

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



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IN THIS ISSUE

November - December 2020

8 FAITH MILESTONES
Parishes in Cisco, Breckenridge, and Rhineland celebrate anniversaries.

16 DAY OF PRAYER
Campus Masses held for "Peace Among People of all Races."

18 VIRTUALLY FORMED
Online religious education presents opportunities and challenges.

22 COVID CATHOLICS
Local Catholics share their struggles with coronavirus.

46 CURBSIDE CARE
To meet increasing demand, St. John the Apostle expands outreach.

ON THE COVER

Juan Reyes, parishioner at St. Patrick Cathedral (*NTC/Juan Guajardo*)

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

HAVE A STORY IDEA?

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

28

COVER STORY

Forming our conscience for faithful citizenship prepares us to vote and to contribute to the common good.



26 ARMOR OF GOD



38 HISPANIC ROOTS



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ON KIND EVANGELIZATION

An acquaintance of mine recently wrote of how she left Catholicism because of Christians' "duality and oppressive beliefs." Seeing the hypocrisy of self-proclaimed Catholics, she left the faith. Now, before we get further, I'm not here to cast stones. Neither will I condone her decision. *But* she brings up a good point.

It seems plenty of people have a problem with the Catholic Church — some to the point of leaving it. As Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said, "There are not one hundred people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church, but there are millions who hate what they wrongly perceive the Catholic Church to be." At the time, his comment referred to practices that other Christian denominations misunderstood, such as our devotion to Mary, the practice of plenary indulgences, and the authority of the pope.

While Sheen's point remains the same even now ("the hatred of the millions is directed against error and not against truth"), it's fair to ponder how many more millions hate the Catholic Church at this point in time, and for how many more erroneous reasons.

Gloomy indeed. But, if we look at this with the eyes of faith, we'll see it as a marvelous opportunity to evangelize our neighbors, as a chance to change lives by showing them the splendid truth of Christ.

So, how do we respond to those millions? The wrong way is with judgment, anger, name calling, harassment, or with actions that don't match our baptismal call. That only makes people defensive and resent us even more. The better way is to respond gently and to speak words of life while not condoning the misconception. There's no need to prove they're wrong and that we're right. Rather, it's about presenting them with the truth of Christ, "in order that the truth may conquer through the grace of God," as Sheen said.

But how do we share the truth if we don't know it? And even if we know it, could we share it convincingly? We live in an age of questioning and it's no longer enough to say we stand for this or for that "because the Church said so." So, we must sit at the feet of the Master, spend time with Him, and learn as much as we can about Him, so that we may grow in love of Him and then share Him with others.

Don't get me wrong, this will be hard, folks. Some of us are already doing that splendidly. Some of us, myself included, aren't. But the fruit is worth the labor! And it starts with little steps, with little actions and interactions.

As St. Thérèse of Lisieux said, "Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love." Let us begin today.

Juan Guajardo, Editor



For Donna Heim, the blessings of organ donation outweighed the discomfort. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Midwestern students tackle dignity and racism

WICHITA FALLS — Students at the Catholic Campus Center at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls gathered on their usual Faith and Fellowship Night Sept. 23 and 30 for talks about the Church's teachings on human dignity and racism.

"Showing with our actions that we care about each other's well-being is a way to proclaim the Gospel in our daily lives," said Alicia Olvera Rubio, 20, in her third year at MSU and a regular at the CCC. "Especially as young adult Catholics, who try to live out our faith, we must stand with the truths that Jesus teaches. I have become more aware of the way I need to interact with others. Loving our neighbors is much easier said than done, but it is a

challenge I try taking on every day."

Debbie Veitenheimer, director of campus ministry, said the idea came out of a conversation she had this summer.

"We have such a diverse population here at the CCC, and when racial tensions [across the country] were getting really high, I had asked if I could lead dialogue and prayer surrounding the issues," she said.

The two-part series featured Father Jonathan Demma; student Omar Combie from St. Lucia in the Caribbean; and Jason Spoolstra, Interim Director of Evangelization and Catechesis and Director of Youth, Young Adult, Campus, and Singles Ministries.

— *Jenara Kocks Burgess*

God's grace is a lifeline for organ donor and recipient

FORT WORTH — Two Catholics in the diocese, one an organ recipient, the other an organ donor, credit family, faith, and prayer for helping them through the process.

Ron Holton went from receiving a life-threatening diagnosis to receiving a liver transplant in a matter of months. The 65-year-old said he now feels 30, just two years after the gift.

When diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver in January 2018, the Holy Family parishioner was told there was no cure and he had three years to live, at most, after diagnosis.

After eight months, and 25 days in the hospital, Holton was placed on the national transplant registry. He had even lost his ability to walk. When he was finally added to the list, he was told the wait could be up to a year or more.

"By the grace of God, I was called three weeks later," he said.

Holton credits God and

the Catholic Church for helping him through the journey. He said. "If it wasn't for family, faith, and prayer, I wouldn't be here."

Donna Heim, a St. Ann parishioner in Burleson, didn't understand a "tug" on her heart while praying for an acquaintance who needed a kidney transplant.

"Maybe I'm supposed to do more than pray," Heim said, reflecting on her thoughts.

"Am I hearing you right?" she asked God. "Why am I having a sense of being a donor?"

A week and a half later, Heim found out she was a match for the man.

Heim said recovery went well, and she has no regrets. "The blessings totally outweighed the discomfort," she said.

Heim said she realizes God has blessed her many times during her life. "But this was the high point in my spiritual journey," she said.

— *Susan McFarland*



The Advancement Foundation moved to a downtown office. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Advancement Foundation moves downtown

FORT WORTH — The Advancement Foundation has moved from the Catholic Center offices in west Fort Worth to the Wells Fargo tower in downtown Fort Worth.

