said.

McNulty also wants to provide professional development for teachers in the diocese to discover new ways to engage all students.

“How do we continue to help teachers to grow and differentiate in the classroom?” she said. “You can’t look at the classroom as a whole. You have 20 to 25 individuals who all have different needs.”

Lisa Tovar said that having a learning specialist available “made all the difference in the world” for her son Matthew, who graduated from Nolan Catholic High School this year and is enrolled at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio.

Matthew deals with dyslexia and



Ana Nieves, learning specialist at Nolan Catholic High School, helps a student with homework while sharing studying tips in this 2019 photo. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ADHD. Working with Ana Nieves, Nolan’s director of learning support and academic coach, was “a gamechanger,” Tovar said.

Nieves helped Matthew succeed at Nolan and assisted him in locating similar support services at Incarnate Word, where he is a freshman this fall.

Tovar also praised Nolan Principal Leah Rios for her passion and vision in supporting students with learning differences.

A MULTI-YEAR PLAN

Kasmeier said that the grant for learning support services is part of a three-year plan to help all students reach their full potential in the classroom.

In year two, the goal is to train four reading intervention teachers, engage the teachers training as dyslexia therapists to work practicum hours on campuses, and hire learning support coordinators. Learning support coordinators will help children get the assistance they need, communicate with teachers and parents so they can collaborate, and support professional development and coaching.

In year three, a grant would support the trained diocesan dyslexia therapists who would be shared between schools, have the

teachers training in reading intervention work with small groups, hire part-time or full-time counselors to support the social and emotional needs of students, and continue to develop and implement enrichment strategies for accelerated learners.

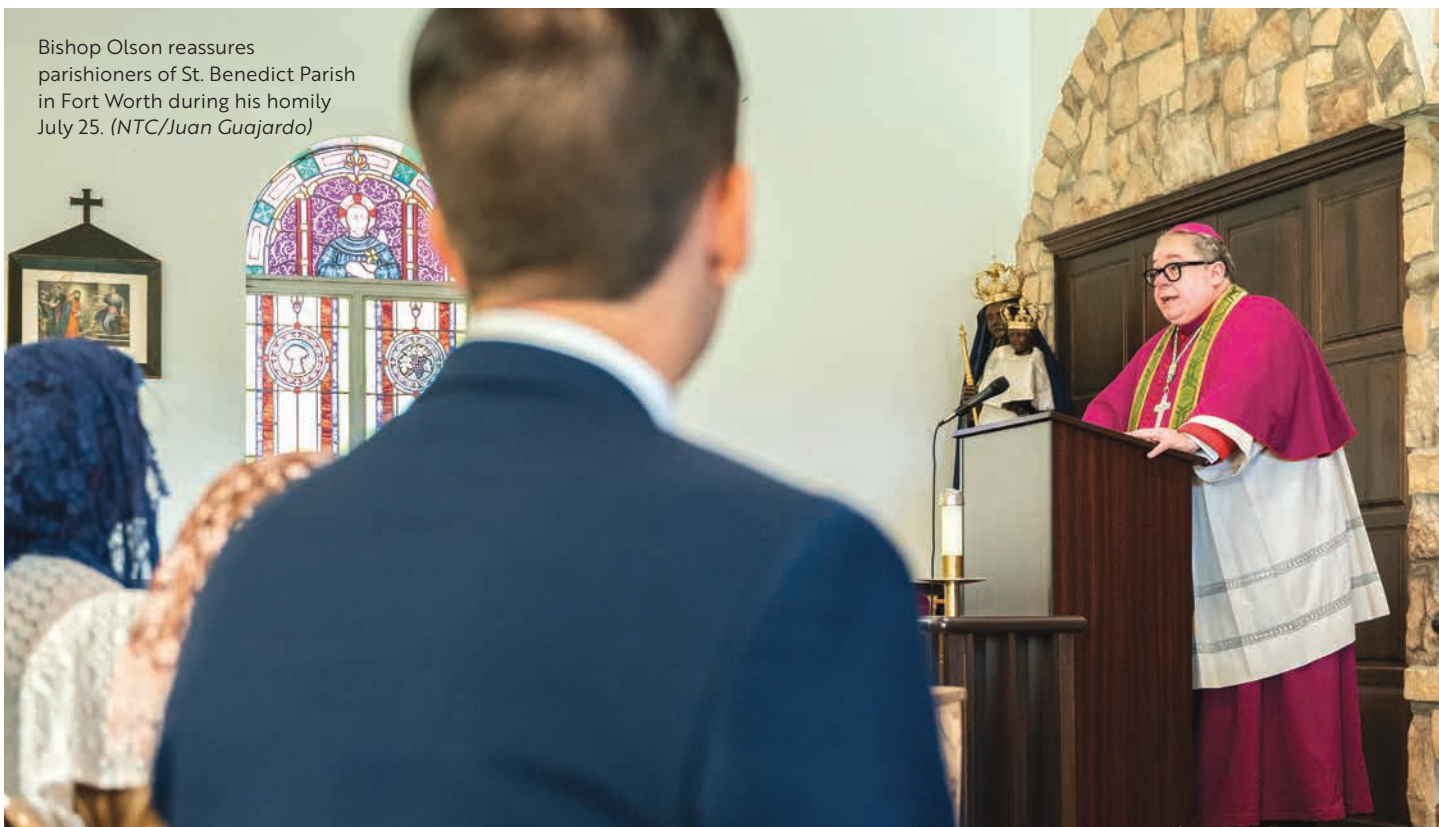
“We want to increase awareness and identification of students who have a need,” Kasmeier said, “We also want to increase the number of those who are equipped to help.”

The Advancement Foundation grants are fulfilling a critical need, McNulty said, as tuition currently doesn’t cover the additional learning support needs.

Underwood said that the Advancement Foundation exists to support parishes, schools, and ministries in the diocese and to raise funds in the Annual Appeal for Bishop Michael Olson’s greatest priorities, which include supporting clergy and seminarians, serving the poor, and strengthening Catholic education. The foundation manages endowments for parishes, schools, and ministries, along with funds from the Annual Appeal.

“We want to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ for the parishes in our 28 counties,” Underwood said. 🇹🇽

Bishop Olson reassures parishioners of St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth during his homily July 25. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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ensure that faith communities celebrating the Latin Mass “do not deny” the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, the document prohibits the building of personal parishes or the use of parochial churches for Latin Mass groups, requires Scripture readings be proclaimed in the vernacular language, and instructs bishops to choose a delegate to oversee the pastoral care of Latin Mass participants. Priests ordained after July 16, 2021, must obtain permission from the Vatican to celebrate the Extraordinary Form of the Mass and veteran priests must request authorization from their bishop to continue celebrating the Latin liturgy. The formation of new Latin Mass groups is prohibited.

In a letter to bishops, Pope Francis said restrictions to the Latin Mass outlined in *Traditionis Custodes* were needed to restore unity of the Church. The pontiff’s decision was made after discussions with bishops around the world revealed a situation of growing rejection of the Second Vatican Council and its ensuing liturgical reforms.



A young woman uses her missal to follow along during the Latin Mass on July 25, 2021 at St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

The pope said it “pains and worries me, confirming the need to intervene.”

“An opportunity offered by St. John Paul II and, with even greater magnanimity, by Benedict XVI, intended to recover the unity of an ecclesial body

with diverse liturgical sensibilities, was exploited to widen the gaps, reinforce the divergences, and encourage disagreements that injure the Church, block her path, and expose her to the peril of division,” he wrote. 🇺🇸

FLEEING FROM chaos

Catholic Charities Fort Worth helps Afghan immigrants build new lives

By Susan Moses

Alice Kigera appeared serene and joyful, despite the whirlwind of activity.

The program manager for Refugee Resettlement Services for Catholic Charities Fort Worth, Kigera had less than 24 hours' notice that an Afghan family of seven would be arriving at the airport.

She and her team sped into action to get an apartment equipped, from furniture to toothbrushes. They hurried to put some groceries in the refrigerator before picking them up at DFW Airport to welcome the immigrants to their new home.

In August, Catholic Charities Fort Worth saw a sharp uptick in the need for refugee resettlement, when 25 Afghans holding special immigrant visas arrived from processing in Fort Lee, Virginia. Having previously completed an extensive background check and security screening in Afghanistan, the immigrants received medical clearance at Fort Lee and were assigned to Fort Worth where a friend or family member already resided.

Plans are in place for CCFW to receive at least 20 more immigrants, and Kigera expects a steady stream to follow.

"We have a number of Afghans who already had their visas but now

they are being evacuated because the Taliban is taking over," said Kigera, who has worked for CCFW for 12 years.

These immigrants served as contractors for U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Already at personal risk, the Afghan allies face heightened prospects for retaliation since the Taliban seized control of the capital city of Kabul on August 15. The U.S. State Department said 20,000 Afghans who served as interpreters, security officers, drivers, and other vital positions have applied for special immigrant visas.

Bishop Michael Olson said he appreciates CCFW staff members embracing their Christian call to uphold the dignity of each and every single person.

"I'm grateful and proud that CCFW, as a nonprofit arm of the Diocese of Fort Worth, is assisting people in such a zealous and reasonable way," he said.

Citing data from the International Rescue Committee, a global nongovernmental humanitarian relief agency, the *New York Times* said more than 300,000 Afghan civilians "have been affiliated with the American mission over its two-decade presence in the country ... but a minority qualify for refugee

protection in the United States."

In 2006, the U.S. Congress first authorized a bipartisan humanitarian program to provide Special Immigrant Visas, or SIVs, for nationals from Afghanistan and Iraq that include resettlement services and legal permanent residence for the approved principal applicants, their spouses, and children.

Since the creation of the program, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services has worked with the U.S. Department of State, the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and other nongovernmental organizations to provide resettlement services to some of the more than 73,000 Afghan SIV holders and their families.

On July 14, the White House announced the emergency relocation of Afghan SIV applicants in their final stages of processing to the United States. The first of that group arrived in the United States July 30.

Jeff Demers, the regional coordinator/director for the North Texas Office for Refugees for CCFW, anticipates that the initial Afghan clients of CCFW will be special

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Lives on the Line

Special Immigrant Visa applicant Ayazudin Hilal poses with his daughter Armaghan, 4, at his home July 26, 2021 in Kabul, Afghanistan. Ayazudin worked as a combat translator with the U.S. Army in Kunar province for three years on the front line. He received the Mission Essential Personnel Heart award after being shot by the Taliban while on patrol with coalition forces on October 14, 2010. Thousands of Afghans who worked for the United States government during its nearly 20-year war now fear for their safety as the U.S. withdraws its troops from the country. Many of these Afghans, who worked as interpreters and translators for U.S. intelligence agencies and military branches, have applied to come to the U.S. as part of the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program.



Displaced Afghan families head into Kabul from the northern provinces desperately leaving their homes behind on August 10, 2021. The Taliban has since taken control of Kabul and all key cities following the United States' accelerated withdrawal of its forces this year. (Getty Images/Paula Bronstein)

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immigrant visa holders, and later Afghan refugees will arrive.

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan will be measured in years, not weeks and months. Demers, who has worked in refugee resettlement for 23 years, said that the war in Iraq ended almost 10 years ago, “and it’s dwindled way down, but we still see some Iraqi SIV clients that come through.”

He continued, “I think there’s going to be a very focused effort to try to get some of the Afghan allies out quicker, so it may not be that long, but it may be over the course of several years to get out everyone who feels their lives are being threatened, at risk.”

Demers, who communicates with the five other refugee resettlement agencies in Texas, said that the situation with the Afghan immigrants differs in its urgency. Where the agencies may have had weeks

to prepare for previous resettlements, the immigrants from Afghanistan are arriving with notification as short as several hours.

A COMMUNITY EFFORT

When it became clear that the Taliban was taking over Afghanistan very quickly, capturing 26 out of 34 Afghan provincial capitals in just 10 days, Kigera began to get calls and emails from community members who anticipated the arrival of Afghan immigrants.

Photos and news video of the chaos in Afghanistan touched the hearts of Texans, including Deb McNamara, interim president/CEO of CCFW. She said, “We are grieving with the people of Afghanistan as we continue to help each family who comes to us. We may never understand the traumatic experience they faced getting here but we are prepared to walk alongside them as they begin their journey here in America. What a privilege to serve these brave families, including so many that

served alongside our troops. There can be no truer way to welcome the stranger than in times like these.”

In these situations, employers, individuals, and faith communities across the spectrum of religions step up to offer assistance.

Demers said, “We’ll see people of all different faiths, all different walks of life, that will come together with the six resettlement agencies and help however they can.... Fort Worth has always had a very welcoming community.”

The regional job market is very good, and Kigera said employers have called with job opportunities for the immigrants.

Kigera said, “At six months, 100 percent of Catholic Charities clients are working, unless they have health issues. At four months, we have at least 85 percent of them working.”

“It’s a big challenge, but the Metroplex is well ready for helping. We know the parishes will help in a tremendous way,”



Shelter from the Storm

Dawlatt Naimati, 22, from Kunduz, stands outside the Herat Kabul Internet cafe where she is seeking help applying for the U.S. Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) on August 8, 2021 in Kabul, Afghanistan. She is among thousands of Afghans who worked for the United States government during its nearly 20-year war and now fear for their safety as the U.S. withdrew its troops from the country. It is Afghans like these that Catholic Charities Fort Worth is currently working to help resettle in DFW.

added Demers.

Kigera said parishioners can help with donations of gently used furniture, kitchen items, and clothing. Gift cards or donations of new bedding, towels, and hygiene items are also appreciated.

“Basically, it’s anything they would need to set up an apartment. They’ll come with, maybe, a suitcase apiece, or what they were able to grab as they were leaving their home,” said Demers.

CCFW has a storage facility on its Fort Worth campus, and Kigera said that furnishing an apartment is much easier if the “supply depot” is stocked.

In June, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, anticipating an uptick in refugee resettlement, provided additional funding for CCFW to hire two additional staff members, which Kigera said “has come in really handy.”

A LABOR OF LOVE

Why invest so much time and effort into the plight of someone from the other side of the world?

Bishop Olson reiterated that, “As Catholics, we have the responsibility to love our neighbor. In each and every human person we see the dignity instilled in them simply on the basis that humans are created in the image and likeness of God.”

Kigera emphasized that Catholic social teaching honors the dignity and value of

everyone. She said, “We are people of faith serving people of need.”

Demers echoed the sentiment. “We love people because Jesus loves us, and Jesus loves people. People that know Jesus, love like Jesus.”

And although they anticipate their jobs will be quite busy for the foreseeable future, they are excited about the long-term potential.

Kigera said typically refugees arrive in a state of panic, but within a few months the children are in school and the parents are employed, speak English, and have learned to drive.

Kigera said, “Getting their dignity back, and providing for their family — that is the most beautiful thing to see. The strength and resilience of these people.”

Demers finds satisfaction in his work from the moment the immigrants arrive at the airport displaying a mixture of joy, fear, and exhaustion. “It shows us how God created us so complex. You literally see every emotion come out on their face, but it’s such a sweet, almost a holy moment. You get a glimpse into their heart. You have to hold that in such honor, because they are so scared. . . . They’ve allowed you into this special space, but they have to because they have no one else that they can turn to.” 🇺🇸

This article contains reporting from Catholic News Service

LESSONS Learned

A look back at what nearly 18 months of a global pandemic taught us about health, perseverance, and what is eternal

By Susan Moses

It's not over yet, but we've learned a little. Maybe a lot. The global COVID-19 pandemic, declared nearly 18 months ago by the World Health Organization, still affects how we work, go to school, and worship.

Although many of us (including me) thought this chapter might have ended by now, diocesan schools and parish ministries including religious education begin the 2021-22 school year still impacted by heightened precautions to protect public health. Fortunately, the difficult journey with the coronavirus has taught us lessons that will be invaluable as schools and parishes resume activities in person this month.

WHO WE ARE

Being deprived of the ability to attend Mass, especially during the 2020 Triduum,

made the importance of the full celebration of the Sunday Eucharist painfully clear. Father Jonathan Wallis, who serves three roles within the diocese: vicar general, director of seminarian formation, and chaplain and director of the Newman Center at TCU, said, "Worship of God is essential to who we are as His creation."

Jodie Rios, a parishioner at Immaculate Conception Church in Denton, experienced that firsthand when she and her husband, a cancer survivor with compromised lung function, shifted to participating in Mass via livestream. "We need to be really careful," explained Rios on why they restructured their lives to avoid crowds.