Both purpose and function make the relocation a logical change.

First, the Advancement Foundation is a separate nonprofit corporation from the Diocese of Fort Worth, although its mission is to serve the fundraising and stewardship needs of the diocese. By having a separate office from the diocese, the distinction between the two becomes more tangible.

“We serve and support the bishop, the ministries, the schools, and the parishes of the diocese, but this physical separation underscores that we are not the diocese,” said Renée Underwood, CFRE, Chief Operating Officer of the Advancement Foundation.

The second reason for the move benefits the Advancement Foundation

immediately and in the future.

“We were busting at the seams” in the previous location, said Clint Weber, president of the Advancement Foundation.

With plans to expand stewardship and capital campaign services, the larger space will allow additional staff to be hired in the future.

Plus, the new office allows for easy collaboration with the gift processing department, which was located on a different side of the building in the previous office.

According to Weber, the 201 Main Street location improves the visibility within the broader business community and with other nonprofits and Catholic organizations.

For the remainder of the year, mail to the Advancement Foundation can continue to be sent to the diocesan office. However, their new phone number is 817-533-3170.

Fr. McGivney beatification scheduled Oct. 31

FORT WORTH — Expecting their 13th child in 2015, Daniel and Michelle Schachle received devastating news. Still adjusting to a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome, the couple was told their unborn son had severe fetal hydrops and, most likely, would die before birth.

Desperate to save his son, Schachle turned to Father Michael J. McGivney, the founder of the Knights of Columbus, for some heavenly help.

Fr. McGivney died at the age of 38 in 1890 during a pandemic similar to today’s coronavirus outbreak. The hard-working diocesan priest from New Haven, Connecticut was particularly concerned with the welfare of widows and orphans. To secure

their protection, he started a “pass the hat” insurance program that evolved, over the years, into one of the top-rated insurance systems in the country.

Named a “Venerable Servant of God” by Pope Benedict XVI in 2008, Fr. McGivney’s cause for sainthood will continue with his Oct. 31 beatification, thanks to the 2015 Schachle miracle.

Describing his son’s journey from expected death to happy five-year-old, Schachle shared his story with North Texas Catholics during a Zoom interview organized by Chris Stark, general agent for the Knights of Columbus insurance program in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

—Joan Kurkowski Gillen

Donna Campbell of Good Shepherd Parish holds up signs of love and encouragement for public servants. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



Sister Megan Grewing renews temporary vows

SAN ANTONIO — Sister Megan Grewing, CDP, still has a prayer card from a high school Confirmation retreat hosted by Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster. That retreat was foundational for her faith journey.

Her Confirmation retreat ignited her personal relationship with God. “I knew about God, but I didn’t know God prior to having that experience.”

She was particularly struck by a talk explaining the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. After that retreat, Sister Megan recalled, “I felt like I knew God so much more personally in my life.”

Fast forward to July 26, the day before her 36th birthday, Sister Megan renewed her temporary vows with the Congregation of Divine

Providence (CDP). In a videochat with the *North Texas Catholic*, Sister Grewing recalled her vocational journey, starting with her family and home parish in Muenster and following God’s call to serve others.

She encouraged all Catholics to consider the religious life and asked that the people of the Diocese of Fort Worth pray for discerning women by name.

These days, Sister Megan is living out her call to service as a licensed professional counselor at Gratia Plena Catholic Counseling Agency in Houston. “I can see Jesus in the people I serve,” she said. “I will have God moments throughout my day.... Those energize me.”

— Kiki Hayden

Good Shepherd launches Operation Appreciation

COLLEYVILLE — Firefighters, police officers, and health care workers serve the community, but clergy and parishioners of Good Shepherd Church took time to serve them with “Operation Appreciation.”

Parishioners wrote cards of encouragement for health care workers, which were delivered over two days in June to two hospitals and four adult living centers near the Colleyville parish. The friars, deacon, and parishioners stood outside the health care facilities and blessed the employees with prayer and song.

On August 27, the parish continued by visiting first responders at their stations with balloons and banners. Firefighters received a prayer card of their patron saint, St. Florian, and police officers received a prayer card of St.


Michael. Parishioners wrote uplifting messages that were printed on banners left at each fire station. Like the health care workers, they also received a blessing and song from the visitors.

Diane Kain, discipleship coordinator, said they wanted the public servants to “know the community appreciates them and stands with them.”

At each visit, Kain said the friars, deacon, and parishioners could feel the “palpable presence of the Holy Spirit.”

“It’s simple to share your faith. You just need to make an opportunity to try it,” said Kain.

The visits were “pretty impactful,” said Kain and reminded health care workers and first responders that “faith is a stronghold in the struggle.”



For full versions of local stories plus more photos, visit NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news



Deacons lay prostrate during ordination at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish. (NTC/Ben Torres)

DEACON ASSIGNMENTS

Effective August 14, Bishop Michael Olson has made the following assignments for the recently ordained **Permanent Deacons** of the Diocese of Fort Worth:

Rodney Asebedo	St. Joseph, Arlington
David Bindel	Sacred Heart, Wichita Falls
Ricardo De Leon	All Saints, Ft. Worth
Steve Dixon	St. Stephen, Weatherford
Tom Doran	St. Michael, Bedford
Gary Endres	Sacred Heart, Muenster
Mark Gannaway	Holy Family, Ft. Worth
Gustavo Garcia	St. Matthew, Arlington
Michael Handler	St. Thomas the Apostle, Ft. Worth
Steve Holton	St. Peter the Apostle, Ft. Worth
Eric Hunsberger	Immaculate Conception, Denton
Ralph Lira	St. Peter, Lindsay
Paul Mahoney	St. Francis of Assisi, Grapevine
Juan Molina	St. George, Ft. Worth
David Poole	St. Jude Thaddeus cluster
Patrick Quinn	St. Philip, Lewisville
Bradley Samuelson	Our Lady of Guadalupe, Wichita Falls
Jesus Humberto Serrano	Our Lady of Guadalupe, Ft. Worth
Michael Sutton	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Keller
Thien Ta	St. John the Apostle, N. Richland Hills
Terry Timmons	Immaculate Heart, Abbott
Manuel Vasquez	St. Mary, Henrietta and St. William, Montague
Richard Wright	Good Shepherd, Colleyville
Daniel Zavala	St. Patrick Cathedral, Ft. Worth

PRIEST ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL F. OLSON

REV. PEDRO J. MARTINEZ

Parochial Vicar of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth has been appointed **Parochial Administrator** of same parish, effective September 5.

REV. DANIEL PATTEE, TOR

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth, effective September 10.

IN MEMORIAM

SR. FRANCESCA WALTERSCHEID, SSMN

October 4, 2020



Born in Muenster, Sr. Francesca taught in schools in Texas and California, mostly first grade. She also volunteered at Cook Children's Medical Center in her 74 years as a Sister of St. Mary.

SR. MARY FRANCES SERAFINO, SSMN

September 9, 2020



Sr. Mary Frances spent 71 years sharing her love of God as a Sister of St. Mary before her death at 90. She served as a teacher, principal, choir director, and director of religious education.

FR. IGNATIUS DAI NGUYEN, CRM

September 14, 2020



Fr. Nguyen shepherded the faithful at St. Rita and Our Lady of Fatima Parishes in Fort Worth from 1997-2005. He returned to the diocese in 2015 to direct Holy Family Religious Retreat Center.

FR. FRANCISCO GARCES, OFM Cap.

September 15, 2020



The first Filipino ordained a Capuchin friar, he served at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Fort Worth from 1997-2013. A priest for 54 years, he also worked as a school administrator in the Philippines.

Full obituaries are available at NorthTexasCatholic.org.

100!

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco hits the century mark with anticipation, rejuvenation, treasures discovered, and mysteries

By Matthew Smith

That COVID-19 precautions caused rescheduling of Cisco's Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish's 100th anniversary celebration stirred disappointment, yes, but also anticipation and renewed purpose on the parts of Father Vijaya "VJ" Mareedu, SAC, and his parishioners.

"We were planning to distribute small bags with a rosary and things like that, but we've now completely postponed our anniversary celebration until next year," Fr. Mareedu said.

Which, parishioner Chrystal Jaimes said, engenders excitement for a grander celebration in 2021.

"I look forward to having everybody together next year," Jaimes said. "All our youth and maybe all four area parishes getting together and really doing a wonderful celebration."

LOOKING BACK

Originally named Red Gap and

founded about 1878, a mix of railroads, farming, oil drilling, and industry fueled Cisco's subsequent growth and name change, courtesy of New York banker John Cisco who helped finance the railroad's arrival. The town is also known for a 1927 bank robbery in which the robbers dressed as Santa Claus, and it was once reportedly home to the world's largest concrete swimming pool. Conrad Hilton paid a visit in 1919 intending to buy a bank, but bought a hotel instead, the beginning of what became the Hilton Hotel chain.

"He was Catholic," parishioner Susan Horton said. "His rosary is in the museum of that hotel, which is now the Conrad Hilton Center."

Father Rudolph A. Gerken, who established St. Rita Church in Ranger the same year, first held Mass in the Union Labor Hall of Cisco in 1919. Land purchased in 1920 for \$2,500 led to the construction of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in summer that same year at a cost of \$10,000. Twenty used solid oak pews were purchased for \$1,500. The original church

remains, albeit remodeled several times through the decades.

Fr. Gerken later served as bishop of the Diocese of Amarillo and as archbishop of the Diocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

"There's a great history to the parish because it's been the main center for many area Catholics then and now," Fr. Mareedu said. "For them, having a church close by and access to the sacraments remains very important and has led to a very vibrant parish."

That vibrant past inspired Horton and fellow parishioner Ann Geasland to create a booklet detailing the parish's history.

"It's something we'll hand out when we have our anniversary celebration next year," Geasland said. "I've taken information from various sources to put together a chronological history of the priests who served here, info about different iterations of the physical building, how it started, and changes made over the past 100 years. We're going to add information on our Altar Society and Friendship Meal too."

Horton is investigating the donors of



THEN AND NOW: A renovation (top) revealed a surprise: two stained glass windows behind the altar at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. (top photo NTC/Juan Guajardo; bottom photos courtesy of Ann Geasland)

the church's 23 stained glass windows.

"I'm looking into who are these people?" Horton said. "For one donor, I found a picture of him and his wife-to-be coming over on a boat from France after World War I. When I look at that window now, I see the person, not just a name on the donor plate."

Other aspects remain a mystery.

"The church was dedicated by [former Diocese of Dallas Bishop Joseph P. Lynch] on April 17, 1921 as Queen of the Holy Rosary," Horton said. "We haven't been able to figure out when it changed from that to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary."

The name inscribed on the base of the parish's chalice traces back to a priest

in 1944 in the Archdiocese of New York who appears to have had no connection to Cisco.

"So why do we have his chalice that we still use every Mass?" Horton said. "We found his gravesite in the Bronx, and we've contacted the archdiocese and are waiting to hear back to see if we can find out more about him."

LOOKING FORWARD

Fr. Mareedu and Deacon Ed Ferguson credit parishioners for raising funds and helping out with last year's major renovation of the church.