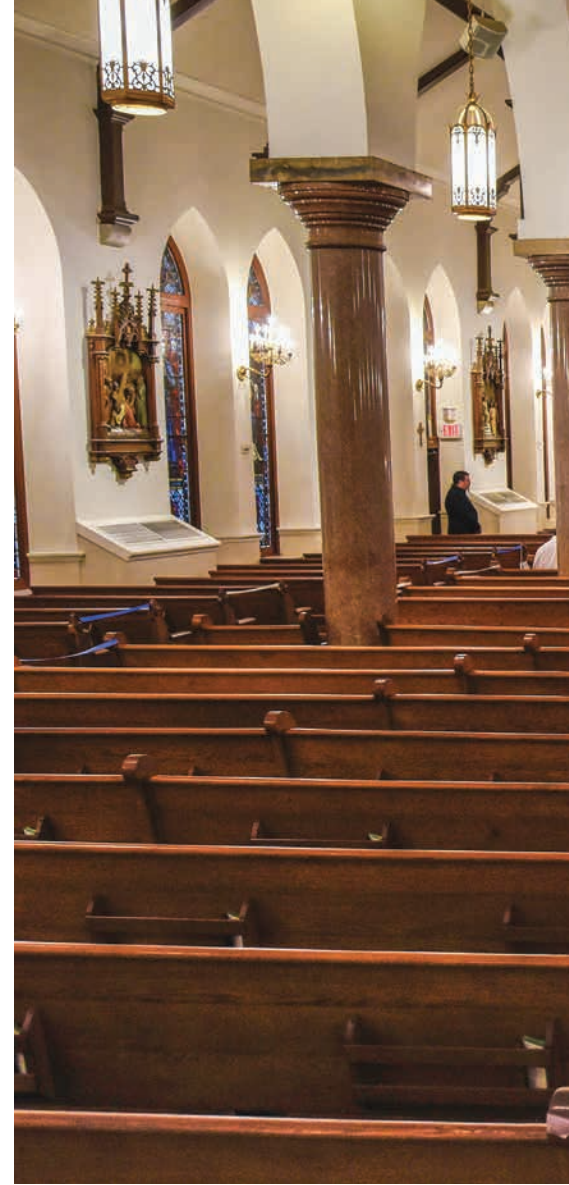
A longtime lector and Eucharistic minister, Rios said, "Watching Mass on television made me tear up just about every week at first – maybe for fear we'd

never get back to normal." The two viewed a livestream Mass every Sunday for 14 months.

After getting vaccinated, Rios and her husband selected a Mass likely to have fewer people and returned to the congregation in May, wearing masks for extra protection. She admitted that after their lengthy absence, worshipping with others felt "weird and surreal."

But, she said, it was "good to see everyone again, and a joy to receive the Eucharist. We really, really, really missed the Eucharist."

In the first weeks of the pandemic, when gatherings were limited to minimize the transmission of the virus – at first to 250 people, and later reduced to as few as 10 – Bishop Michael Olson and other diocesan officials wanted to make certain Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Worth had





MARCH 2020

On March 19, 2020, Bishop Michael Olson ordained six men to the transitional diaconate in the diocese in a nearly empty St. Patrick Cathedral. The bishop called the occasion “a great event of hope in the midst of a pandemic.” (NTC/Ben Torres)

access to the sacraments while enacting measures to protect the health and well-being of the community.

Amidst the unknowns that made decision making a challenge, communication was key. Bishop Olson spoke with the county judges of all 28 counties within the diocese as well as local health officials, state government authorities, his brother bishops, and hospital administrators. He kept his pastors informed about the rapidly changing protocols with weekly virtual meetings.

For six weeks, Mass was celebrated *sine populo*, or without a congregation present, and livestreamed via social media platforms and parish websites. Some parishes offered Reconciliation outdoors, and many priests were able to perform the Anointing

of the Sick in hospitals by wearing personal protective equipment.

One of the many decisions made in the early days of the pandemic was to proceed with the ordination of six men to the transitional diaconate on March 19, 2020, in a nearly empty St. Patrick Cathedral. Fr. Wallis said holding the ordination demonstrated “this is an important act of the Church, and it can happen safely.”

The Church “has her own standing” and partners with government to serve the common good, but is not subservient to it, noted Fr. Wallis.

On the weekend of May 2-3, 2020, which was the earliest opportunity, parishes in the diocese reopened for public celebration of the Mass. The Diocese of Fort Worth was on the vanguard of

reopening its doors to public worship, both among Catholic dioceses and other denominations.

Fr. Wallis said returning to public worship as soon as safety protocols were in place was a priority for the diocese because Catholicism teaches: “The human person is composed of body and soul, both. We have real physical concerns, and we have spiritual concerns. And those two things always have to be taken into account, together.”

A FAITHFUL RESPONSE

Like a business, parishes and schools have regular bills due and employees to be paid.

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MARCH 2020

Father Sojan George distributes the Holy Eucharist outside St. Francis of Assisi Church in Grapevine on March 21, 2020. “Stay-at-home” orders put a stop to the public distribution of the Eucharist the following week. (NTC/Joseph Barringhaus)

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The diocese did not apply for a paycheck protection program loan, and Bishop Olson requested that pastors and schools only apply for government assistance if they had significant need in the initial weeks when parishioners could not attend Mass. A small subgroup of individual parishes and schools requested a paycheck protection program loan, and some others took advantage of interest-free loans that the diocese offered for short-term help.

But during 2020, parishes in the diocese experienced only a minimal drop in contributions overall. The people of the diocese kept supporting the mission of the Church monetarily, according to Don Wagner, chief financial officer for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Pastors in the diocese observed that the faithful not only continued their financial support, but they also were

cooperative with the four main health measures enacted: mask wearing, hand sanitizing, social distancing, and Holy Communion in the hand.

Fr. Wallis noticed that decisions, both in their formation and their execution, have resulted in discussions and disagreements, but not division, which he found encouraging. “It’s the response of us, together. Too, too, too often we have people who like to put various groups in the Church in opposition to each other.... The people of God is everyone. And I think that’s how, here in the diocese, we went through the pandemic — together... What became very clear to me during this time was we need God, and we need each other.”

CREATIVE COMMUNITY

In the fall of 2020, religious education was taught by livestream, or for parishes in communities without reliable internet, religious education directors provided

packets for students to complete at home. Conferences and retreats were cancelled.

Throughout the pandemic, some youth ministers got “really creative,” recalled Victoria Ramon, associate director of youth and young adult ministries. Some managed to have scavenger hunts, praise and worship music, or guest speakers, all via Zoom. “They all, within the means of their parish, did the best that they could,” she said.

Still, attendance declined for religious education and sacramental preparation last year.

Ramon said, “In a lot of places, those groups are a little bit smaller, so we’ve encouraged our parishes to gather them back together, start to build that community again.

“For our young people who have been away from their school community, or their sport community, or even their own extended family for so long, it can go from solitude to loneliness. We want to

encourage them and let them know, ‘You’re not alone, you’re not meant to be isolated. This Church is your family,’” she continued.

Cassie Erazo, director of youth ministry at Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls, said when the diocese recommended youth activities return in person in April, planning took more time. She had to think of activities that would engage the students, keep them spaced apart, and have a catechetical component.

A first step was to separate the middle and high school students, who previously participated in youth ministry activities together. Erazo anticipates maintaining the smaller groups through the fall.

Her creative solutions have included exploring the devotion of the Sacred Heart through some unconventional means: cookie decorating, a painting night, and tie-dyeing t-shirts.

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

Nancy Eder, diocesan school nurse consultant, anticipated coronavirus numbers would rise after July 4. She was right.

Now, she’s “cautiously optimistic” about resuming school and extracurriculars. “We will try to resume activities as much as possible,” she said. She has helped track coronavirus cases in schools and parishes throughout the pandemic, which is an ongoing task.

Eder anticipates it may be another year before schools and parish activities are completely “back to normal,” but she noted that the current situation differs greatly from a year ago. “We know how it looks now; we know how it acts now; and we’re grateful for vaccines,” she explained.

Reflecting back a year, when Eder worked with school administrators and diocesan officials to determine how to safely open, she “leaned on God. He was right beside me. He led me in the process to learn, to understand this disease. It was a journey.

“We don’t have all the answers, but we ask and trust God to lead us in the

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JUNE 2020

When Father Pedro Martinez was ordained to the priesthood on June 29, 2020, sitting every other pew and wearing masks was the norm. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

APRIL 2021

In April 2021, the diocese encouraged parishes to resume in-person faith formation. Below, youth from the Northwest Deanery gather for a worship night on August 1. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)





The mask mandate for all parishes in the diocese was lifted the first weekend in May. For rural parishes in counties with high rates of vaccination, such as St. Mary of the Assumption in Megargel, above, masks became optional in April 2021. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

MAY 2021

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right direction,” she said.

Fr. Wallis concurred. “At the time, nobody had all the information; nobody had a clear road map.”

Last year, the policies enacted proved effective in mitigating the spread of coronavirus and other contagions in schools and parishes. Bishop Olson told diocesan teachers at the August 11 convocation, “Our protocols worked, even before the development of the vaccines. This should be a cause for our confidence.... We have science, we have experience, and we have confident preparation.”

If an increase in COVID-19 cases necessitates increased health precautions, “We will be on familiar ground,” said Fr. Wallis. “But the bishop has stated on several occasions, ‘We are not closing churches again.’ We need God.”

BUILT ON ETERNAL TRUTH

Everyone has been affected by the pandemic. Everyone has been changed by it, for better or for worse. And everyone has learned from it, even if the lessons are painful.

Fr. Wallis, in his role as TCU chaplain, observed college students were confronted with profound truths they may not have contemplated. He said, “In an instant, especially the freshmen last year, their whole lives were turned upside down. All of the things that it seemed they would have, like senior prom, graduation, all that was gone.

“But for that moment, it became very clear, what can change and what’s eternal. There was such an openness to [the realization that] God is eternal — to build our lives on that.”

That’s a lesson he hopes remains with the college students and with the greater Catholic community.

“And so, I would say that we not become forgetful of that truth as things begin to go back to normal, whatever that means. That so much of what seems permanent in this world isn’t, and for one moment we saw that,” Fr. Wallis continued. “To not forget that things here change, but God never changes. And so to never forget that a life built upon Him is a life built for eternity. It’s a gateway to eternity if we build our lives on that truth.” ✝

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





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far flung outreach

Donors to the Annual Diocesan Appeal lend help to rural parishes – but their gifts don't stop there

By Matthew Smith

God's call to all Catholics to employ their talents and generosity to the best of their abilities to help those in need is a crucial part of discipleship, of course.

As King Solomon said in *Proverbs*, "Whoever is kind to the poor is lending to God who will repay him the kindness done" (19:17).

Grants distributed through the Advancement Foundation of the Diocese of Fort Worth, however, also provide concrete evidence of the Annual Appeal's numerous benefits and, for many parishes, result in huge positive differences, the effects of which often resound far beyond the Appeal term of any given year.

Both the needs and pluses of the Annual Appeal are evident, but so too, especially this year, are the challenges.

"Absolutely," Advancement Foundation Chief Development Officer Renée Underwood said. "We had record support, the best Appeal we'd had in our 37-year history for the 2020 Appeal, which ended June 30, 2020."

Underwood continued, "But for last year's Appeal, the one that ended June 2021, we saw that support drop off significantly."

The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic complicated everything.

"Many people lost jobs, faced health issues," Underwood said. "One of the biggest things is that our parishes weren't having in-person Masses for much of last year, and we certainly

weren't distributing pieces of paper in person and couldn't do the in-pew commitment brochure last September."

The pandemic negatively compounded the situation in another big way.

"Because even though support and giving to the Appeal decreased last year, the needs grew greater than ever especially, in many cases, because of the pandemic."

As the pandemic appears to be winding down, parishioners are back in church and a return to normalcy is underway. In-pew brochures will be distributed this September, Underwood said.

But the needs are daunting as this year's Appeal officially kicks off during the September 18-19 weekend with a \$3.5-million goal.

"Mailables will be in mailboxes around Labor Day and parishioners will be approached in their parishes to commit to the Appeal if they haven't already," Underwood said. "Each parish has a goal toward reaching that \$3.5 million. So, when a person makes a recurring monthly gift to the Appeal or one-time donation, they are supporting the overall Appeal and helping their parish reach its goal."

Appeal donations help support many diocesan ministries including formation and education of seminarians and men discerning for the permanent diaconate as well as care for retired and infirm priests. Also benefitting are Catholic Charities Fort Worth, prison ministry,



Marriage and Family Life ministries, schools in the diocese, and much more.

FAR FLUNG OUTREACH

Appeal funds also benefit the many rural parishes dotting the diocese's 28 counties.

"The lion's share of money from the Appeal supports rural and struggling parishes," Underwood said. "Smaller parishes needing support to pay their priest's salary, utilities, maybe have a youth director, or just meet the basic needs that larger parish communities may take for granted.

"It's as important for our rural parishes to spread the Gospel where many otherwise can't get to Mass in the larger

cities. In a lot of parishes that we give grants to, the priest may serve several parish communities, almost like circuit riders. But them being shepherds to those communities is very vital to our faith and diocese."

Father John Perikomalayil Antony, HGN, was assigned to Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Hillsboro on July 1. Before that, he served at St. Joseph Parish in Rhineland. Both parishes received Appeal grants from the 2020 campaign.

Our Lady of Mercy received \$26,500 to fund a support priest, operational expenses, and payroll. St. Joseph received \$30,600 to help with salaries for a

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GIVING THANKS

Genesis Salvador prays during her First Communion Mass at Our Lady of Mercy in Hillsboro July 10, 2021. Thanks to funds from the Appeal, Our Lady of Mercy was able to afford a support priest and payroll expenses for ministry staff.
(NTC/Ben Torres)

MEETING THE GOAL

Father Bose Jjuvarapu, HGN, high-fives Michael Lane's son after Mass at Sacred Heart in Seymour Aug. 7. Since the inception of the Annual Appeal, Sacred Heart parishioners have always met their Appeal goal. (NTC/Ben Torres)

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secretary/bookkeeper, youth minister, and director of religious education.

Both grants made a difference.

"It helps us stay afloat financially with payroll and monthly expenses," Fr. Antony said. "Living in our socioeconomic areas, meeting those costs would be hard for both parishes without the Annual Appeal. We need the supplement and support of the diocese to operate."

The fruits of the grants have not gone unnoticed to parishioners of both churches, Fr. Antony added.

"The grants help support our ministries and basic costs, which in turn helps us spread the word and build community," Fr. Antony said. "Once the people heard about the grants, they became very excited, and I think that helps build their interest in supporting the Appeal to help others."

"I will be pushing for more active participation in the Appeal this year in hopes that now that we have received grants, people will be more enthusiastic to participate."

The grants help in other ways as well.

"They free us up to expand our outreach and ministries and increase our focus beyond the celebration of the sacraments," Fr. Antony said. "It helps us to offer more to our youth and to meet the growing demands of our parish community. Another aspect is that it encourages parishioners to learn more about and see their duties of stewardship in action."

Father Bose Jjuvarapu, HGN, serves at Sacred Heart Church in Seymour and St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Megargel. Both received \$35,000 in combined grants to assist with staff



Janie Sykora counts out how many times to ring the church bell as Mass begins on Aug. 8 at St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Megargel, one of the parishes that was helped by the Annual Appeal. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

salaries, pastoral administration, and faith formation projects. The Megargel parish saw 100 percent participation by parishioners during last year's Appeal.

"I would say strong love for the Lord," Fr. Jjuvarapu answered when asked how that was accomplished. "I think it's witness

to how they love and dedicate their lives to God in their desire to live out the Gospel, in serving the Church and especially the needs of our diocese.

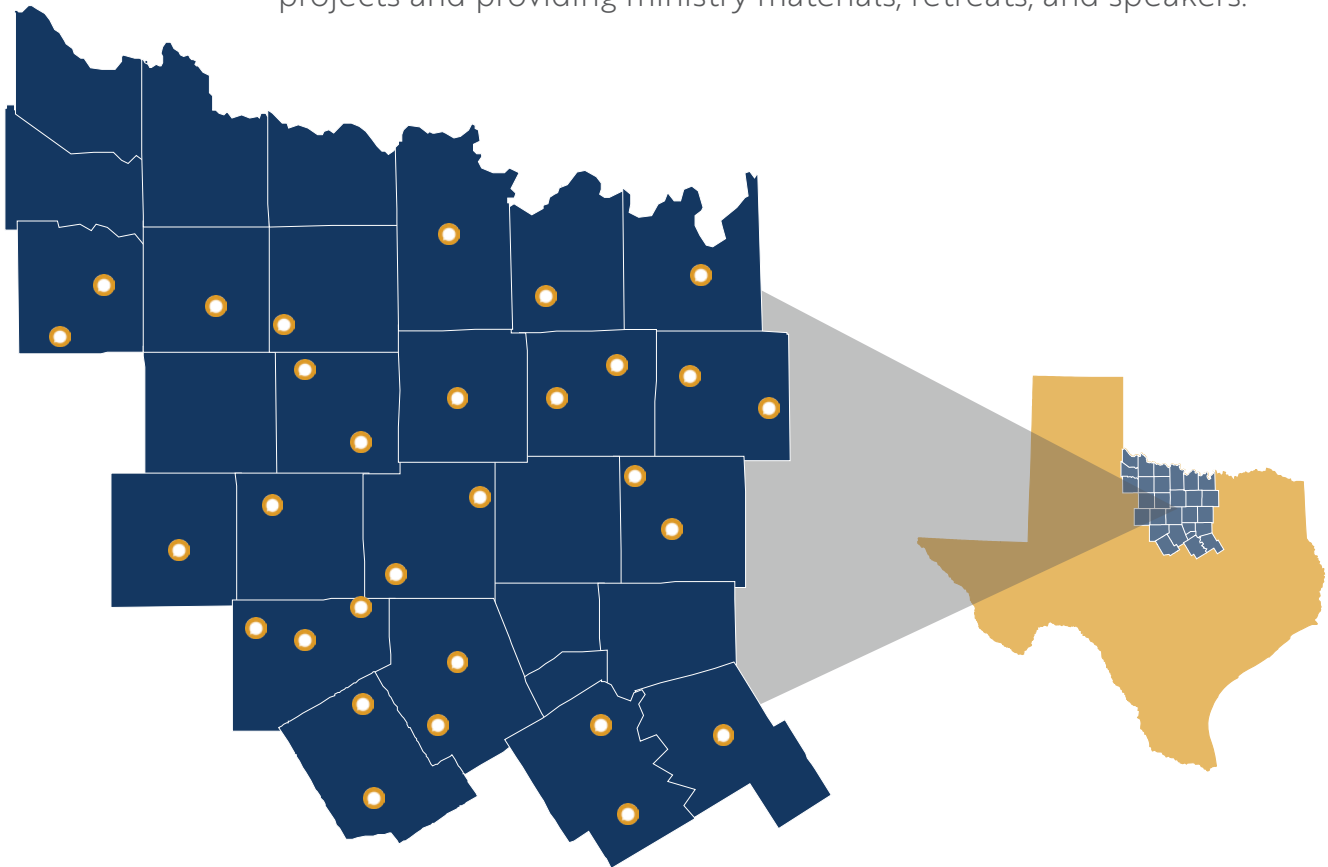
"That's what I preach about on the

Continued on Page 30

Your Gifts in Action



This map of the diocese shows the 29 parishes that received operating grants from the Annual Appeal for fiscal year 2022. More than \$840,000 of Appeal gifts went to these parishes to help with everything from subsidizing salaries of key staff members to supporting faith formation projects and providing ministry materials, retreats, and speakers.