"I wish you could see the before and after," Den. Ferguson said. "They did a

fantastic job renovating the church. It is beautiful."

Horton agrees.

"The parishioners had wanted to do some work on the church for some time," Horton said. "With the 100-year anniversary coming up, it just seemed like the perfect time."

"So last year in July and August basically we were going to Mass at other parishes. Holy Rosary was shut down. We completely emptied the church and put everything in our parish hall.

"We had a lot of help from parishioners and also a lot of patience from

Continued on Page 15

A CENTURY OF *FAITH*

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Breckenridge
has served local faithful for 100 years



Father Prakash
Dias, SAC,
stands in front
of Sacred Heart
of Jesus Church
in Breckenridge.
(NTC/Juan
Guajardo)

By Jerry Circelli

Nearly 50 years before Saint Pope Paul VI established the Diocese of Fort Worth in 1969, Masses were being celebrated in the oil-boom town of Breckenridge, 100 miles west of Cowtown.

It was in rural towns, such as Breckenridge, where the future diocese was taking shape as North Texas communities grew rapidly after the turn of the century and the Church strove to establish places of worship for the faithful in these new settlements.

In the case of Breckenridge, the Catholic Church was established in 1920 to serve thousands of oil workers who set up tent cities throughout the town. The sleepy town had woken up overnight after the McCleskey No. 1 oil well blew in Ranger about 30 miles to the southeast three years earlier.

Drilling soon began in Breckenridge, with thousands of oil workers flocking into the town. From 1920 to 1921, the population grew from 1,500 residents to about 30,000 people. The growth was phenomenal and so was the need to serve the faithful in Breckenridge.

Diocese of Dallas Bishop Joseph P. Lynch sent an energetic priest named Father Rudolph A. Gerken to celebrate the first Masses there. The area was then part of the ecclesiastical territory of the Diocese of Dallas.

The bishop and the zealous priest were no strangers to spreading the Word of God in remote areas of North Texas. During his 43 years as shepherd, Bishop Lynch established more than 100 parishes.

Fr. Gerken, while serving as pastor in

Ranger, established churches in Eastland, Cisco, Breckenridge, and Pioneer.

Fr. Gerken celebrated Mass for Breckenridge-area Catholics at a warehouse and the local courthouse. Through the pastor's guidance, local Catholics purchased property for a church in 1920 at a cost of \$4,500.

According to the pastor's detailed written records, in the summer and fall

Society.

Fr. Gerken went on to become bishop of the Diocese of Amarillo in 1927. The pioneering cleric's experience in North Texas served him well. During his administration of the new Diocese of Amarillo, he built 20 churches, six schools, three hospitals, and a convent. In 1933 he was appointed archbishop of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Fr. Gerken literally built up the faith in Breckenridge and throughout North Texas, where many dedicated priests have followed in his footsteps.

The present brick structure of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Breckenridge was completed in October 1961. The former church was then converted into a parish hall. It served for 20 years, until a new parish hall was constructed in 1989.

While the parish had planned to celebrate its 100th anniversary in the fall of this year, it is being postponed until next year because of concerns related to COVID-19.

An optimistic Father Prakash Dias, SAC, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus in Breckenridge and Jesus of Nazareth in Albany, said of the celebration postponement, "Maybe it's an opportunity to celebrate it with more spiritual vigor and grandeur next year."

Fr. Dias said the 100-year recognition represents a time to express gratitude for the clergy and laity who have served Sacred Heart of Jesus

Parish over the past century.

"The people always kept their faith and kept this church going," Fr. Dias said. "It is a huge responsibility for me now to carry on this legacy in collaboration with



The original Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Breckenridge

of 1922, construction on the church was underway. It was completed at a cost of \$10,000, plus \$2,500 for furnishings.

On June 3, 1923, Bishop Lynch, assisted by Fr. Gerken, dedicated the new church. In 1925 a rectory was completed and furnished by the church's Altar

Continued on Page 15

LIVING History

Fondly called “The Cathedral in the Cotton Patch,” St. Joseph Parish brings the message of Jesus to Rhineland for 125 years

By Jerry Circelli

Laura Myers is working diligently every day to compile a 125th anniversary history book — full of significant details and photographs — about her beloved parish, St. Joseph Church in Rhineland. For Myers and many of the more than 200 faithful who attend St. Joseph, the background of the parish is interwoven with their own family histories.

Myers said that in 1898, her maternal grandmother’s family left home in Nebraska with plans to relocate. They resided in New Mexico for a year and ultimately traveled to Rhineland, where the family settled permanently.

“My grandmother drove one of the family wagons at the age of 10, while her dad drove the other one,” Myers explained. “Rhineland came to be home to them due to the German culture and faith that they found here.”

Father Joseph Reisdorff, a visionary priest, helped people find that kind of spiritual environment on March 19, 1895 — the feast day of St. Joseph — when he transformed 12,000 acres of fertile soil in Knox County into a German-Catholic colony. His efforts eventually led to a thriving Catholic community in Rhineland, located

THERE'S
MORE TO
SEE

View the photo gallery of beautiful St. Joseph Church. Visit NorthTexasCatholic.org and click on the 'Photo Gallery' tab.



about 165 miles northwest of Fort Worth.

While parishioners of St. Joseph planned this year to celebrate the 125th anniversary of their parish’s 1895 founding, COVID-19 safety concerns have necessitated delaying the event until April 2021.

In the interim, parishioners are taking time to remember people like Fr. Reisdorff, who worked tirelessly to establish their rural parish.

A native of Rhine Province in Germany, Fr. Reisdorff hailed from a Catholic region blessed with rich soil.