- St. Mary, Dublin
- St. Francis Xavier, Eastland
- Jesus of Nazareth, Albany
- St. Jerome, Bowie
- Sacred Heart of Jesus, Breckenridge
- Holy Rosary, Cisco
- Holy Angels, Clifton
- Holy Cross, The Colony
- Sacred Heart, Comanche
- Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Decatur
- Our Lady of Guadalupe, De Leon
- St. Thomas the Apostle, Fort Worth
- Holy Trinity, Azle
- St. John Paul II, Denton
- St. Mary, Gainesville
- St. Mary, Graham
- St. Mary, Henrietta
- Our Lady of Mercy, Hillsboro
- St. Mary, Jacksboro
- Santa Rosa, Knox City
- St. Mary of the Assumption, Megargel
- Our Lady of Lourdes, Mineral Wells
- Our Lady of Guadalupe, Morgan
- St. Theresa, Olney
- St. Rita, Ranger
- St. Joseph, Rhineland
- Sacred Heart, Seymour
- St. Brendan, Stephenville
- St. John, Strawn



SERVING IN STEPHENVILLE

Thanks to a grant from the Annual Appeal, Tarleton State University Students like Daniel Jones (left) and Victoria Rodriguez (right) have the support of Nathan Mena, part-time campus minister based at St. Brendan Church. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 28

Annual Appeal — that it’s for the love of God and the Church and helping to meet the needs of the Church and the people.”

Deacon Jim Novak, who has served both parishes for 14 years, said both have met their Appeal goals for as long as he can remember.

Sacred Heart has about 160 registered families while St. Mary with 13 is probably the smallest parish in the diocese. Needless to say, financial needs often pose a challenge.

“But, while it’s been tough with COVID-19, we also try to do as much as any large parish,” Dcn. Novak said.

Such includes a heavy focus on youth ministry and other outreach programs.

“For us it’s a case of supporting our diocese,” Dcn. Novak said of the robust participation in the Appeal by members of both parishes. “Even though we are smaller parishes, sort of the little brothers to the bigger brothers, we find thanksgiving through trying

to do our share to contribute to that pool of donations to help us and the diocese stay as vibrant as possible.”

Fr. Jjuvarapu and Dcn. Novak feel very blessed to have received the grants.

Stephenville’s St. Brendan Parish, which operates as part of a four-parish cluster, received funding for a second full-time priest, part-time business manager, part-time administrative assistant, utilities, and a part-time campus minister. The parish received more — \$44,300 more — than requested in the grant because the Advancement Foundation deemed it important to increase campus ministry at nearby Tarleton State University. Thanks to the grant, a staff member, rather than a volunteer, is leading Tarleton’s Catholic Campus Ministry for the first time in more than a decade.

St. Brendan, which dates from 1960, was in large part started to serve area students, Father Matthew Sanka, SAC, said.

“The presence of students here is

Let us give thanks



This year's Annual Diocesan Appeal has the goal of \$3.5 million to help parishes and ministries across the diocese. To learn more or to participate, please visit: [AdvancementFoundation.org](https://www.AdvancementFoundation.org)

TEAMWORK IN MEGARGEL

Since the birth of the Annual Diocesan Appeal, 100 percent of adult parishioners at St. Mary of the Assumption in Megargel have contributed to the Appeal each year. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

always a plus," the pastor said. "But it's also that vulnerable time for many as to retaining the faith. So, for us to have a campus minister fully dedicated is very appreciated. We also serve several smaller and spread-out communities and, without the generosity of the diocese and Advancement Foundation, much of what we're able to do just wouldn't happen."

St. Patrick Cathedral parishioner Stephanie Montero said she contributes to the Appeal mainly because of its support of Catholic Charities Fort Worth. Montero said she was unaware of the Appeal's other benefactors including rural parishes.

"Well, it does now," Montero joked when asked if that information increases her desire to support the Appeal. "I've never associated the Annual Appeal with that, but I can see where it's urgently important. Especially given the difficult couple of years we've all been through where so many more people are in need of more help."

Montero said the importance of good stewardship has been instilled in her from a young age when asked why she supports the Appeal in general.

"Just that need to reach out, help others, and support the Church," Montero said. "So yes, that's definitely something I feel we all need to try harder to do."

Underwood urged parishioners to consider donating on a monthly basis if possible and at any amount they can afford, and, whether they make a commitment or not, to submit prayer intentions. The Discalced Carmelite Nuns



cloistered in the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity in Arlington will pray for those intentions throughout the year.

LET US GIVE THANKS

The theme of this year's Appeal is "Let us give thanks" coupled with the spirit of looking back in gratitude for all we've received from the Church and its ministries.

"I think it's safe to say COVID-19 impacted all of us in some way," Underwood said. "But through it all and forever, God is faithful, good, and

loving and we really need to focus on the many ways we're blessed and thankful, and there are so many.

"So in selecting this year's theme, it's a spirit of joyous, wonderful thanksgiving, which is what lives of stewardship are.

"It's also fair to say that, because of everything everyone went through last year, we need to look out for and help one another now more than ever, especially those in need — and to support the Appeal in gratitude for God's blessings and all the incredible work He's doing in the Diocese of Fort Worth." 🇺🇸

SERVING CHRIST WITH Conviction

Monsignor E. James Hart celebrates 25 years of Catholic priesthood

By Susan Moses

In his 25 years as a Catholic priest in the Diocese of Fort Worth, Monsignor E. James Hart has served in diverse assignments, from the pastor of a congregation of 30 recent converts from Anglicanism to the pastor of a parish with 6,000 families, plus two stints as the diocesan chancellor and moderator of the curia.

Regardless of the role, his character and motivation are as resolute and unchanging as his 4 a.m. alarm, which summons him to prayer and spiritual reading. He is a priest, compelled to serve God and His Church, because of “my interior life. It’s my relationship with my Lord. That’s just an integral part of my priesthood. I can’t separate those two things,” he said.

THE PATH TO THE ALTAR

After a long spiritual journey, Msgr. Hart was ordained a Catholic priest on September 25, 1996. Baptized as an infant into the Catholic faith, he was raised in an Assembly of God church. As a young adult, his prolific reading of Christian authors led him to enter the Episcopal Church, where the business

executive heard the first whispers of a call to ordained ministry.

In his late 30s, he heeded the call and moved from his native California to enter seminary in Pennsylvania, and he was ordained an Episcopal priest in 1990. He began ministry as the associate rector of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Fort Worth.

But God still beckoned him onward. His continued spiritual studies led him to writings of the early Church Fathers, especially regarding the Eucharist. In 1995, he resigned from the Episcopal priesthood with plans to enter the Catholic Church.

Several like-minded parishioners sought him out, and for about a year he pastored about 30 individuals in an independent Anglican community. He and 26 members of what eventually became St. Thomas More Parish under the Pastoral Provision were accepted into full communion with the Catholic Church on August 18, 1996.

As a former Episcopal minister, Msgr. Hart requested ordination as a Catholic priest under the Pastoral Provision established by St. John Paul II. After months of waiting for a Vatican indult, followed by written and oral

examinations, Msgr. Hart’s request was granted.

SERVING HIS CHURCH

He remembers his presbyteral ordination at St. Patrick Cathedral on September 25, 1996, as “a bit overwhelming.” During the sacrament of Holy Orders he thought, “This is real. We’re not playing anymore.”

He continued to shepherd St. Thomas More Parish for four years while simultaneously serving as a parochial vicar at St. Michael Parish in Bedford.

After four years, he was assigned to be the parochial administrator of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, and parishioners of St. Thomas More assimilated into their local canonical parishes. Msgr. Hart explained, “The Pastoral Provision was always intended . . . to be transitional to help people make that pilgrimage.”

He served at St. Peter the Apostle until 2005, when he was appointed chancellor and moderator of the curia for the Diocese of Fort Worth under Bishop Kevin Vann, the current bishop of Orange, California. Those responsibilities included overseeing and coordinating diocesan administration under the



authority of the bishop.

From 2010 – 2016 he was pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller. A highlight during that span was receiving the papal honor of monsignor, an ecclesiastical title conferred by Pope Benedict XVI at the request of Bishop Vann. At the February 14, 2012 luncheon announcing the honor, the prelate noted that Msgr. Hart “has distinguished himself since becoming a Catholic priest and was an excellent diocesan administrator in my early tenure as bishop. Now he is leader of the largest diocesan parish and is ably guiding it,” according to a March 2012 article in the *North Texas Catholic*.

In 2016, he was tapped once again to serve as chancellor and moderator of the curia by Bishop Michael Olson, who had served with Msgr. Hart at St. Michael Parish and at the diocesan office in the late 2000s when then-Father Olson was vicar general.

Although he may be a skilled administrator, Msgr. Hart asserted, “First

of all, I’m a priest. So, the heart of my life is not chancellor and moderator of the curia, it’s being a priest. And that’s really confecting the Eucharist and preaching and teaching, and so, quite frankly, I spend quite a bit of time in preparation for Sunday homilies. It’s at the heart of my ministry along with celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.... That’s still the driving force of my life.”

Msgr. Hart celebrates the 7 a.m. Mass on Sundays at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, along with daily Mass at the diocesan office. He also hears confessions at the Keller parish each week.

Father Dennis Smith has known Msgr. Hart for more than 25 years and calls him an “esteemed colleague and true friend” since they served together at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Fr. Smith said, “Since ordination, he has proved to be a dedicated, tireless laborer in the vineyard. His priesthood is fortified by a genuine love for the Church, not just the Church as an institution, but the Church as the people of God.”

One aptitude that has served Msgr. Hart as pastor and diocesan administrator is his ability to listen, according to Fr. Smith. “He doesn’t simply hear what you say, he listens. Truly listening involves the mind, heart, and soul.” The retired priest continued, “He’s a great treasure for the diocese.”

Now, after 25 years as a Catholic priest and decades of early morning prayer and study, the spiritual journey continues for Msgr. Hart — but not onward, just deeper. Especially deeper into the Eucharist.

“I think all of us need to really enter into the worship of God through the Holy Sacrifice and to do the best we can to understand Who we’re receiving under the appearances of bread and wine,” he said. “A deeper appreciation for what is really taking place, what we’re privileged to be a part of, would help draw us more deeply into that union with Christ, which can be the foundation for the transformation of our lives and then the lives we touch, wherever God happens to put us.” 🇺🇸

FIGHTING IN A Different Way

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem carries on a tradition of support for Christians in the Holy Land

By Susan McFarland

They began as knights during medieval times and fought in the first religious wars to recapture, protect, and guard the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Today, instead of riding into battle on horseback to protect the sacred place where Christ was crucified and was buried, the Knights and Dames of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (EOHSJ) fight in a different way.

“Resources of the Order are no longer weapons, but brotherly support of the Christians in the Holy Land. In spirit, we are still Knights of the Holy Sepulchre,” said Bill Ross, who along with his wife, Tessy, serve as EOHSJ section leaders for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

The origins of the EOHSJ date back to 1096 during the First Crusade (1096-1099 AD). The primary mission of the order is to support the Christian presence in the Holy Land through prayer, presence, and purse.

Their work is crucial. In the Holy Land, the Christian population has declined from 30 percent to less than two percent in the last 60 years.

The Order’s work in the Holy Land helps to build and support churches,

convents, schools, higher education, and seminaries all with the underlying focus of helping to promote the Catholic population’s presence in the area.

“Many of the restrictions for Christians there affect their ability to make a living and support their families. Not only is our support enabling them to remain in their native land, but most especially giving the Latin Patriarchate (the Catholic episcopal see of Jerusalem) the ability to maintain the churches, build new facilities, educate the children, and serve the faithful in the Holy Land,” Tessy stated.

The funds benefit Christians in the Holy Land, and Muslims and Jews who are serviced by the facilities. The Order has funded and supports the operation of 40 patriarchal schools in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan.

“Today over 19,000 students attend these schools, and on average the student breakdown is 60 percent Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, etc.) and 40 percent Muslim,” Bill said. “It is hoped that these schools will generate mutual respect and help to get people of different races and religions used to living in peace.”

Father Mel Bessellicu, pastor at St. Ann Parish in Burleson, was inducted



The Knights and Dames of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem at the celebration of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth 50th anniversary in 2019. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

into the EOHSJ in October 2019, at St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

“I would like all Catholics to know just how important this Order is in maintaining a vital presence in Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land,” Fr. Bessellieu said. “The number of Christians living in the Holy Land has dwindled considerably, and the Order is making sure that there will always be a Christian presence in Palestine.”

John M. Pritchett Sr., a parishioner at St. Patrick Cathedral and EOHSJ member since 2009, was attracted to the Order because of its fidelity to the Gospel, ancient traditions, and promotion of pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

“Each member aspires to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This is not always possible, but one of the charitable works the Order does locally is to attend the funeral masses of deceased members,” Pritchett said. “The consolation it provides to surviving family members, and the hope in the resurrection it expresses, points to the ultimate pilgrimage we all will make some day.”

Pritchett said the Order is quiet about

its work, but its work is not secret.

“Any adult Catholic interested in growing their faith and serving the Church and who is able to provide financial support to our fellow Christians in the Holy Land ought to seriously consider participating in the work of the Order,” he said.

Prospective members are nominated by current members, pastors, or the bishop and must be certified by their pastor and the local bishop.

Section leaders Bill and Tessy Ross were invested in October 1999 and have attained the rank of Knight and Dame Grand Cross. They have served as section leaders since 2008 and were among 40 pilgrims who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2006 with Bishop Kevin Vann.

The Southwestern Lieutenancy, one of 52 lieutenancies worldwide, includes members from Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. Every fall, one of the dioceses within these four states hosts the Annual Meeting and Investiture. This year in October, members of the Order from the Diocese of Fort Worth will host the meeting and

investiture.

“The Annual Meetings include awe-inspiring music, liturgies which are spiritually enriching, and the solemn rites of knighthood. The processions include our Grand Prior, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, archbishops and bishops from the Lieutenancy, and member priests and deacons, as well as the Knights and Dames in full regalia,” Tessy said.

Tessy described their distinctive dress, “The Knights, regalia includes a white wool cape bearing the red Jerusalem cross of the Order — a link to the Crusaders who wore a white mantle with the Jerusalem cross. Knights wear a black velvet beret with a patch indicative of their rank within the Order. Those who have completed a Holy Land pilgrimage also wear a pilgrim shell secured on the center of the Jerusalem cross.

“Dames wear black capes and cover their heads with a mantilla, attire that was typical to dress approved for women attending the Papal Court in the Vatican during the late 1800s when Pope Leo XIII invited Dames into the Order,” she explained. 🇺🇸

American Heritage Girls and Troops of St. George
offer faith-forward programs for

Scout Life

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

As traditional scouting programs face declining membership, more parents are seeking alternative ways to get youth involved in community service or outdoor activities.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, two organizations offer those opportunities, as well as character development and leadership skills within the magisterium of the Catholic Church.

The American Heritage Girls and Troops of St. George for boys are Christ-centered, parish-based initiatives that help youngsters grow spiritually and socially during their formative years.

LOVING GOD, CHERISHING FAMILY, SERVING OTHERS

Karen Wilde loved the responsibility, leadership, and service opportunities her son found in the Boy Scouts and wanted her daughter, Lauren, to have the same experience.

She considered the Girl Scouts.

“But that didn’t work out,” explained the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (SEAS) parishioner, who wanted faith fully integrated into the program.

Her quest to find a group that coupled fun activities with spiritual development ended one Sunday after spotting an American Heritage Girls table set up in the church foyer. Founded by a network of Cincinnati, Ohio, parents in 1995, the national organization welcomes 5- to 18-year-old girls and builds them into women of integrity through service to God, family, community, and country.

Members earn badges, participate in service projects, and experience the outdoors with an emphasis on Christian values and family involvement. Catholic girls receive added guidance and support from the AHG National Catholic Committee and are encouraged to earn faith awards and patches.

The faith-based organization checked all the boxes for Wilde, who became an adult leader for Troop TX2012 at SEAS.

“It had all the things I was looking for, but with a Catholic focus,” the mom said. “Lauren has been a member ever since and that was five years ago.”

An incoming senior at Keller High School, Wilde’s daughter received the

AHG’s Stars and Stripes Award for her efforts refurbishing a flagpole and surrounding landscape at the historic Mount Gilead Cemetery in Keller. The achievement is equivalent to earning the rank of Eagle Scout.

“It took a lot of time to sand the pole, paint it, and replace the worn-out ropes but I’m glad I stayed with it,” said 17-year-old Lauren, who spent 100 hours working on the project. “Being an American Heritage Girl showed me how to be a leader and become an independent person.”

Celebrating its 26th year, AHG now boasts more than 50,000 members in 15 different countries and all 50 states. Six parishes currently sponsor troops in the Diocese of Fort Worth: Good Shepherd, Immaculate Conception, Sacred Heart in Wichita Falls, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Maria Goretti, and St. Philip the Apostle.

“American Heritage Girls helped my daughters grow in faith and, at the same time, taught them different life skills and leadership,” said Anne Bremer, who started a troop at St. Mary Parish in Temple in 2010 before moving to the DFW area. The



Bishop Michael Olson celebrates an outdoor Mass with the Troops of St. George. (Courtesy/TSG Troop 5)

Coppell resident later co-wrote the curriculum for the national organization's Catholic faith awards and badges. American Heritage Girls is interdenominational, and girls are encouraged to work toward awards that reflect their religious beliefs.

Serving on a five-member committee charged with upgrading the Catholic faith guidebooks, Bremer wrote materials geared towards junior high students.

"We wanted something a little more in-depth as far as apologetics and integrating the core points of the AHG creed with different virtues of the Catholic Church and saints who demonstrate these virtues," Bremer explained.

Requirements for a faith award advance as a girl gets older.

"Some patriot level awards are really deep studies of encyclicals written by different popes," she added.

Now the shepherd (spiritual leader) of Troop TX1027, Bremer said American Heritage Girls reinforces the values of loving God, cherishing family, and community service she wants to instill in her daughters, Hannah and Gianna.

"For me, American Heritage Girls is a way of integrating faith through life skills," she pointed out. "It teaches them how to be the hands and feet of Christ on earth."

Continued on Page 38



Lauren Wilde recently earned AHG's Stars and Stripes Award. (Courtesy/Karen Wilde)



Victor Hernandez and his sons on a TSG hike at a favorite location, Caprock Canyon. (Courtesy/Victor Hernandez)



Campouts with the Troops of St. George include praying the Rosary around a bonfire. (Courtesy/TSG 5)

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FORMING VIRTUOUS MEN, BOYS

Years from now, when Victor Hernandez recalls his favorite memories of fatherhood, he'll reminisce about sitting around a glowing campfire with his four sons reciting the Rosary. The nighttime ritual is always part of a weekend spent with the Troops of St. George.

"It was impactful," said the St.

Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioner, describing the experience shared with other boys and their dads.

"We say the Rosary for veneration of Mother Mary, but we're doing it in a very masculine environment. We're praying in the dark and in the middle of the woods with a roaring fire. It's amazing how memorable that is," he said.

Hernandez is one of the founding members of Troop 5 — the largest group

of men and boys in the burgeoning Troops of St. George organization. A Catholic apostolate that combines outdoor adventures with faith formation, the organization was started in 2013 to develop strong, virtuous fathers and sons.

Hernandez explained the "idea was to bring dads and their sons together for the primary purpose of growing in faith. That journey happens in the outdoors, [through] being self-sufficient and doing the things men and boys love to do."

Hiking, archery, fishing, and learning survival skills occur between morning and evening prayer, a daily Rosary, and heartfelt discussions about the saints or living the faith.

A MASS NOT TO BE MISSED

The highlight of every campout is the Mass with a priest visiting the campsite, or the troop traveling to a nearby church for the Saturday vigil service.

"We stop everything we're doing, get cleaned up as much as we can, and give emphasis to what is the most important thing — the Mass," the spokesman said. "There's something to be said for experiencing it in God's creation versus a structure made by man. It's just special."

A frequent Mass celebrant is Monsignor E. James Hart, the diocesan



Hannah Bremer and Ali Perez pray the Rosary at an American Heritage Girls event. (Courtesy/Angela Stambaugh)

Chancellor and Moderator of the Curia, who serves as national chaplain for the organization.

Other North Texas Catholics on the executive team include Dr. Jeremy Lustig, the national director; David Fischer, board member; and Brian Squibbs, national director of communications and recruitment.

The organization has grown from 11 troops a few years ago to just shy of 100 active troops today.

In addition to SEAS, the organization has chapters at St. Philip in Lewisville and St. Martin de Porres in Prosper.

“It’s not really about the numbers. If we change one soul, we’ve done our darnedest,” enthused Squibbs, who is an acolyte at SEAS.

Approved as an apostolate in 2018 by Bishop Michael Olson after a careful review of the curriculum and field manuals, the Troops of St. George welcomed its first Canadian troop recently.

Squibbs credits the bishop’s approval and the pandemic for surging interest in the organization.

“Being an outdoor activity helped, as did Bishop Olson sharing information about us with his brother

bishops,” he explained.

When promoting the apostolate, the communications director stresses one point: It’s different from anything out there.

“We not only live the adventure of the outdoors in God’s creation, we’re doing it alongside our kids,” he said, noting it’s not a drop-off program. A dad, uncle, grandfather, or older sibling must accompany the Catholic youngster to the troops’ six or seven events a year.

“I tell mothers they think they are sending boys out for an adventure with the Troops of St. George, but they end up getting a better husband and father back,” Squibbs continued. “That’s what’s been absolutely crucial for me — my family and my spiritual growth in the Catholic faith.”

Fully and unapologetically Catholic, the organization’s mix of learning how to light a fire along with knowing how to be an altar server also benefits parishes.

“I always tell priests you’re going to get better families and better boys in the parish helping you,” the father of four pointed out.


“That’s what the Troops of St. George bring.” 🇺🇸



SAINT FRANCIS VILLAGE

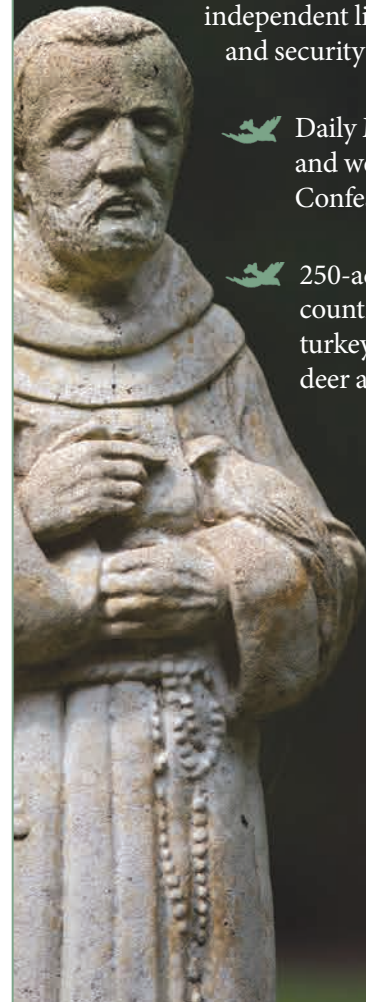
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signs of LIFE

Ultrasound technicians working at pro-life pregnancy centers
brace the front lines of the battle to save lives

By Susan McFarland

As an ultrasound technician, Angela Ly assumed she would always work in a hospital setting. In fact, she was hesitant when pondering a job at her current clinic. Now, two years into her role at Mother & Unborn Baby Care, she wouldn't trade a thing.

"I have a chance to save souls," Ly said.

MUBC, a nonprofit organization, serves women and their families in crisis pregnancies. Their Pregnancy Options Center is located in the downtown hospital district of Fort Worth.

"We offer real hope and practical assistance to the woman who must decide under pressure whether her unborn child will live or die. Her entire future life, happiness, and destiny are at stake! Nothing is more crucial at this time than making available to her the positive alternatives for life, as weighed against the destruction of abortion," the organization states on its website.

Ly, a parishioner at St. Maria Goretti Church in Arlington, said faith is her motivation and what keeps her going as she tries to help save one soul at a time. Even before the mother is brought to her to "meet the baby," her silent prayers begin.

"I try to do my best during that moment for her to see it is alive, a real baby," she said. "The whole time I am praying, 'Let them see what they need to see, and give me the words that I need to say.' I try to rely on the Holy Spirit."

Sometimes they will choose life. Some leave and are not sure. Some call back. Either way, Ly continues prayers for the mother to see God's love.

"We continue to pray and hope something we said will get through to her heart. It's a burden at times. But it's definitely a blessing to see a woman choose life," she said.

Seeing life in the womb is a special experience. Hearing life is too.

Randy Bollig, president of Loreto House in Denton, said as a man, he isn't allowed into the ultrasound room.

"However, what's beautiful is in the rest of the building we can hear that heartbeat coming through the walls," he said. "And you can hear the mom laughing and saying, 'My baby!' We hear the joy... That's a pretty powerful thing. It gets loud, sometimes we hear laughter. It permeates through the building."

Among more than 50 pro-life centers in the boundaries of the Diocese of Fort Worth, Loreto House and Mother & Unborn Baby Care, along with Flourishing Tree of Life Family and Pregnancy Resource Center in Aledo, are the only Catholic-led pregnancy centers. They are also approved apostolates in the diocese.

Workers serve women in alignment with the teachings of the Catholic Church and offer resources to help the mother during pregnancy and for several months after the baby is born.

Pat Pelletier, a founder of MUBC, said approximately 60 percent of women who visit the clinic are



Angela Ly prays while she introduces expectant mothers to their babies via ultrasound at Mother & Unborn Baby Care. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

considering an abortion.

“The great majority will change their mind once they see the baby and eliminate the crisis, whether it is family pressures or financial pressure,” Pelletier said.

The center provides free, fast, and accurate pregnancy testing; counseling to the troubled mom and her family; and

friends to help them appreciate the reality and sanctity of the life she carries within her. It also provides free sonograms, guidance, support, and other provisions, including financial help, rent, and paying bills.

MUBC is in the process of building a new office, next to an abortion clinic on

the west side of Fort Worth, where Pelletier estimates about 500 abortions a month are performed.

“That’s why it’s important for us to be next to this clinic,” Pelletier said. “If we are next door, we will have a constant presence ... My prayer is to see at least half of those women.” 🇺🇸

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THE PADUA TEAM

Led by Cindy Casey (middle row, far right), Padua's staff of 30 includes 12 case managers and six case workers who currently serve 160 families. Since 2015, Padua has served 492 families. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



better way



Catholic Charities Fort Worth's Padua program is turning poverty on its head by using "what we know works"

By Mary Lou Seewoester

Since President Lyndon B. Johnson's 1964 "War on Poverty" when the national poverty rate was 19 percent, government assistance programs have dedicated trillions of dollars toward eliminating poverty. Yet, the U.S. Census Bureau reports a 2019 poverty rate of 10.5 percent, or 34 million Americans living in poverty.

Catholic Charities Fort Worth, however, is quietly accomplishing what government assistance programs and traditional case management have been unable to do — guide people out of poverty for good — one family at a time.

When CCFW introduced its Out of Poverty campaign in 2015, it set the bold goal of guiding 10,000 people out of poverty. With that goal, CCFW defined four financial benchmarks for someone to move out of poverty: earning a living wage, eliminating inappropriate debt, increasing savings and savings behavior, and being free from government assistance.

In 2015, CCFW also launched Padua, a long-term case management model designed to help clients reach those out-of-poverty benchmarks. Padua provides case management that is holistic, relationship-based, client-led, and research-based. It is named for St. Anthony of Padua,

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who in addition to being patron of lost items, also is a patron saint of poverty.

Cindy Casey, director of CCFW client services/client strategies, says Padua goes far beyond food pantries and emergency assistance.

“We’re able to take that a step further by bringing in professionals who can help with long-term growth so we can take the mission of the Church and move it forward,” she said.

Casey explained how Padua works by first describing traditional case management, which provides funds but does not plan and problem solve with clients. Without planning, an unemployed client may receive money for back rent but still needs work and rent money for the following months.

Padua provides the missing piece. With Padua, clients receive coaching to help them plan, organize, and problem solve so that once they obtain financial stability, they can maintain it, Casey said.

“Financial assistance is there and available, but as a problem-solving tool to help develop problem-solving skills with the client,” Casey said. “It’s not just a transactional payment of a bill.”

A LIFE-CHANGING CHOICE

Two years ago, Sheritha Cobb, a single mother of two teenagers, lived in a small apartment, worked part-time, went to school full-time, and received government assistance to make ends meet.

“I was stuck,” she remembered. “Stuck in that mentality of ‘this is as good as it’s going to get, so just make the best of it.’”

Then, during an event at her son’s high school, she half-heartedly stopped at one of the booths. It was a booth for Padua, and it changed her life. Cobb was skeptical that Padua could help, but she applied anyway “just to see how it goes.”

It went better than she could have imagined. Today, she receives no government assistance, works full-time as a licensed vocational nurse, has savings in the bank, and recently purchased her first home.

“My life changed and turned around completely,” Cobb said.

With her Padua team, a case manager and a case worker, Cobb set initial goals of having stable transportation, a stable income, and making sure her children were safe and stable as well. She also set long-term goals of someday owning a home and taking a vacation with her children, both of which she has accomplished.

“Purchasing a house was one of my long-term dreams but I didn’t think it would happen,” she said. “With someone guiding you and helping, you see that you can accomplish these goals by just taking little steps at a time.”

No one told her to “just do this,” she added. “It was more like, ‘you can do this. Let’s do this together.’”

“When I got the point where we did a budget — what a wakeup call,” Cobb said. “They gave me categories to look at [in the budget]. We looked at everything — and I mean everything. Writing it down and seeing it really helped, and I still use that today.”

Cobb said her children also have learned and benefited

ACHIEVING DREAMS

With the help of Padua and through her hard work, Sheritha Cobb recently achieved her dream of buying a house. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)





from her Padua experience.

“I sat down with my children and talked about budgeting,” she said. “They’re not strangers to ‘we can’t get that right now,’ or ‘we have to wait a little bit.’ My son said we needed a dog for the house. So, he saved up and bought a dog.”

For Cobb, who graduated Padua last summer, the most meaningful aspect of the program was her relationship with the people on her Padua team.

“I’m really shy and being able to open up to these wonderful individuals was amazing,” she said. “I’m speechless and I cry thinking about my progress and how they helped me.”

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF PADUA

According to Casey, there are four aspects of Padua that make it unique. First, it’s directional, meaning that clients identify what they want for their

“bigger, brighter future.” Then they use components built around financial benchmarks to plan their own trajectory.

Padua is holistic and long term. Clients stay with Padua from 12 months to as long as five years, but typically, clients are with Padua two to three years before reaching their financial benchmarks.

“We are not telling people what to do,” Casey said. “We’ll show you the scenarios and you can choose. We’ll keep you as well-informed as you need to be.”

Padua offers strategic and flexible financial assistance. It does more than pay bills. It uses financial resources to help people set goals, put a plan in place, and hold themselves accountable to the plan.

Finally, Padua provides ongoing support for its staff with training that is

Cobb and her son, Devin, and daughter, Cydney, play board games at their home in Cleburne on July 18, 2021. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

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Demetria Johnson, a Padua client, plays with her children on July 23, 2021 in Grand Prairie. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)

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frequent and ongoing. Casey said, “One of the things we’ve done exceedingly well with Padua is our training.”

FINANCIAL AND EMOTIONAL RESILIENCY

All Padua clients commit to meet twice monthly with a case manager and case worker, Casey explained. Clients may receive financial help for today’s needs, but coaching ensures there is a plan and process to meet tomorrow’s needs, thus disrupting the complex system of poverty.

“At its heart, Padua is a financial coaching model based on a firm foundation of emotional resiliency,” Casey said.

She said Padua helps clients “develop a foundation of well-being — emotional well-being, mental and physical health,

the ability to have strong relationships and support systems and the ability to develop executive function — to regulate emotions, plan, and problem solve.”

“People can obtain their financial goals, but not maintain them if their emotional resiliency is not firm,” Casey explained. “So, we start working on financial resiliency right off the bat, but we also work on emotional resiliency — that foundation of well-being.”

Cobb’s case manager nurtured that foundation of well-being by helping her look at not only her relationship with money but also her relationships with friends and co-workers.

“We even talked about the people around me, which relationships were positive, and which were negative, and then how to release those negative relationships.”

She remembers the day her case

manager asked her how a particular relationship would benefit her long-term — in a year or five years.

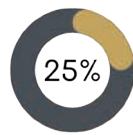
“I said, ‘It’s not,’” Cobb recalled. “So that’s when I cut ties. And I was free ... I was able to let go of bad relationships because they helped me see that those relationships were not helping my growth.”

WHATEVER IT TAKES

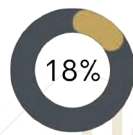
Casey noted that the tenets of Padua can be found in any social work textbook. But in the real world, critics argue that it’s too costly to execute and too time-consuming for a traditional case manager with 50 or 60 clients. So, in 2014, CCFW formed a “Whatever It Takes” committee with professionals from other agencies nationwide, the cities of Fort Worth and Arlington, clients, and staff, to answer the question: If you could design “whatever

Research reveals

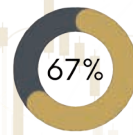
Two years into a randomized controlled trial, the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities found improvements in labor-market outcomes for Padua participants. Participant interviews at 12 months and 24 months revealed that compared to the control group:



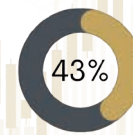
Padua participants were 25% more likely to have full-time employment



Monthly earnings for Padua participants were 18% higher



Participants who were not employed at the beginning of the program were 67% more likely to be employed full-time after 2 years



Forty-three percent of Padua participants reported improved health



Families starting Padua without stable housing were 60% more likely to obtain stable housing



it takes” to help people move themselves out of poverty, what would that look like?

“Over and over, we heard: ‘There’s never enough time to do what we know works. We get so caught up in connecting clients with resources for today that we can’t help them for tomorrow,’” Casey said. “So, we made a conscious decision to invest in clients by investing in our staff.”

To that end, Padua limits caseloads to 25 clients per case manager, who is paired with a case worker. The case manager primarily helps clients build financial and emotional resiliency, and the case worker helps clients identify and access resources and funds such as assistance with rent, housing, employment, food, and childcare. Each case worker supports the clients of two case managers.