In his drive to help develop Christ’s Church in Texas, the priest sought to create such a place in Knox County. A few years earlier, in 1892, he helped establish a Catholic community in Windthorst, where he celebrated the first Mass in that new parish.

Responding to Fr. Reisdorff’s advertisements in newspapers in the United States and Germany, settlers began arriving in Rhineland eager to sow the seeds of opportunity that had been planted in their minds after reading and hearing about the available land in Texas.

Before long, the number of settlers outgrew the space at the early colony house where the priest was celebrating Mass. A wooden church, along with a school staffed by the Benedictine Sisters from Jonesboro, Arkansas, was soon built and stood for about 25 years.

Construction of the current church, which started in 1927, was interrupted by economic hardships of the Great Depression and the perils of uncertainty during World War II. Finally completed in 1951, the German Gothic-style structure now stands as one of the most beautiful

country churches in Texas.

“People here know it as ‘The Cathedral in the Cotton Patch,’” parishioner and church secretary Mary Denise Groves said. A lifelong resident of Rhineland, Groves continued, “The tradition, the architecture, everything about this church, you just feel holy when you enter it. You feel the presence of the Lord here.”

Most of the material for the church was donated by a generous business community, and work on the church was undertaken by talented parishioners. The church contains tens of thousands of handmade bricks.

Beautiful cut-glass windows were later installed, beginning in 1972, bringing holy artistic themes to life throughout the church. Windows in the nave, the central part of the church, depict the life of Christ, including His birth, transfiguration, and crucifixion. Sanctuary windows represent the themes found in the Bible related to bread and wine.

Other windows depict saints important to the Catholic Church and to the Rhineland community. They include Saint Isidore, patron of farmers, and Saint Benedict, founder of the Benedictines, who served St. Joseph as priests and sisters for decades.

Longtime parishioner Mary Birkenfeld moved to Rhineland from nearby Bomarton in 1953, just a few years after the final completion of St. Joseph’s present church. Its spiritual grandeur never ceases to inspire her.

“Whenever I enter the church, I just feel a reverence wherever I look. It’s beautiful and it’s alive.”

The aura of St. Joseph has also captivated Janet Dillard, who has been spiritually enriched by the church her entire life. “This is home and always has been home for me,” Dillard said. As director of religious education and youth ministry leader, Dillard said parishioners wear many hats at St. Joseph. Under the guidance of Pastor John Perikomalayil, HGN, parishioners are involved in myriad ministries. “We just do whatever Father wants,” Dillard said.

Billie Myers agreed. He serves as an

Continued on Page 14



St. Joseph Parish in Rhineland was the first assignment outside of India for Father John Perikomalayil, HGN. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



The parish was established in 1895, and construction on the current church lasted from 1927 to 1951. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

From Page 13

acolyte, finance council chairman, and Grand Knight of the local Rhineland Knights of Columbus Council #1766. “This parish is like a family, and that’s what makes it so special,” he said.

Myers’ fellow Knight, Magdaleno “Leno” Hernandez, is also an acolyte at St. Joseph. In addition, he serves as sacristan, lector, Eucharistic minister, RCIA director, and head of baptismal preparation. “Everybody gets along here and we take care of anything that needs to be done,” Hernandez said.

Valera Hertel, who serves as sacristan for daily Masses, is someone who has remained active at St. Joseph her entire life. She was baptized in the unfinished church in 1938. “We all love our church and we adore Fr. John,” she said.

“He has brought back so many traditions in the church, and we have needed that,” Hertel continued. Those traditions have included Stations of the Cross, Eucharistic Adoration, and a weekly novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

Fr. Perikomalayil, a native of

India, said he has always felt welcome by the local parish community. As an HGN religious order priest, Fr. Perikomalayil’s first assignment outside of India was in the Diocese of Fort Worth for St. Joseph in Rhineland and Santa Rosa in nearby Knox City.

Fr. Perikomalayil has been known to do whatever it takes for the church, parishioners said, stating that they have seen him mowing the lawn on the church grounds, stacking chairs and tables, and even weeding the flower beds.

“I grew up in a rural area in India,” the priest said. “My parents were farmers and I can easily relate to a farming community. Before I became a priest, I actually wanted to be a farmer, but God had a different plan for me.”

Fr. Perikomalayil now enjoys living out his order’s charism for the faithful at St. Joseph. That spiritual gift calls for the Heralds of Good News to “train and supply zealous, dedicated, hard-working, and saintly missionaries to proclaim the Good News of the Lord.”

“That’s exactly what we do here at St. Joseph’s,” he said. 🇺🇸

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To Report Misconduct:

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

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

To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

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

- ▶ 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



From Page 9, CISCO

parishioners,” she said.

The church’s pews, more than 100 years old, were refinished and now look brand new, Horton and Geasland said, as do the kneelers.

Renovation uncovered treasures.

“We had paneling from the ‘60s or ‘70s,” Horton said. “Removing that paneling uncovered two stained-glass windows on either side of the main altar.”

Removal of carpet and linoleum from the sacristy uncovered the original pine wood flooring, which has since been restored and refinished, Geasland added.

COMMUNITY OF FAITH

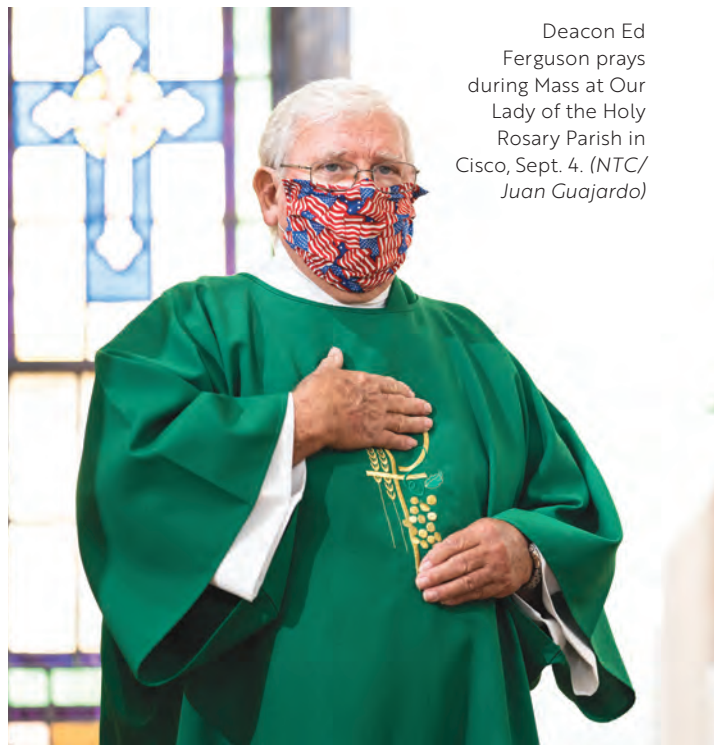
In the end, it’s more about

spiritual sustenance than an anniversary celebration, parishioners said of the centennial milestone.

“We’ve only lived in Cisco seven years, and, of course, this is where we get spiritually fed,” Geasland said.

“But also, the parishioners have been incredibly kind and friendly to us. They’ve made us feel very welcome from the first day we walked in the door,” Geasland continued.

“Our parish is tight knit, but always open to new people,” Jaimes said. “We’re very blessed to have Father VJ who is so vivacious and full of life. Sometimes we get down in the midst of COVID and everything going on, but he keeps us up. I feel like he’s in the right place at the right time.” 🇺🇸



Deacon Ed Ferguson prays during Mass at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco, Sept. 4. (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)

From Page 11, SACRED HEART OF JESUS

our parishioners.”

As a missionary Pallottine priest with the Society of Catholic Apostolate, Fr. Dias has taken a practical approach to involving laity, which is at the heart of his religious order’s charism.

Fr. Dias recruits carpenters, welders, plumbers, computer technicians, teachers, and many others with special talents from among the faithful to serve Christ and the local Church.

“This was precisely the desire of our founder, St. Vincent Pallotti, to have a participatory Church,” Fr. Dias said.

Robert Alvarez has been a Sacred Heart of Jesus parishioner for 31 years. He has served in many roles from Marriage Encounter facilitator to religious education teacher, and from acolyte to maintenance worker, to name only a few.

Alvarez said he has taken on many jobs with the church that he never dreamed he would perform, “but priests really helped me look at myself and what I am capable of doing when trusting in God.”

William Davidson, a parishioner for 15 years, has served Sacred Heart of Jesus in many ways as well, including his work with the finance committee, parish council, and numerous fundraisers.

Davidson said the word “resilience” best characterizes Sacred Heart of Jesus over the past 100 years.

Fr. Dias said he is thankful for those who have come before him to build the Church and those who continue the work.

“Our 100th anniversary logo states, ‘Community of Love: One Heart, One Body, In Christ,’” the priest said. “We will continue to live out this commitment with Mother Mary as our model.” 🇺🇸



A parishioner at daily Mass at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco, Sept. 4. (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)

Father John Robert Skeldon celebrates Mass for University of Texas at Arlington students on September 9. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



A DAY OF PRAYER

Diocesan schools, campus ministries, and parishes celebrate Mass for “peace among people of all races”

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

In a society consumed by social unrest, division, and racial tension, North Texas Catholics carved time from their busy lives September 9 to pray for racial harmony and an end to civil discord.

The Day of Prayer for “Peace Among People of all Races,” called by Bishop Michael Olson and observed on the Memorial of Saint Peter Claver, brought together parishioners, students, and clergy for the celebration of Mass at different locations across the diocese. Participants were reminded that prayer — not violence — is

the way to achieve justice and dignity for every human person.

For those unable to attend Mass, the bishop suggested saying the Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel along with performing a spiritual or corporal work of mercy for peace.

At Nolan Catholic High School, where the Mass was livestreamed into classrooms to observe social distancing guidelines, Bishop Olson asked students to remember the Golden Rule’s command to love one another and “treat each other with both justice and mercy as found in the natural law God has written in our hearts.”

Civil laws are unjust whenever they are

contrary to natural law.

“Authentic justice is brought about first by conversion of heart and then, when necessary, through a change in the laws of the state,” he pointed out.

The bishop said St. Peter Claver, a 17th century Jesuit priest, exemplified what it means to recognize all people are created in God’s image and likeness. Sent to South America where he cared for the physical and spiritual needs of African slaves arriving in crowded ships from their homeland, the Spanish missionary clothed their naked bodies, bandaged their wounds, and introduced them to Jesus Christ.

“Peter Claver saw their dignity and



Nolan Catholic High School President Leah Rios distributes Communion during a Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson at the campus chapel. Due to COVID precautions, the majority of the high school's students viewed the Mass through livestream in their classrooms. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

made himself their servant,” Bishop Olson explained.

Following the Mass, many Nolan students and teachers asked for a copy of the bishop’s homily.

“They felt it was really empowering and want the opportunity to reflect more on his words,” said Leah Rios, Nolan Catholic president. “What the bishop said will help them learn how to react and maneuver through the difficulties and challenges out there with integrity and character.”

EVERYONE HAS VALUE

The young people Gabe Gutierrez meets at Texas Christian University are receptive to the idea that at every stage of life — despite nationality, creed, abilities, or disabilities — a person has value.