“Every client who comes in the door gets a case worker and a case manager. That makes Padua very unique in giving clients more support,” Casey explained.

“CCFW has allowed us the flexibility, and stakeholders have allowed us the funding, to do what everyone knows works,” she added. “So, we’ve been very blessed.”

Padua’s staff of 30 includes 12 case managers and six case workers who currently serve 160 families. Since 2015, Padua has served 492 families and guided 69 families out of poverty. Jennifer Strand, CCFW director of research and evaluation, explained that many of the 492 Padua families made

A RESILIENT FAMILY

Demetria Johnson and her three children, Adrian, Ta’tyanna, and Kyanna. (NTC/Jayme Donahue)



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significant progress and “were helped greatly” but they did not feel a need to stay in Padua until they reached all four financial benchmarks for out-of-poverty status.

“But that doesn’t mean they are not moving their life toward their bigger, brighter future,” Strand said.

MORE THAN FINANCIAL HELP

Demetria Johnson, a single mother of three, had received financial assistance from a variety of agencies, but in May 2020, she discovered Padua and found much more than help with paying bills.

She said, “A lot of people say they want to help but they just give you the information and then leave you to take care of it. But Padua is right on top of it, and they will help you to stay on top of it.”

When Johnson started Padua, she had been out of work for three months and had just gained full-time employment with a temp agency doing insurance verification but earning less than at her previous job.

She said Padua “came at the right time for me. I was stressed out trying to figure out how to catch up and pay my bills every month.”

Padua paid for groceries during the February freeze when Johnson’s apartment lost power for a week and everything in her refrigerator spoiled. Padua also helped pay for her last semester of training in medical billing and coding and for the fee to take the licensure test.

“This program has helped me so much. I wouldn’t have been able to finish school without it,” she said.

Along with the financial help, her Padua team guided her in making a manageable budget so she could not only provide for her family but also begin saving — encouraging her, for example, to save 30 percent of her tax refund. They helped her complete an application for rental assistance from the State of Texas during the pandemic and found free workshops for her on managing

money and on what it takes to eventually own a home.

“Every month we go through financial planning and go over all my expenses. When we broke it down and wrote an entire list of bills, I could see where I can save money because I actually think about it now before I spend it,” Johnson explained. “They also showed me how to remove things from my credit that are negative.”

In addition to financial coaching, her team offered emotional support with frequent communication about her needs and well-being, supportive text messages during stressful times, and with counseling provided through a CCFW partnership.

“I feel a strong bond between all of us. They make me feel like they care about me,” Johnson said. “And they give you incentives to make you want to do better for yourself.”

PROVING PADUA WORKS

CCFW developed Padua with a commitment to long-term research to evaluate its effectiveness and to understand how to continually improve it. To do that, Padua partnered with the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO) at the University of Notre Dame. LEO is conducting a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to measure the effectiveness of Padua’s long-term, comprehensive, and individualized case management model.

LEO’s preliminary conclusions show increased client self-sufficiency and improved employment outcomes. Two years into the RCT, participant interviews revealed increases in full-time employment, increased earnings, improved health, and reduced use of government assistance.

Collaboration with LEO prompted CCFW to start its own research and evaluation team, according to Strand, who heads the research team at CCFW.

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Research reveals

CCFW’s internal Research and Evaluation Team collected real time data from the 226 Padua participants who provided household financial information upon service completion. The data showed that:

120 families



Increased their annual wages; the typical Padua family increased annual wages by \$15,405.36

79 families



Increased savings; a typical Padua family’s savings increased by \$1,900.

26 families



Improved their debt-to-income ratio; a typical Padua family reduced negative debt balance by \$979.

120 families



Improved their net income.



Nolan Catholic High School

EDUCATION IN FAITH, FORMATION IN HOPE, AND PERSEVERANCE IN CHARITY

Nolan Catholic High School continues a tradition that began more than half a century ago: a ministry of the Diocese of Fort Worth providing a college preparatory education and evangelizing students to be tomorrow's servant leaders through education based in faith, formation based in hope, and perseverance in charity. Founded in 1961, Nolan Catholic's storied history continues to evolve, grow, and move in exciting new directions. The school recently completed a \$32 million enhancement, including updates to the existing main building, new classroom furniture, additional outdoor classrooms, a state-of-the-art natatorium, and an Integrated Design of Engineering and Arts (IDEA) building.

A Nolan Catholic education engages students with a diverse, rigorous curriculum that spans across academic disciplines with a classical approach and a focus on grammar, logic, and rhetoric. A curriculum embedded in traditional studies allows for collaborative investigations needed for higher education experiences. Even more importantly, the Nolan Catholic experience helps students discover, nurture, and develop their unique, God-given talents. Students learn to succeed with grace, fail with dignity, and approach all challenges with humility. Nolan Catholic High School students are immediately recognizable as Christians through their acts of faith.

The Nolan Catholic experience addresses the whole person with college preparatory academics, an award-winning fine arts program, outdoor classrooms, championship-level athletics, innovative ecology and engineering programs, and more – all built on a foundation rooted in the Catholic faith. At Nolan Catholic, students are formed in the Gospel virtues of faith, hope, and charity to become lifelong learners in knowing, loving, and serving God.

Nolan Catholic High School is accredited by the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department (TCCB ED), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and AdvancED.

Quick Look

ADMISSION

admissions@nchstx.org
817.457.2920

GRADES

9-12

ENROLLMENT

706

STUDENT/FACULTY

12:1

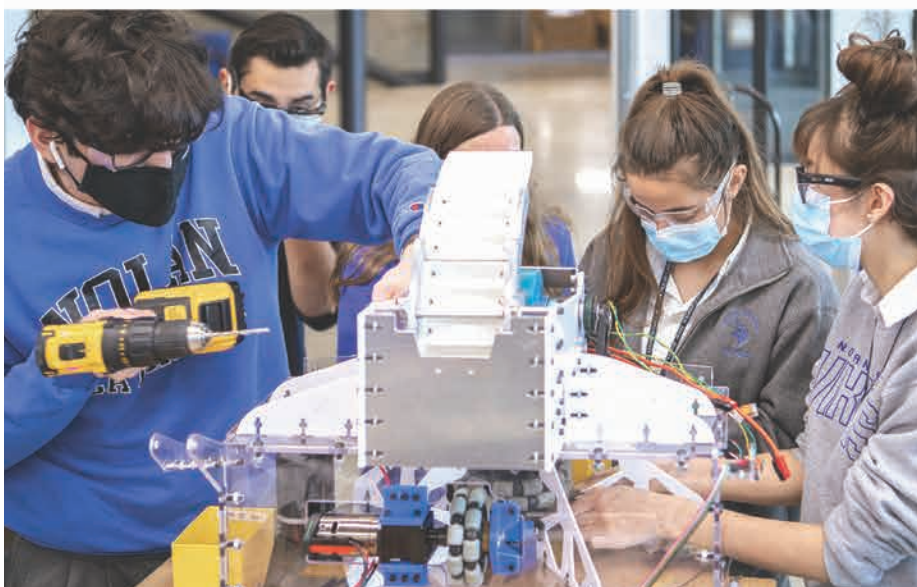
TUITION

\$18,390



4501 Bridge Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76103

NOLANCATHOLIC.ORG



Dr. Jennifer Strand (right) is shown with her research and evaluation team at Catholic Charities Fort Worth. **Left to Right:** Bridget Hennessey, Sarah Dunham, and Trent Ormsbee-Hale. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



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“Research allows programs and agencies to see what’s working and not working on both a macro and micro level,” Strand said.

She explained that LEO’s research addresses Padua’s big picture, evaluating the effectiveness of its foundational components.

“It takes a long time to gather that data because it is longitudinal,” she said. “But the internal research provides the opportunity to refine actual services in a more real-time manner.”

“That helps us support clients better and more efficiently and it helps us know where we need to put our resources, time, and money and where we don’t,” Strand said.

For example, she said Padua made a significant change early on in how it disburses financial assistance, based on data from the Research and Evaluation team. She said Padua began with the assumption that financial help would

FIND
OUT
MORE



To learn more about Padua please visit: bit.ly/PaduaTeam. To get help, or to donate to Catholic Charities Fort Worth, visit CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org.

alleviate pressure and give clients the mental and emotional capacity to do the work needed to move forward. But research revealed that approach was not helpful, so Padua tied financial assistance to planning and problem-solving. Funding became a tool for the long-term goal of financial resiliency.

“The problem wasn’t that [clients] didn’t have capacity to think about it,” Strand explained, “but they didn’t have the tools to solve for it. So, using funding to equip them with tools to find their own solutions was a much better way.”

“Without changing the big components of what we believe works with Padua, we were able to refine and adapt the methodology and mechanisms that

make the program work,” she said.

As director of CCFW client services/client strategies, Casey also sees the benefits of continued internal research and LEO’s long-term research for the purpose of offering clients the best and most effective path out of poverty. She reminds us that all work at CCFW is based on Catholic social teaching, “so we’re the hands and feet of Christ out there.”

“When you come in the door with Padua, you can be homeless, a high school drop-out, or unable to work because of illness but know you’ll be able to work in the future. As long as you will eventually be able and willing to work 40 hours a week, you’re eligible for Padua and we’ll work for you,” she said. 🇺🇸



Into God's Hands

HE IS: Father Oscar Sanchez Olvera, CORC, pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Fort Worth for the past three years.

SOLID GROUND: The fifth of eight children, Oscar grew up in Querétaro, Mexico, in a family with deep Catholic roots.

CALLED LIKE DAVID: In his late teens, he felt a call from God, but he had concerns about how and where to proceed. His aunt, a religious sister, invited two of his older brothers to a discernment retreat. They declined.

His aunt and her friend Father Gildardo Álvarez Abonce, CORC, then invited Oscar, who had just graduated from high school. He said, "Yes, why not?"

He entered seminary the next month.

ORDAINED: After studying in Mexico and Spain, he was ordained June 5, 2006 in the Church of the Fifth Apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

TOGETHER AGAIN: About two decades after Fr. Álvarez invited him to the retreat, they served together at Immaculate Heart of Mary. Fr. Álvarez was pastor, and Fr. Sanchez the parochial vicar.


AN ORDERED LIFE: Fr. Sanchez appreciates living in community with three other CORC priests in this diocese, who pray and eat at least one meal together each day.

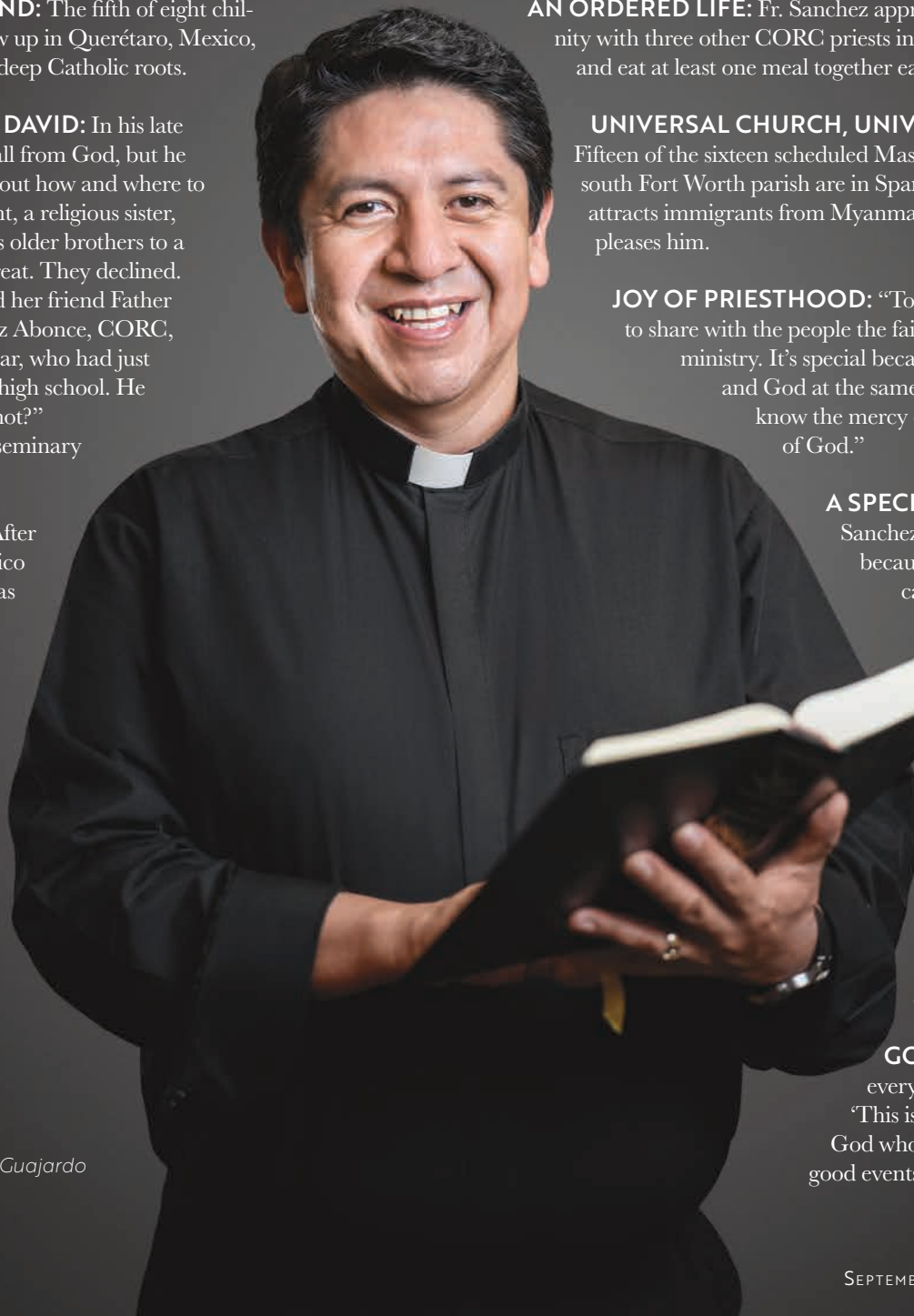
UNIVERSAL CHURCH, UNIVERSAL PARISH: Fifteen of the sixteen scheduled Masses each week at the south Fort Worth parish are in Spanish. The English Mass attracts immigrants from Myanmar and Africa, which pleases him.

JOY OF PRIESTHOOD: "To be with the people, to share with the people the faith, to serve them in ministry. It's special because I am serving people and God at the same time.... I want people to know the mercy of God, to know the love of God."

A SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP: Fr. Sanchez is devoted to St. Joseph because of "his mission to take care of the Son of God and the Virgin Mary; his silence, his humble life in obedience to God's word."

IN YOUR HANDS: Since he was a seminarian, he meditates on the prayer of abandonment of Blessed Charles de Foucauld with every decision.

GO WITH GOD: "In every event in my life, I'll say, 'This is not coincidence, it is God who is present in my life: the good events and the bad events.'" 



NTC/Juan Guajardo



MERCY mission

Every encounter with Dennis Schroeder of Windthorst includes a reminder of Jesus' love

By Susan Moses

Dennis Schroeder's home is filled with things he loves. More mounted deer heads than you can count on your hands. Stacks of ballcaps for Windthorst High School sports teams. Enough rods and reels for a flotilla of fishing boats.

Paradoxically, what he has the most of is the thing he gives away: framed photos of the Divine Mercy image.

Schroeder has spent all his life in Windthorst. Baptized at St. Mary Parish, the 76-year-old said he's never missed Sunday Mass, except for an occasional remote hunting trip or an illness.

His father had a dairy farm, and he and one of his brothers took over the day-to-day operations of the farm when Schroeder was a teen. For 51 years, his days were scheduled according to the cows' needs, until he sold the farm to a nephew.

But it was in retirement that Schroeder discovered what he describes as his true purpose.

It's not hunting or fishing, even though he fries the catfish he catches for the local senior citizens. "I like to give it away and

give back," he explained.

Although he has attended almost every game in every sport played by the Windthorst Trojans, including away games, that's not where he finds his greatest joy.

His purpose is to spread the news of God's mercy to each person he encounters by giving them a framed copy of the Divine Mercy image for them to keep "for inspiration."

ONE BY ONE

Cassie Erazo was traveling south on US-281 from her home in Wichita Falls to visit her grandmother in Windthorst when her car had a flat tire.

With her eight-year-old daughter in the car and her husband out of town, Erazo thought, "The only one getting me out of this [predicament] was me."

But within a couple of minutes, two motorists stopped to change the tire for her. One was Dennis Schroeder.

"I felt like my guardian angel was watching out for me to put this humble man in my path," she recalled.

When her car was roadworthy again, Schroeder told her, "I want to bless you with something," and he returned to his



Dennis Schroeder at his home in Windthorst. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

truck and gave her a framed portrait of Jesus, with rays of red and white extending from His heart. They talked a few minutes about Jesus and His love before they continued their separate journeys.

AN UNINTENTIONAL START

Schroeder's Divine Mercy ministry came out of an ACTS retreat about six years ago. The leadership team shared stories about how their lives were changed by a deeper encounter with Christ and His Church.

Although Schroeder was a regular at Mass and prayed the Rosary daily, a habit instilled by his parents, he examined his life and found that some habits and priorities needed to change. "I decided to go to the Lord, to be with Him," he said.

At the retreat, he also learned the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Two weeks later, he received a Divine Mercy image in the mail,



and he framed it and put it on his kitchen table.

Schroeder explained why the image that came to St. Faustina in a vision means so much to him. “I look at the nail marks in His hands and feet. He fell three times when He was carrying the cross. Sure the cross was heavy, but He was carrying all of our sin.

“I look at the rays. I see the Passion and Easter, all in one. It’s everything He’s done for us,” Schroeder continued.

A visitor admired the beautiful photo on his kitchen table, so Schroeder ordered five copies of the image, framed them, and gave them to two friends and his three daughters.

He thought of others whom he wanted to bless and ordered 25 more. Then 50. Now he orders them 100 at a time, and he estimates he’s given away more than 1,000. He places them in frames so the iconic

image will be displayed.

“I give it anytime I meet people and tell them, ‘This is what it means to me.’ I love giving that away. It’s inspiration ministry,” he said. Most recipients respond positively and often end the conversation by hugging him. His gift has been refused only twice.

A recent day began at a farmer’s market, where Schroeder gave one away to a vendor and four to fellow shoppers. Later, he went fishing at a local park and gave three to other fishermen. In the afternoon, he gave two more to travelers who stopped to pray at the parish’s grotto.

Distributing 10 in a day is more than average, but he said he won’t pass a stranded motorist without stopping to help, then sharing the gift that has helped him.

Schroeder describes himself as shy but claims his ministry is easy. “I have found my calling. The Lord does not ask much of us, but He does ask a little. This is the little

I can do back for Him,” he said, his eyes brimming with tears.

His love for Jesus includes honoring His mother. The retired dairyman begins each day praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet followed by the first of three daily Rosaries.

He serves as St. Mary’s team captain for the annual Rosary Rally for America, sponsored by America Needs Fatima. This year, when St. Mary parishioners gather after the October 16 Mass to pray the Rosary, he hopes he’s joined by a group even larger than the 92 parishioners in 2019.

Never one to miss an opportunity to evangelize, Schroeder writes, “Pray the Rosary” on each piece of mail he sends out.

It’s a simple act, but it aligns with his purpose. He said, “I want to spread His word. When I meet St. Peter, I want to hear him say three words, ‘Well done, Dennis.’” 🇺🇸

A gift and grandparents



Grandparents rank among the best gift-givers.

In our house, they are legendary. Presents tumbling out of suitcases. Piles under the Christmas tree. Birthday packages on the doorstep with Sunday comics tucked inside as colorful cushions.

Everyday moments are no exception. Extra cookies after dinner. Ice cream cones on a sunny afternoon. One more game of catch, one more round of cribbage, one more push on the swing.

Grandparents love to give, and grandchildren love to receive. Not every family knows this relationship, but wherever we see the outpouring of affection between generations, we witness a gift of human love.

Giving and receiving stand among life's greatest joys.

Each time we receive the Eucharist, we participate in God's generous gift-giving. Amid the latest debates about Communion in the Church, I've watched my children with their grandparents, wondering what our families might teach us about a theology of gift-giving.

Gifts are freely offered. They are not forced; they cannot be demanded. The way my children reach out their arms for a hug or a treat from their grandparents mirrors how we open our hands or mouth

to receive the Eucharist. We learn not to grab out of greed; we wait with humility and patience — and joy awaits us.

By definition, true gifts are good, never cruel or conniving. They are treasures, not tricks. More than once I've watched a child turn wide-eyed to a grandparent and ask with delight and disbelief, "How did you know I wanted this?". Gifts remind us that we are seen, known and cherished.

Gifts are meant to be enjoyed, not kept on a shelf gathering dust. Every present has a purpose, even (and especially) when it is the simple gift of presence.

My kids remember special days spent with grandparents long after they leave favorite toys or books behind. Gifts draw together giver and receiver, just as we come closer to Christ in Communion.

Gifts are unearned. They are not payment for services rendered or conditional loans based on good behavior. Gifts spring from a place of selfless love.

At every Mass, we remember we cannot control or earn God's favor as a reward but only accept what is offered as mystery: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

Gifts invite gratitude. Saying or writing a word of thanks might feel forced

at first, nudged by a parent's prompting. But over time we hope to cultivate natural thanksgiving as a response of joy in return.

Likewise the word "Eucharist" itself means thanksgiving — a reminder that gratitude is what we bring to God for grace that is unearned but overflowing.

As an adult, I love to find reminders of gifts my grandparents gave me decades ago. An inscription in a Bible or a card tucked in a book brings back memories of their affection, the warmth of knowing I was beloved to them, even among many cousins.

My husband and I laugh that each gathering of grandparents with grandkids convenes the mutual admiration society.

We as parents stand separate from their delight and affection for each other, pure and unburdened by the discipline (and drudgery) of daily parenting. But even this arrangement is wisely given by God, who knows we need to be seen and loved by many people in different ways.

All of us are called to be gift for each other.

May we spend our lives in awe of the gifts we've been given, seeking to share them with those in need. May we learn from young and old how to give and receive in love, just as Jesus does for us. 🇺🇸



Laura Fanucci

Laura Kelly Fanucci writes the "Faith at Home" column for Catholic News Service.

Jimena Estrada, 15, shows off her vaccination card after receiving her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the vaccination site located at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Fort Worth July 17, 2021. (NTC/Ben Torres)



No matter the cause: CCFW is there to aid parish communities

By Alice Varela Murray

In what has been an unprecedented and challenging time in the past year and a half, Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW) has remained vigilant throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth by continuing to meet its mission to “provide service to those in need.”

Last month, CCFW and its Disaster Response Team closed an urgent five-month effort to support families affected by Winter Storm Uri by providing services from financial and volunteer assistance to collaborating with local and national agencies in meeting individual needs of those families.

Most recently, CCFW saw the need and reached out to local parishes to assist the COVID-19 vaccination effort to battle the devastating effects of the lingering pandemic.

“Anytime we can do events to help the community as the church — it’s a win-win situation,” said Beverly Oberdorf, business manager at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in north Fort Worth.

As of August 15, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website reports that in the United States there have been 36,556,516 COVID cases with a total number of 618,591 deaths.

The need for the vaccine in its own community at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish was illustrated by “the results of a parish survey from April 2021,” Oberdorf said.

Of the survey respondents from St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, 39 percent were already vaccinated, and another 21 percent had already been ill with COVID-19. That led to the decision to team up with CCFW to provide the clinic, Oberdorf said.

“We had about 100 people” that came

to receive the vaccine at the clinic last month, Oberdorf said. “Half of our community is Hispanic, and that was encouraging that they took part.” A Kaiser Family Foundation analysis from July 19, 2021, shows 40 percent of Hispanics in Texas are vaccinated compared to 44 percent of the white population and 65 percent of Asians.

Oberdorf said those who came to the clinic were happy to be there, as many said, “they would not have gotten the vaccine if [the parish] hadn’t offered it.”

The effort to conduct the vaccination clinics started while the delta variant of the COVID-19 virus was surging across the country, making the vaccination effort even more important.

According to the CDC website, the delta variant is “much more contagious than past versions of the virus” and places with low vaccination rates are experiencing the most cases and devastating results. 🇺🇸





One Family Together

With family and business ties on three continents, Jane-Mary and Jean-Patrice Tchatat began their marriage separated by 4,950 miles and seven time zones.

In time, Jean-Patrice decided to take a step back from his career to move to Fort Worth.

Pope Francis described actions like this in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), which was issued five years ago.

“As love matures, it also learns to ‘negotiate.’ Far from anything selfish or calculating, such negotiation is an exercise of mutual love, an interplay of give and take, for the good of the family,” wrote the Holy Father.

Pope Francis has announced an “*Amoris Laetitia* Family” year to affirm the complexity and realities of family life and to share spiritual insights and practical wisdom. He said, “We are called to accompany, listen, and bless the journey of families.”

For this “*Amoris Laetitia* Family” year, the NTC is expanding its regular feature The Domestic Church to explore how local families live daily struggles and joys.



THE BEGINNING — Jane-Mary originates from northwest Cameroon, where English is the primary language, and Jean-Patrice is from west Cameroon and grew up speaking French.

After graduating from high school in London, Jane-Mary moved to Fort Worth, where an uncle was living, to continue her education. She eventually went to pharmacy school in Oklahoma, then returned to work in Fort Worth.

Jean-Patrice finished his education in Paris and worked in information technology for the banking industry in Paris and London.

A childhood friend of his introduced them when he was visiting Fort Worth on business.

EARLY MARRIAGE — They married in 2007 but continued to live an ocean apart. They would talk each day in the morning and evening, and they were able to travel to visit each other about six times a year.

The distance seemed even greater after the birth of their oldest son, Frederick. Jean-Patrice remembers their son crying at the airport when he would leave, and he worried about his wife being alone without any help.

One day at lunch, Jean-Patrice stepped away from his workplace in Paris to buy clothes for Frederick. When a co-worker learned what he was doing, he told Jean-Patrice, “What are you doing here?” Jean-Patrice explained, “I’m not American, I’m French. It’s difficult to go there.”

His co-worker responded, “No, that’s not the reason. You need to go stay with your son. You cannot have your family living in another place.”

The truth stung. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Fort Worth and

was a stay-at-home dad for a year. He has since resumed his work in IT.

PARTICIPATE, DON’T SPECTATE — Jane-Mary is a lector, sacristan, and Eucharistic minister, and she has also served on the RCIA team; Maya is an usher; and Frederick is an altar server.

“I want to give more to our community and church,” said Jane-Mary. Her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament motivates her to participate as a sacristan and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. “I like to set up the altar so I can be closer to Him,” she said.

When Mass was celebrated without a congregation in April 2020, “I couldn’t stand it,” Jane-Mary recalled. After two weeks of watching livestream from home, she thought, “I can’t take this anymore,” drove to the church and knocked on the door to see if “maybe I could be the tenth person.” To her delight, they had enough capacity to allow her inside. She continued the practice until Mass resumed in person.

MASS APPEAL — Jane-Mary said attending Mass is “part and parcel of who I am. Wherever I am on Sunday, I have to go to church.”

They hope to impart that love to their children, that they “always go to Mass no matter what, not because their parents take them.”

SCHOOLED IN THE FAITH — Frederick and Zane go to Catholic schools, and their parents reinforce those values at home with prayer and service. As a family, they deliver food and items to homeless shelters. “We want to encourage them to see people, to remember people who are in need,” said Jane-Mary.

A GREAT START — Jane-Mary said the family likes to start the day with prayers of thanksgiving, followed by prayers of blessing for their friends and family. “Then we thank Him for listening,” she said, explaining that beginning the day this way helps promote gratitude for what God has done for them.

ROOTED — Jane-Mary is part of a local organization of Catholic women from Africa that prays together and studies Catholic teachings. “We build each other up; we pray the Rosary together every week,” she said.

STRONG FAITH, STRONG FAMILY — Jean-Patrice credits his faith with strengthening his marriage and his family. It helps him align his values with what is truly good, and it prevents him from being corrupted by the values of the world.

He said, “It helps you to see what is prohibited, what is not good for society. It gives integrity for the family.”

He joked that without his Catholic faith, he might be obsessed by “putting the George Washingtons in my pocket,” referring to the importance that society places on accumulating wealth.

“Faith brings together my family and my community,” he said.

SOURCE OF HOPE — Jane-Mary said faith gave her the strength to get through hard times, like the early years of their marriage when they lived apart, and when Zane was delivered early because of health concerns. “At those times, He had me in His hands.”

“Faith gives me hope for a better tomorrow every day. I take one day at a time. It’s a blessing,” she said. 🇺🇸

THEY ARE: Jane-Mary and Jean-Patrice Tchatat, with their children Zane (left) and Frederick at St. Bartholomew Parish in Fort Worth. Daughter Maya is not pictured. (NTC/Ben Torres)

It starts at home

As a Hispanic immigrant priest in the United States, I bring my personal experience of growing up in Mexico and moving to the U.S. I brought with me strong Catholic values in which the Domestic Church, the family, played an important role. My faith in Mexico was not primarily sacramental due to limiting circumstances. Instead, it was mostly an experience of community-based and family-based popular religiosity.

Moving to the U.S. when I was 14 was a multi-generational and multicultural experience. But one thing that remained the same was the need to continue fostering the expression of our faith in the Domestic Church. "In it [the Domestic Church] parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state." (*Lumen Gentium 11*)

As a newly ordained priest I can see the importance of building and forming the Domestic Church. Doing so enables the family, along with the guidance of the Church, to persevere in the faith, fostering vocations

Father Pedro Martinez, with his parents and family at his diaconate ordination in 2019. (NTC/ Courtesy Photo)



El Padre Pedro Martínez, con sus padres y familia en su ordenación diaconal en 2019. (NTC/ Foto de cortesía)

Comienza en casa

Como sacerdote migrante hispano en los Estados Unidos, traigo mi propia experiencia personal de crecer en México y desarrollarme en los Estados Unidos con fuertes valores católicos en los que la Iglesia doméstica jugó un papel importante. La práctica de mi fe católica en México no comprendió tanto la vida sacramental debido a circunstancias que la limitaron; sino que, en cambio, se trataba de una experiencia de religiosidad popular en la que se enfatizaba la comunidad y la familia. Al mudarme a los Estados Unidos vivíamos en un ambiente multigeneracional y multicultural, pero cosa que se mantuvo igual fue la necesidad de seguir fomentando la expresión de nuestra fe en la Iglesia doméstica. Esto se debe a que "en esta especie de Iglesia doméstica los padres deben ser para sus hijos los primeros predicadores de la fe, mediante la palabra y el ejemplo, y deben fomentar la vocación propia de cada uno, pero con un cuidado especial la vocación sagrada." (*Lumen gentium, 11*)

Como sacerdote recién ordenado, soy capaz de ver la importancia de construir y formar la Iglesia doméstica. El hacer esto permite a la familia, junto con la guía de la Iglesia, perseverar en la fe y fomentar las vocaciones incluso en el bullicio de lo que parece un mundo que cambia y evoluciona rápidamente, pero

even in the midst of what seems a rapidly changing and evolving world, and remaining true to the Gospel message and values.

Growing up in a small village in Guanajuato, Mexico, I was able to experience the popular religiosity and the active role of the Domestic Church in nurturing the Catholic faith. Because our priest would cover a significant amount of rural area with many churches, we were able to have Mass only twice a month. The people maintained the faith through communal Rosaries, processions, holy hours, popular saint devotions and feast days, catechism classes, and many other activities that promoted and fostered their faith. The Domestic Church even in its limitations was able to maintain and nurture a lively expression of their faith.

The family as a Domestic Church plays a significant role in fostering committed vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and matrimony. The Domestic Church's witness and example of faith and life becomes essential in fostering vocations. Holding true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in multigenerational and multicultural families is crucial for the expression and affirmation of their proclaimed and lived faith that enables people to be transformed and changed. 🇲🇽

Ordained to the priesthood in 2020, Father Pedro Martinez serves as Pastor at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth and as Vocations Liaison with the Vocations Office.

aún debemos permanecer fieles al mensaje y los valores del Evangelio. Al crecer en un pequeño pueblo en Guanajuato, México, pude experimentar la religiosidad popular y el papel activo de la Iglesia doméstica, en la cual se fomentó la fe católica. Debido a que nuestro sacerdote cubría una cantidad significativa de área rural con muchas iglesias, podíamos tener Misa dos veces al mes. La gente pudo mantener la fe mediante la popularidad religiosa con rosarios comunitarios, procesiones, horas santas, devociones populares de santos, clases de catecismo, y muchas otras actividades que promovieron y fomentaron su fe. La Iglesia doméstica, incluso con sus limitaciones, fue capaz de mantener una expresión viva de la fe.

La familia como Iglesia doméstica juega un papel importante en el fomento de las vocaciones, ya que es en ellas que sus miembros se comprometen al sacerdocio, la vida religiosa y el matrimonio. El testimonio y el ejemplo de fe y vida de la Iglesia doméstica son esenciales para fomentar las vocaciones. Mantenerse fiel al evangelio de Jesucristo en una población multigeneracional y multicultural es crucial para la expresión y la afirmación de la fe católica proclamada y vivida, que lleva a las personas a transformarse y cambiar. 🇲🇽

El Padre Pedro Martínez sirve como párroco de la Parroquia de San Pedro Apóstol de Fort Worth y como Enlace vocacional con la Oficina de Vocaciones.



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La pandemia mundial de COVID-19 nos ha enseñado nuevas lecciones y nuevas formas de vida, pero Dios nunca cambia

Por Susan Moses

La pandemia mundial de COVID-19, que fue declarada hace casi 18 meses por la Organización Mundial de la Salud, todavía afecta la forma en que trabajamos, vamos a la escuela y celebramos nuestra fe en las iglesias.

Aunque muchos de nosotros (incluyéndome a mí) pensamos que este capítulo podría haber terminado a estas alturas, las escuelas diocesanas y los ministerios parroquiales, incluida la educación religiosa, comienzan el año escolar del 2021-22 todavía afectados por las precauciones que se han de tomar para proteger la salud pública. Afortunadamente, la difícil jornada que hemos experimentado con el coronavirus nos ha enseñado lecciones que serán invaluable a medida que las escuelas y parroquias reanuden sus actividades en persona este mes.

Quiénes somos

La privación de poder asistir a Misa, especialmente durante el Triduo del 2020, dejó dolorosamente clara la importancia de la celebración plena de la Eucaristía dominical. El Padre Jonathan Wallis, quien desempeña tres funciones dentro de la Diócesis como Vicario General, Director de Formación de los Seminaristas y Capellán y Director del Centro Newman de Texas Christian University, declaró: “La adoración de Dios es esencial para quienes somos como Su creación”.

Jodie Ríos, feligrés de la Parroquia de la Inmaculada Concepción de Denton, experimentó eso personalmente cuando ella y su esposo, que es un sobreviviente de cáncer con una función pulmonar comprometida, comenzaron a participar de la Misa a través de una transmisión en línea. “Tenemos que tener mucho cuidado”, explicó Ríos al explicar el por qué reestructuraron sus vidas para evitar estar en contacto con grupos de mucha gente.