“And it’s not because of anything we’ve accomplished,” the campus minister tells students who come to TCU’s Catholic Newman Center. “It’s not because of the way we look, or the place where we were born. It’s because God breathed the breath of life into us.”

Undergraduates attending the Sept. 9 Mass at the W. Berry Street center heard Father Jonathan Wallis tell them hatred of anyone, especially on the basis of race, denies recognition of God the Father, who created all people in His image and likeness.

“In the Church, we learn to love as Christ loved and live as brothers and sisters

guided by a common Father with the common goal of eternal life,” said the vicar general, who also serves as director/chaplain of TCU’s Newman Center. “Let us be instruments of the peace of Jesus Christ in the midst of all going on today.”

His message encouraged TCU freshman Monica Nieto, who as a Mexican American, feels strongly about racial injustice.

“I’m very proud the Catholic Church is addressing these issues — not just because of the current protests — but because racial injustice doesn’t line up with Catholic teaching,” said the St. Stephen in Weatherford parishioner. “Jesus Christ instructed us to treat every human being with dignity, so we should always do that.”

LEARNING FROM A SAINT

Jonathan Olivares, co-president of the University Catholic Community at the University of Texas at Arlington, said praying for peace and an end to civil discord at the Sept. 9 Mass provided an opportunity for self-reflection about how we treat other people.

“People need to know what’s going on and fix the social injustice that’s been happening,” commented the college senior, who attended the liturgy celebrated by Father John Robert Skeldon in the UCC building. “But that should be done in a peaceful manner.”

In his homily, the priest, who serves as rector at St. Patrick Cathedral, described

how St. Peter Claver made himself a “slave to the slaves” as a way to let the shackled Africans know God still cared for them.

“He brought a sense of hope to those suffering such inhumane cruelty,” Fr. Skeldon said, calling slavery and abortion intrinsic evils.

Forces in today’s society are trying to divide people based on historical reasons that go back centuries, “and we lose sight of the common good and humanity we all share,” he added.

The homilist urged his listeners to promote, sustain, and encourage others to know their God-given dignity.

Members of the UTA Catholic community read a letter written by St. Peter Claver in 1627 before coming to Mass. The dispatch offered, in detail, the misery and illness witnessed by the missionary as he approached captives from a newly docked slave ship.

“Our young people can learn from this saint who ministered to slaves in the presence of their owners who did nothing for them,” said Jeff Hedglen, UTA’s campus minister. “He gave them human dignity by being countercultural.”

The Mass was an important way to address racial harmony because it couched the issue with the need for prayer.

“Prayer is one of our most powerful modes to enact change in our own selves and society,” he added. “Prayer that changes us on the inside can prompt us to act differently outside.” 🇺🇸

virtually PRESENT

Catechists across the diocese utilize new ways to pass on the faith

By Susan Moses

With all religious education classes in the Diocese of Fort Worth taking place online this fall, the long-established ways of passing on the faith have changed.

One constant remains, however. “Everything starts with a prayer to the Holy Spirit. We ask the Holy Spirit to sanctify and bless what we’re doing, that it will do what it’s supposed to do,” explained Silvia Lesko, the director of religious education at St. Mary Parish in Gainesville.

Catechists and the parish staff responsible for faith formation have made new plans, using new technology and new resources, to educate children and adults. Although change can be difficult, they are rising to the task.

At Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, Sister Eva Sanchez, MCSH, said she and the 85 catechists at the predominantly Spanish-speaking parish are “challenged, but we like it. We are looking for ways to be creative.”

In June, Sr. Eva, the director of

religious education, developed two plans: a hybrid model combining remote education and in-person classes, and a program for remote education exclusively. After Bishop Michael Olson, in consultation with diocesan staff and public health officials, requested that all fall religious education classes be conducted online only, the parish arranged for catechists to livestream their class according to the schedule established in prior years.

Some catechists are choosing to teach from the parish’s classrooms to avoid a distracting home environment or unreliable technology. But most will teach the 800 students registered for class via Zoom from their homes.

Holy Name of Jesus catechists have shared tips for online presentations and brought ideas — like improving the Wi-Fi in the parish’s old brick classrooms — to help make September’s start for K-12 religious education, RCIA, special education, and sacramental preparation classes successful.

With a degree in catechesis and more than three decades with the Missionary Catechists of the Sacred

Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Sr. Eva said, “I myself feel open to all these experiences.” She is “praying a lot for the formation of the catechists,” a priority for the religious woman even in normal times.

The sister has found parents to be especially accommodating this year. She has written orientations for parents of each class, detailing the plans for online education and the expectations for students, parents, and catechists. After receiving the thorough communication, she said parents were receptive to the changes.

BY THE NUMBERS

Parishes report the number of students registered for religious education has diminished, by a small amount in sacramental preparation and RCIA, but by a third or more in religious education for grade school children.

Brad Horn, coordinator of youth ministry and Confirmation at St. Mark Parish, conducted virtual activities in the spring and summer for teens at the Denton parish — online Bible study, coffee and prayer sessions, Life Teen nights, game



Catechist Luis Fabela leads a religion class virtually at Holy Name Parish in Fort Worth Sept. 23. (NTC/Ben Torres)

nights, even a discussion on the aspects of faith evidenced in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Accustomed to a crowd of teens, the youth minister noted that some activities had 10 or fewer participants.

Instead of being anxious about the small turnout, he remembered a quote from St. Teresa of Calcutta, “Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.”

Before the pandemic, Horn considered transitioning the youth program from large events to small group discipleship. Social distancing has jumpstarted that plan.

In small groups, he said, “You can focus on taking care of their needs. The relational ministry is thriving.”