Ríos, que es lectora en las Misas y Ministro de la Eucaristía, dijo que: “Ver la Misa en la televisión me hizo llorar casi todas las semanas al principio, tal vez, por temer que nunca íbamos a volver a la normalidad”. Los dos vieron la Misa en vivo en línea todos los domingos por catorce meses.

Luego de vacunarse, Ríos y su esposo seleccionaron una Misa que probablemente tendría menos personas y

LECCIONES apren



ABRIL 2020

Liturgia del Viernes Santo de la Pasión del Señor en la Iglesia de San Juan Apóstol en North Richland establecida para ir virtual. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

didas



regresaron a Misa en persona en mayo, usando mascarillas para protegerse más. Reconoce que después de su prolongada ausencia, asistir a la celebración Eucarística en persona se sentía “extraño y surrealista”.

No obstante, añadió que “fue bueno ver a todos de nuevo y sentimos una gran alegría al recibir la Eucaristía. Realmente, realmente, extrañamos mucho la Eucaristía”.

En las primeras semanas de la pandemia, cuando las reuniones se limitaron para reducir al mínimo la transmisión del virus, la capacidad fue de 250 personas y luego se redujeron a tan sólo 10 personas. El Obispo Michael Olson y otros funcionarios diocesanos querían que los católicos de la Diócesis de Fort Worth tuvieran acceso a los sacramentos, mientras se promulgaban medidas para proteger la salud y el bienestar de la comunidad.

En medio de las incógnitas existentes la toma de decisiones fue un verdadero reto a veces y la comunicación fue clave. El Obispo Olson habló con los jueces del condado de los 28 condados dentro de la Diócesis, así como con los funcionarios de salud locales, las autoridades del gobierno estatal, sus hermanos Obispos y los administradores de hospitales. Mantuvo a sus párrocos informados acerca de los protocolos que cambiaban rápidamente mediante reuniones virtuales cada semana.

Durante seis semanas, la Misa se celebró *sine populo*, es decir, sin una congregación presente, y se transmitió en vivo a través de las plataformas de las redes sociales y los sitios web parroquiales. Algunas parroquias ofrecieron el Sacramento de la Reconciliación al aire libre y muchos sacerdotes pudieron dar la Unción de los Enfermos en los hospitales usando equipo de protección personal.

Una de las muchas decisiones que se tomaron en los primeros meses de la pandemia fue proceder con la ordenación de seis hombres al diaconado de transición el 19 de marzo del 2020 en la Catedral de San Patricio casi vacía. El Padre Wallis dijo que la celebración de la ordenación demostró que “éste es un acto importante de la Iglesia y puede llevarse a cabo de manera segura”.

La Iglesia “tiene su propia posición” y se asocia con el gobierno para servir al bien común, pero no está subordinada al mismo, señaló el Padre Wallis.

El fin de semana del 2 al 3 de mayo del 2020, a la primera oportunidad que se tuvo, las parroquias de la Diócesis reabrieron para la celebración pública de la Misa. La Diócesis de Fort Worth estuvo a la vanguardia de reabrir sus puertas al culto público, tanto entre las diócesis católicas y otras denominaciones religiosas.

El Padre Wallis señaló que regresar al culto público tan pronto como se establecieron los protocolos de seguridad fue una prioridad para nuestra Diócesis porque el *Catecismo* nos enseña que: “La persona humana está compuesta de cuerpo y alma. Tenemos preocupaciones

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físicas reales y preocupaciones espirituales. Y esas dos cosas siempre tienen que ser tomadas en cuenta en conjunto”.

Una respuesta fiel

Al igual que cualquier empresa, las parroquias y las escuelas tienen facturas pendientes y empleados que deben pagar.

La Diócesis no solicitó ningún préstamo del Programa de Protección de Cheques de Pago. El Obispo Olson le pidió a los párrocos y a las escuelas que sólo solicitaran ayuda del gobierno si tenían una gran necesidad en las primeras semanas de la pandemia cuando los feligreses no podían asistir en persona a Misa. Un pequeño grupo de parroquias y escuelas individuales solicitaron un préstamo del Programa de Protección de Cheques de Pago, y algunas parroquias y escuelas aprovecharon los préstamos sin intereses que la Diócesis ofreció para recibir asistencia a corto plazo.

Sin embargo, durante el año del 2020 las parroquias de la Diócesis experimentaron en general sólo una



Los feligreses, guardando distancia y usando mascarillas, se acercan al Padre Thu Nguyen para recibir la Sagrada Comunión en la Parroquia de San Judas de Mansfield. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

merma mínima en las contribuciones recibidas. Los fieles de la Diócesis siguieron apoyando con sus aportaciones monetarias la misión de la Iglesia, según lo afirmara Don Wagner, el Director de Finanzas de la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

Los párrocos de la Diócesis observaron que los fieles no solamente siguieron

haciendo su aportación económica a sus parroquias, sino que también cooperaron con la implementación de las cuatro medidas de salud principales promulgadas: el uso de la mascarilla, la desinfección de las manos, el distanciamiento social y la distribución de la Sagrada Comunión en la mano.

El Padre Wallis explicó que las decisiones, tanto al ser formuladas como en su ejecución, han dado lugar a discusiones y desacuerdos, pero no a divisiones, lo que encuentra alentador. “Es la respuesta de todos nosotros juntos. Con demasiada frecuencia tenemos personas a las que les gusta contraponer unos grupos de la Iglesia contra otros... El pueblo de Dios somos todos. Y creo que así fue cómo, aquí en nuestra Diócesis, pasamos la pandemia juntos... Lo que me quedó muy claro durante este tiempo fue que necesitamos a Dios y que nos necesitamos unos a otros”.

Comunidad creativa

En el otoño del 2020 la educación religiosa se impartió por transmisión en vivo en línea, o para las parroquias en comunidades sin Internet confiable, los directores de educación religiosa proporcionaron paquetes para que los estudiantes los completaran en casa. Todas las charlas y retiros se cancelaron.

Durante la pandemia, algunos ministros de jóvenes se volvieron “realmente creativos”, recordó Victoria Ramón, la Directora Asociada de la Pastoral de Jóvenes y Adultos Jóvenes. Algunos lograron tener búsquedas de tesoro, música de alabanza y adoración u oradores invitados, todo a través de Zoom. “Todos, dentro de los medios disponibles de su parroquia, hicieron lo mejor que pudieron”, comentó.

Aún así, la asistencia a la educación religiosa y a la preparación sacramental disminuyó el año pasado.

Ramón dijo que: “En muchos lugares, esos grupos son un poco más pequeños, por lo que estamos animando a nuestras parroquias a reunirlos nuevamente y comenzar a construir esa comunidad otra vez”.

“Para nuestros jóvenes que han estado lejos de su comunidad escolar, de su comunidad deportiva, o incluso de su

propia familia extendida durante tanto tiempo, puede pasar de sentirse solos a una profunda soledad y aislamiento. Queremos animarlos y hacerles saber: ‘No estás solo, no estás destinado a estar aislado. Esta Iglesia es tu familia’”, prosiguió diciendo.

Cassie Erazo, la Directora de la Pastoral Juvenil de la Parroquia del Sagrado Corazón de Wichita Falls, dijo que cuando la Diócesis recomendó que las actividades juveniles regresaran en persona en abril de este año, la planificación tomó más tiempo. Tenía que pensar en actividades que involucraran a los estudiantes, los mantuvieran distanciados en una misma sala y que tuvieran un componente catequético.

Un primer paso fue separar a los estudiantes de intermedia y preparatoria, quienes anteriormente participaban juntos en las actividades de la pastoral juvenil. Erazo espera mantener los grupos más pequeños durante el otoño.

Sus soluciones creativas comprenden explorar la devoción del Sagrado Corazón a través de algunos medios poco convencionales: decoración de galletas, una noche de pintura y teñir camisetas.

Optimismo cauteloso

Nancy Eder, la enfermera consultora de las escuelas diocesanas, anticipó que los números de coronavirus aumentarían después del 4 de julio. Tenía razón.

Ella está “cautelosamente optimista” en estos momentos sobre la reanudación de la escuela presencial y las actividades extracurriculares. “Intentaremos reanudar las actividades tanto como sea posible”, dijo. Eder ha ayudado a rastrear los casos de coronavirus en las escuelas y las parroquias durante la pandemia. Ella sigue realizando esta importante tarea.

Eder anticipa que podría pasar otro año antes de que las escuelas y las actividades parroquiales “vuelvan a la normalidad” por completo, pero señaló que la situación actual difiere mucho de la que existía hace un año. “Sabemos las señales que el virus muestra; sabemos cómo actúa ahora; y estamos agradecidos de las vacunas”, explicó.

Al reflexionar acerca de la situación del año pasado, durante la cual Eder trabajó con los administradores escolares y oficiales diocesanos para determinar cómo



abrir las escuelas de manera segura, ella comenta que “se apoyó en Dios. Estaba justo a mi lado. Él me dirigió y condujo durante el proceso de aprender para entender esta enfermedad. Fue un viaje largo. No tenemos todas las respuestas, pero pedimos y confiamos en que Dios nos guíe en la dirección correcta”, dijo.

El Padre Wallis estuvo de acuerdo. “En ese momento, nadie tenía toda la información; nadie tenía una ruta clara hacia dónde dirigirse”.

Según Eder, hemos aprendido actualmente lo que funciona mejor, cómo separar los escritorios de los estudiantes y abrir las puertas y ventanas en las escuelas cuando sea posible. Si un aumento en los casos de COVID-19 requiere mayores precauciones de salud, “estaremos en un terreno familiar”, dijo el Padre Wallis. “No obstante, el Obispo ha dicho en varias ocasiones: ‘No cerraremos nuevamente las iglesias. Necesitamos a Dios’”.

Construido sobre la verdad eterna

Todos se han visto afectados por la pandemia. Todo el mundo ha cambiado, ya sea para bien o para mal. Todos hemos aprendido de ello, incluso si las lecciones adquiridas son dolorosas.

El Padre Wallis, en su papel de capellán de Texas Christian University, observó que los estudiantes universitarios

se enfrentaban a verdades profundas que tal vez nunca habían contemplado antes. Comentó que: “En un instante, especialmente para los estudiantes de primer año del año pasado, sus vidas dieron un tremendo vuelco. Todas las cosas que parecía que iban a tener, como el baile de la clase graduanda y la graduación, de repente todas se fueron”.

“En ese momento de sus vidas quedó muy claro qué puede cambiar y qué es eterno. Hubo una gran apertura a ver más claramente que Dios es eterno, y que hemos de construir nuestras vidas sobre esa verdad”.

Ésa es una lección que el Padre Wallis espera que permanezca con los estudiantes universitarios y con la comunidad católica en general.

“Entonces, yo diría que no nos olvidemos de esa verdad cuando las cosas comiencen a volver a la normalidad, sea lo que sea que eso signifique. Que gran parte de lo que parece permanente en este mundo no lo es, y por un momento lo vimos”, el Padre Wallis añadió. “No nos olvidemos de que las cosas aquí en nuestra vida terrenal cambian, pero que Dios nunca cambia. Que nunca se nos olvide que una vida construida sobre Él es una vida construida para la eternidad. Es una puerta de entrada a la eternidad, si construimos nuestras vidas sobre esa verdad”. 🇺🇸



MINISTERIO PLASMA UNA FE florecente

Celia Martínez decora el altar de la Parroquia de San Pedro Apóstol para una boda el 14 de agosto de 2021 en Fort Worth. Martínez ha servido fielmente a la parroquia a través de muchos ministerios, pero especialmente en la decoración del altar y la iglesia con flores a lo largo de los años. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Por Violeta Rocha

Celia Martínez de Medina, recuerda con orgullo los tiempos que en la Parroquia de San Pedro Apóstol de Fort Worth se comenzaron a reunir firmas para iniciar una Misa en español hace 20 años.

“Hoy día somos una comunidad muy bella y unida”, señala.

Desde entonces, su vocación de servicio la ha llevado a ser parte del coro, lectora, ministro de Eucaristía y otros ministerios en su parroquia. Sin embargo, gracias a su don para hacer arreglos florales, ha dedicado casi dos décadas utilizando su creatividad, fe y amor a Dios para crear hermosos diseños de ramos y guirnaldas que resaltan la

belleza del altar y de su iglesia, a la que ama tanto.

“Me siento muy bendecida y alegre de poder ejercer este ministerio que me ha dado la gracia de servir”, apunta Martínez, quien ha trabajado con cientos de flores y arreglos a los que dedica desde cinco horas hasta dos días en ciertas ocasiones. “Al ver los arreglos terminados frente al altar, siento alegría, y siento que puedo ofrecerle a Dios ese arreglo y decirle ‘Es para ti, Señor, es para Tu Gloria, es para que tu casa se vea más hermosa’”, resaltó.

“La señora Celia es un ejemplo de servicio desinteresado y dedicación fiel que le rendimos a Dios solamente”, expresa el Padre Pedro Martínez, párroco de San Pedro Apóstol.

El don que Celia cultiva “con gran

amor y creatividad” para arreglar las flores con hermosos diseños, agrega el Padre Martínez, brinda “el toque perfecto” para reflexionar, pues nos lleva a admirar en la naturaleza la misma creación de Dios, y nos llevan hacia Dios.

“Además, podemos disfrutar de su belleza”, dijo el padre.

En las solemnes celebraciones como Pascua, Corpus Christi, y los días de fiesta como el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe y la fiesta de San Pedro y San Pablo, Celia se ocupa de que con sus manos y su corazón la belleza de las flores resalte la belleza de la iglesia.

Como adolescente Celia trabajó en una floristería por dos años en su natal Chihuahua, México. “Ahí aprendí los primeros pasos, pero aquí en mi parroquia he podido desarrollar ese don.



Celia Martínez corta unas flores para el altar de la Parroquia de San Pedro Apóstol. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Yo siento que el Espíritu Santo es quien me ha guiado e inspirado, dándome ese don para desarrollarlo en mi parroquia”, señaló Celia.

Vicky Tapia, feligrés de la misma parroquia desde hace 13 años, afirma que llegar “junto a mi familia, a nuestra parroquia y verla tan hermosa, llena de flores, significa algo muy espiritual. La comunidad de San Pedro es muy bonita y gracias a servidores humildes y dedicados como Celia nos sentimos muy bendecidos de ser parte de ella”.

Ella recuerda “lo bella que se veía la iglesia en la fiesta de San Pedro y, sobre todo, el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe, cuando la iglesia está completamente llena de flores”.

“Se ve adornada de tantas flores que uno se puede imaginar que así debe haber sido el momento del milagro cuando la Virgen de Guadalupe dejó su imagen plasmada en la tilma de San Juan Diego”.

Como Director del Ministerio Hispano, Ramón León asegura que “Celia se ha encargado de poner bella la Iglesia desde que formamos la comunidad hispana en el 2001, aunque no fue hasta el 2005, que por primera vez, se celebró

en la parroquia el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe con la característica tradición hispana”.

Desde esa primera festividad, “ella se ofreció para hacer los arreglos de flores”, narró León, “y desde entonces siempre recurrimos a ella para pedirle que nos ayude con los arreglos de flores.

“Ella está siempre dispuesta a ayudar, lo hace siempre por la fe, ella pone su lindo don a disposición de Dios. Es algo maravilloso que la gente llegue y vea nuestra iglesia hermosa, llena de flores, y que la gente se sienta acogida y bien recibida” León añadió.

“Es importante dar. Mi familia y yo hemos recibido tanto de Dios, y Nuestra Madre ha intercedido tanto por nosotros que con más ganas y con más amor ofrezco mi servicio, y si con flores puedo mostrar mi agradecimiento, me siento feliz, concluyó diciendo Celia. “Pienso que alguna otra persona podría también hacerlo, por eso le doy gracias a Dios y a mi familia por su apoyo; y a los sacerdotes y a toda la comunidad por permitirme realizar este servicio”. 🇺🇸

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



AYUDA CON amplio alcance

La Campaña Diocesana Anual 2021 beneficia a las parroquias rurales además de ayudar a otras obras en la Diócesis

Por Matthew Smith

Un elemento esencial del discipulado es responder al llamado de Dios que nos urge a todos los católicos a que utilicemos nuestros talentos de la mejor manera posible y actuemos con generosidad para servir a los necesitados.

Como dijo el rey Salomón en *Proverbios*, “El que tiene compasión del pobre le presta a Yavé: éste sabrá pagar su deuda”. (19,17).

Las subvenciones distribuidas a través de la Fundación de Avance de la Diócesis de Fort Worth también brindan evidencia concreta de los numerosos beneficios de la Campaña Anual. En muchas parroquias los fondos otorgados hacen una diferencia y producen resultados muy positivos, cuyos efectos a menudo resuenan mucho más allá del término de la campaña de un año en particular.

Tanto las necesidades existentes como los beneficios de la Campaña Anual son evidentes, pero también lo son los desafíos, especialmente durante el pasado año.

“Absolutamente”, dijo Renée Underwood, la Directora de Desarrollo de la Fundación de Avance. “Tuvimos un respaldo récord para la Campaña de Apelación del 2020, que finalizó el 30 de junio del año pasado. Fue la mejor campaña anual que hemos tenido en nuestros 37 años de historia”.

“Sin embargo, para la Campaña de Apelación del año en curso, que terminó el 30 de junio del 2021, ese apoyo se redujo significativamente”, dijo Underwood.

Los efectos continuos de la pandemia de COVID-19 lo complicaron todo.

“Mucha gente perdió sus trabajos y otras muchas personas enfrentaron



De izquierda a derecha: Tadeo Vizcaino, Alejandro Felipe, Olivia Olvera Rubio, Coordinadora de los jóvenes y Directora de la vida de familia, el Padre Eugene Nyong, Angela Fuentes y Aneida Huerta al frente de la Parroquia de Santa María de Graham el 12 de agosto del 2021. (NTC/Ben Torres)

problemas de salud”, dijo Underwood. “Una de las cosas más importantes es que nuestras parroquias no tuvieron Misas en persona durante gran parte del año pasado, y ciertamente, no estábamos distribuyendo ninguna hoja de papel en persona. El folleto del compromiso, que tradicionalmente se distribuye en los bancos de las iglesias, no se pudo hacer en septiembre del 2020”.

La pandemia agravó negativamente la situación de otra manera muy importante.

“Pese a que el respaldo y las donaciones a la Campaña Anual disminuyeron el año pasado, las necesidades crecieron más que nunca debido en muchos casos a la pandemia”.

A medida que la pandemia parece estar disminuyendo, los feligreses están regresando a la Iglesia y se puede palpar un regreso gradual a la normalidad. Los folletos de la campaña anual se distribuirán de nuevo en los bancos en septiembre, señaló Underwood.

Las necesidades en la Diócesis son abrumadoras. La Campaña de Apelación de este año comienza oficialmente durante el fin de semana del 18 al 19 de septiembre con la meta de recaudar \$3.5 millones.

“Los sobres estarán en los buzones de correo alrededor del Día del Trabajo y se hará un acercamiento a los feligreses en sus parroquias para que se comprometan con la Campaña, si aún no lo han hecho”, añadió Underwood. “Cada parroquia tiene la meta de ayudar a alcanzar esos \$3.5 millones. Es decir, cuando una persona hace una donación mensual recurrente a la Campaña o hace una sola donación, esa persona está apoyando la Campaña en general y está ayudando a que su parroquia alcance su objetivo”.

Las donaciones a la Campaña de Apelación ayudan a respaldar muchos ministerios diocesanos, incluidos la formación y educación de los seminaristas y de los hombres que estudian para el diaconado permanente, así como el

cuidado de los sacerdotes jubilados y enfermos. Se benefician también la obra y los ministerios de Caridades Católicas de Fort Worth, el ministerio de confinados, los ministerios de matrimonio y vida familiar, las escuelas de la Diócesis y muchas más obras de apostolado de la Diócesis.

AMPLIO ALCANCE

Los fondos obtenidos mediante la Campaña de Apelación también benefician a las muchas parroquias rurales esparcidas entre los 28 condados de la Diócesis.

“La mayor parte del dinero de la Campaña de Apelación apoya a las parroquias rurales y a las parroquias que enfrentan dificultades”, dijo Underwood. “Las parroquias más pequeñas necesitan asistencia para pagar el sueldo de su sacerdote, los servicios públicos de agua y luz, el salario de un director de

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La Parroquia Santa Rita en Ranger cumplió más de 100 años en junio de 2019. Fondos de la Campaña Anual ayudaron con su reparación después de las tormentas invernales en febrero de este año. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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jóvenes, o simplemente para satisfacer las necesidades básicas que las comunidades parroquiales más grandes dan por sentado.

“Es muy importante para nuestras parroquias rurales difundir el Evangelio, ya que muchos de sus feligreses no podrían de otro modo asistir a Misa en las ciudades más grandes. El sacerdote en muchas de las parroquias a las que damos subvenciones sirve a la vez en varias comunidades parroquiales, casi como solían hacer los predicadores de otros tiempos”, dijo Underwood. “Ser los pastores de esas comunidades es extremadamente vital para nuestra fe y las ovejas de toda la Diócesis”.

La Parroquia de Santa María de Graham y la Parroquia de Santa Teresa de Olney comparten un director del ministerio de jóvenes y familias, gracias a una subvención de \$60,000 a través de la Campaña Anual.

“Somos una parroquia pequeña que cuenta sólo con 300 feligreses”, dijo el

Padre Eugene Nyong. “Solíamos tener una directora de jóvenes y familias de forma voluntaria, pero era demasiado para ella manejarlo. Ahora, con la subvención, esos ministerios están funcionando nuevamente y podemos llegar a las familias y, con suerte, hacer una gran diferencia en la vida de nuestra comunidad parroquial”.

“Los feligreses siguieron aportando durante la pandemia, pero la cantidad era menos y fue difícil lograr esas aportaciones”, el padre dijo. “Ése fue uno de los desafíos del COVID-19, pero el poder y el amor de Dios aún nos insta a seguir sirviendo y hay siempre muchas necesidades que atender”.

El Padre Vijaya Mareedu, SAC, es el párroco de la Parroquia de San Francisco Javier de Eastland, y sirve además en las parroquias de Cisco, Strawn y Ranger. Su parroquia en Eastland es mayormente hispana y todas las misas se celebran en español.

“Las subvenciones han sido de gran ayuda para nosotros porque durante el tiempo de COVID-19 el

dinero recogido en las colectas fue muy bajo”, dijo el Padre Mareedu. “Además, nuestras parroquias sufrieron daños debido al frío extremo y las tormentas invernales ocurridas en febrero de este año, especialmente en la Parroquia de Santa Rita de Ranger. Sin la subvención no hubiéramos podido hacer las reparaciones que se necesitaban y los costos de mantenimiento requeridos. Hubiéramos tenido que posponerlas”.

“Más importante aún, usamos fondos de la Campaña para los programas de jóvenes y otros ministerios que podrían hacer que nuestras parroquias sean más vibrantes”.

Se está también recaudando fondos, gracias a una subvención de desafío de la Fundación de Avance, para construir un centro familiar y juvenil que será compartido por las cuatro parroquias. El centro ofrecerá programación y actividades, y reunirá a los miembros de las cuatro parroquias, comentó el Padre Mareedu.

El Padre Mareedu dijo que las subvenciones hacen posible que



Un grupo de jóvenes, niños, seminaristas y el Padre Vijaya Raju Mareedu, SAC, frente a la Parroquia de Francisco Xavier de Eastland después de vacaciones escuela bíblica en julio 2021. (Cortesía/Carolina Ruth Boelter)

él y los feligreses se concentren en proyectos parroquiales individuales no relacionados, incluidas las campañas para recaudar fondos para renovar los salones de reuniones de dos de las parroquias.

“Cuando llegué a estas parroquias estaba preocupado y rezaba para encontrar la forma de poder ayudar a hacer una diferencia aquí para lograr que más católicos, no sólo de las cuatro parroquias, sino también de las áreas circundantes, se unieran y se involucraran en su comunidad parroquial”, el Padre Mareedu comentó. “Pienso que la Fundación de Avance escuchó lo que pensaba y les estoy muy agradecido. Fueron lo suficientemente amables como para confiar en que, bajo la guía de Dios, estas parroquias crecerán. Siento que han prestado atención a la visión por la que estamos laborando día a día”.

Los planes para el centro familiar y juvenil están todavía en su etapa inicial, pero ya varios donantes han ofrecido su aportación, añadió el Padre Mareedu.

“El plan comprende cuatro fases, pero esperamos comenzar la primera en diciembre”, señaló el Padre Mareedu. “Esto es lo que digo en estos momentos, pero ya veremos qué pasa. Los precios de la madera siguen siendo muy altos”.

La comunidad de St. Brendan de Stephenville, que es parte de un grupo de cuatro parroquias, recibió fondos para un segundo sacerdote a tiempo completo, un gerente de negocios a tiempo parcial, un asistente administrativo a tiempo parcial, ayuda para el pago de los servicios públicos de agua y luz y un ministro del campus universitario a tiempo parcial. La parroquia recibió más dinero - \$44,300 adicionales — de lo solicitado en la subvención porque la Fundación de Avance consideró importante acrecentar el ministerio del campus universitario de la Universidad Estatal de Tarleton, que queda cerca de esta parroquia. Gracias a la subvención, un miembro del personal, en lugar de un voluntario, dirige el Ministerio del Campus Universitario Católico de Tarleton por primera vez en más de una década.

La Parroquia de St. Brendan fue establecida en el 1960 para servir a los estudiantes del área, según el Padre Matthew Sanka, SAC. “La presencia de los estudiantes aquí es siempre una ventaja. No obstante, es también importante considerar que éste es un momento en sus vidas en el que muchos jóvenes son vulnerables respecto a mantener su fe. Por lo tanto, apreciamos mucho que podamos tener un ministro del campus universitario dedicado completamente a atender los estudiantes. Servimos también a varias comunidades más pequeñas y dispersas y, sin la generosidad de la Diócesis y la Fundación de Avance, gran parte de lo que estamos haciendo simplemente no sucedería”.

Stephanie Montero, feligrés de la Catedral de San Patricio, dijo que contribuye a la Campaña principalmente por su apoyo a Caridades Católicas de Fort Worth. Montero dijo que no sabía hasta ahora de los otros benefactores de

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Gracias a una subvención de la apelación anual, estudiantes de la Universidad Estatal de Tarleton como Daniel Jones (izquierda) y Victoria Rodriguez (derecha) tienen el apoyo de Nathan Mena, ministro de campus de medio tiempo basado en la Iglesia de San Brendan. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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la Campaña, incluidas las parroquias rurales.

“Bueno, ahora sí”, bromeó Montero cuando se le preguntó si esa información aumenta su deseo de respaldar la Campaña de Apelación. “Nunca había asociado la Campaña Anual con eso, pero puedo entender dónde hay una necesidad más urgente. Sobre todo, luego de este par de años difíciles que todos hemos pasado, donde muchas más personas necesitan más ayuda”.

Al preguntársele la razón para apoyar la Campaña de Apelación Montero dijo que la importancia de la corresponsabilidad y mayordomía se le inculcó desde que ella era pequeña.

“Se trata de la necesidad de extender la mano, ayudar a otros y apoyar a la Iglesia”, dijo Montero. “Así que sí, eso es algo por lo que definitivamente siento que todos debemos esforzarnos más”.

Underwood instó a los feligreses a considerar la posibilidad de hacer una donación cada mes, si es posible, y por la

cantidad que puedan pagar. Ya sea que se comprometan o no con la campaña, deben enviar sus intenciones de oración.

Las Monjas Carmelitas Descalzas enclaustradas en el Monasterio de la Santísima Trinidad en Arlington orarán por esas intenciones durante todo el año.

DEMOS GRACIAS

El tema de la campaña de este año es “Demos gracias”, entrelazado con el espíritu de mirar hacia atrás con profunda gratitud por todo lo que hemos recibido de la Iglesia y sus ministerios.

“Creo que podemos decir con certeza que el COVID-19 nos afectó a todos de alguna manera”, dijo Underwood. “Pero a pesar de todo y para siempre, Dios es fiel, bueno y amoroso, y realmente necesitamos enfocarnos en las muchas maneras en que somos bendecidos y en ser agradecidos, ya que hemos recibido mucho.

“Por eso, la inspiración para seleccionar el tema de la campaña de este año fue el espíritu de acción de gracias gozosa y maravillosa, que constituye lo que es vivir una vida de mayordomía.

“Creo que también es justo decir que, debido a lo que todos pasamos el año pasado, debemos cuidarnos y ayudarnos unos a otros ahora más que nunca, especialmente a los necesitados y apoyar la Campaña de Apelación en agradecimiento por las bendiciones de Dios y todas las obras increíbles que la Diócesis de Fort Worth está realizando”. 🇺🇸

APOYA A LA CAMPAÑA

Para más información o si desea donar, por favor visite:
[Advancementfoundation.org/annual-diocesan-appeal-donation](https://advancementfoundation.org/annual-diocesan-appeal-donation).





REGRESO A LA ESCUELA:

TIEMPO DE EJEMPLOS ILUMINADORES, NO DE MODELOS BRILLANTES

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



 @BpOlsonFW

Legamos a la época del año en la que se nos recuerda constantemente que estemos atentos a todo lo que se exige para prepararnos a volver a la escuela. Esto me llevó a considerar las prácticas modernas utilizadas por muchas universidades y otras instituciones de educación superior para promover sus escuelas como las opciones óptimas que los padres han de seleccionar en nombre de sus hijos. Para este fin muchas universidades investigan cómo les está yendo a sus recién graduados y demás exalumnos en sus carreras. Por consiguiente, sintetizan los datos junto con los valores contemporáneos de sus futuros estudiantes o sus padres, y desarrollan modelos de cómo serían sus graduados y exalumnos ideales.

Al comenzar nuestro año escolar como católicos, ya sea en nuestras escuelas católicas o en otras formas de la educación, podríamos considerar dos cosas a la luz de la práctica que acabo de describir. El primer punto es que cualquier modelo no es real y está limitado con respecto a lo que nos puede mostrar para que nuestras decisiones cuenten con la información necesaria. Los modelos son ideales sintetizados que son abstractos, y que no son reales ni concretos. Los modelos dependen totalmente de nuestra interpretación y, por lo tanto, pueden presentarse de una manera que induzca a la interpretación deseada por parte del agente que presenta el modelo.

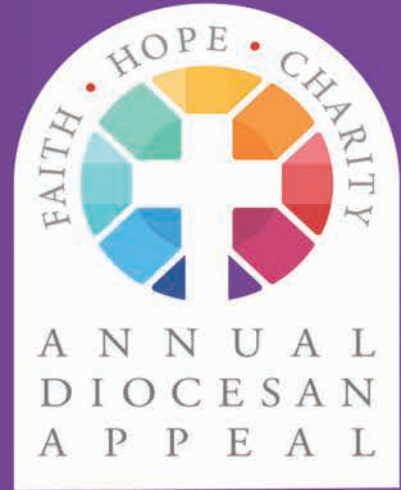
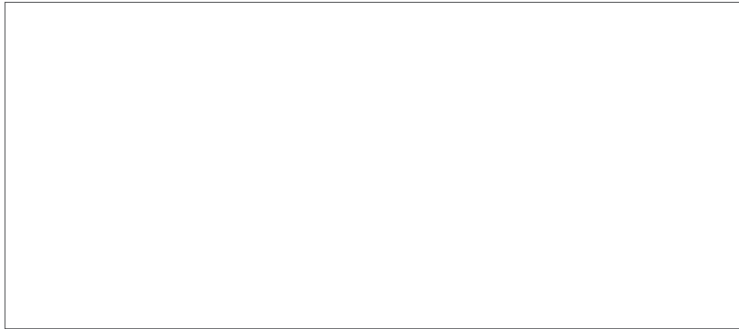
En contraste con el diseño conceptual de un modelo, Dios nos ofrece ejemplos. Los ejemplos son personas reales que nos enseñan mediante la forma en que viven y

cómo dan testimonio cuando entablamos una conversación con ellos o simplemente cuando los observamos en nuestro contacto diario con ellos. Como católicos tenemos los ejemplos reales de Cristo, la Santísima Madre y los santos que nos sirven de guías mediante su palabra y obra. Tenemos además a nuestros educadores, entre los cuales los principales ejemplos son nuestros padres y madres, hermanos mayores y nuestros maestros, todos los cuales son personas reales, y no valores y conceptos sintetizados. Una cita de Santo Tomás de Aquino parece particularmente apta para aclarar la importancia de esta distinción: “Es mejor iluminar que simplemente brillar, es mejor ofrecer a los demás verdades contempladas que simplemente contemplar”.

Tales ejemplos nos llevan al segundo punto de nuestra reflexión: el objetivo general de la educación católica es llegar a conocer y amar la plenitud de la Verdad que Jesús enseñó como el amor libre a Dios y al prójimo. Jesús nos dio un ejemplo a este respecto por su predicación clara y constante, su sanación compasiva a través de los milagros y Su acción desinteresada y salvadora en la cruz, que culminó en Su resurrección y ascensión. Nos enseñó a ir y hacer lo mismo que Él hizo. Este objetivo general es nuestro fin último y nuestro propósito en la vida, y la medida por la cual cada uno de nosotros evalúa nuestras prioridades personales que son únicas para nosotros, pero que también están fusionadas por nuestra naturaleza humana común dirigida hacia la excelencia común y floreciente.

Hoy en día enfrentamos un desafío particular, pues se nos ha confiado la misión de la educación auténtica y católica: enseñar como Jesús enseñó. Este desafío es la presunción equivocada entre muchos en nuestro mundo actual de que el mayor bien que se puede obtener, el *Summum Bonum*, es decir, el propósito primordial de la educación, no es el amor a Dios y al prójimo, sino el logro de un estilo de vida próspero que le brinde a la persona una autosuficiencia egocéntrica en este mundo, en la que la fe católica y religiosa se trata como una ocurrencia secundaria o como mera decoración de la propia historia familiar o cultural privada. Esto nos afecta a muchos de nosotros, que somos madres y padres de niños que regresan a la escuela en busca de una educación, y que no sólo sentimos la presión y el temor de que los hijos no tengan los suficientes bienes de este mundo para vivir, sino el anhelo de que posean más que suficientes bienes materiales para ser completamente autónomos.

El comienzo del nuevo año escolar es un momento para que examinemos nuevamente cómo valorizamos la educación y la responsabilidad que tenemos en nuestro apostolado como padres y educadores de dar un buen ejemplo. Es un momento para pedirle a Dios claridad de mente y firmeza de propósito para establecer prioridades que estén correctamente ordenadas, dirigidas al amor a Dios y al prójimo, y llevarlas a cabo con valentía y confianza en la Providencia real del Dios que es todo amor. ✚



Give Thanks to the Lord

*“Give thanks to the LORD
for he is good, his mercy
endures forever!”*

– Psalm 107:1