Still, he thinks about the youth who aren’t present. “Youth are craving community. Youth are craving spirituality,” he said. Without the draw of a large group activity, “It’s difficult to reach disinterested teens. Once we are in person, it will be

interesting to see which kids are on fire, which kids are seeking, and which kids are content to be where they are.”

Although Horn has served as the youth minister at St. Mark Parish for five years, he said that the rapid changes brought on by the pandemic “make me feel like a first-year youth minister. It’s completely different, a whirlwind.”

WALK WITH YOU

At St. Ann Parish in Burleson, Director of Faith Formation Trisha Vasquez said it’s not just the faith formators who are a little dazed by altered practices.

She has observed that parents are overwhelmed, as their employment and their children’s education may have shifted rapidly and left routines in disarray.

Vasquez compared the current situation to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. “They were confused, anxious, and distraught. They did not recognize Jesus in the midst of them,” she explained.

She hopes to assure families, “We

know times are tough. We are here to help. We will walk the journey with you, to help us keep our eyes on the cross.”

Many parents have expressed they feel inadequate to teach their children the faith, according to Vasquez. In previous years, St. Ann offered a year-long class about Jesus, salvation history, and the sacraments to parents of children in RCIA. This fall, the series is virtual, and all parents are invited to attend.

Vasquez, who has held her position for eight years, said she and the catechists are searching for ways to increase the students’ engagement. For example, middle and high school students, who will have Life Teen videos and Zoom sessions most weeks, will occasionally meet in the church for a socially distanced Mass and Adoration. Elementary students have an online lesson to complete on their own timeframe each week, but catechists plan to dress up as saints for special virtual

Continued on Page 20



Shannon Kemp, a parishioner at St. Mary Church, helps her children with religious education Sept. 25 at their home in Gainesville. (NTC/Kenneth Munyer)



Instructor Jorge Hernandez leads a Confirmation class virtually with students watching from their homes Sept. 23 at Holy Name Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Ben Torres)

From Page 19

meetings on important feast days or Church seasons.

“How can we get through this as a parish? Keep focusing on Jesus. The battle has already been won. It’s faith over fear,” she said.

FAMILY FOCUSED

St. Mary Parish in Gainesville instituted the family formation model, where parents play a large role in providing religious education to their children, in kindergarten through eighth grade a few years ago.

That has been “a blessing,” according to Lesko, the director of religious education at the parish, which dates to 1879 and is the second oldest parish in the diocese.

Notwithstanding the pandemic, she said the model has been a success.

“It’s born fruit in families. We see greater parent engagement. They arrive for the sacraments, but families become

more intrigued with their faith and get more involved in their parish,” Lesko said. The DRE has 15 years’ experience, including five at St. Mary.

Using the family formation model in the younger grades has made for an easier transition to virtual learning this fall. Instead of meeting in person with parents twice each month to review the lessons they will teach their children, those meetings are by video conference.

However, said Lesko, “High school is challenging.”

Previously, the teens attended a large gathering, but now they meet in cyberspace. Lesko reports that the teens are disappointed, but “they can see we’re trying.”

Lesko spent the summer learning what resources and technologies were available to keep the virtual presentations interactive, so the teens aren’t just watching a talking head. Polls, emojis, avatars, video clips, and breaking into small virtual groups are tools to help keep the students interested. “It’s a whole new way of looking at what we do,” she said.

A rural parish like St. Mary has additional challenges, Lesko explained. Internet service can be spotty, and some students don’t have technology with video and audio capabilities. “We can connect, but we can’t see them,” she said.

Despite the drawbacks, Lesko has noted some advantages. “The teens are not late, because they aren’t having to drive in after school practice. No one is as rushed, and they come in on time. There are no transportation problems.”

She also was pleased

with a summer Confirmation retreat she held for the youth virtually, which received several positive responses. Lasting most of a day, the program included some online presentations, independent Scripture reading and reflection, and discussions.

Lesko has already decided that one adjustment to virtual faith formation is here to stay.

She said many, if not most, of the monthly catechist training sessions at St. Mary will continue online for the foreseeable future. It eliminates the hassles of having to find a babysitter or rushing home from work just to leave the house again for training.

So far, Lesko has found the adjustments in faith formation “more difficult, but more rewarding.” She cites the opportunity for more one-on-one interaction, from meeting with RCIA candidates individually to calling families who are not showing up.

A quote from the prolific Catholic author G.K. Chesterton often crosses her mind — “If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.”

She summed up what the quote means to her. “Do the best you can. Don’t strive to be perfect. Always strive, but even if you can’t do it perfectly, if you can’t do it amazingly, keep trying. Evangelization is worth doing, even if it’s not done perfectly.”

To illustrate that point, Lesko shared that each year after First Holy Communion, there is often a young communicant who is a little upset that he or she didn’t experience that Mass exactly as they had envisioned it. She tells them, “At the end, did you get closer to Jesus? If you did, then we’re doing okay.” 🇺🇸



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Elvia Acevedo, marriage preparation coordinator at St. Peter the Apostle Parish, lost her father and two relatives to COVID-19. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



CALM IN THE STORM

Prayer and parish communities provide peace, help when COVID-19 hits hard

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Believing in a higher power has guided people through troubled times for thousands of years. Three North Texas Catholics share how faith, family, and friends helped them deal with illness and loss when the novel coronavirus touched their lives.

PLACING THEMSELVES IN GOD'S HANDS

The first hint of illness for Selena Flores came while mashing a bowl of potatoes for dinner. Thinking the vegetable tasted bland, she oversalted the dish.

Then the 47-year-old mother of five couldn't smell the aroma of steaks being grilled or savor the flavor of iced tea.

By nightfall, her temperature was 102 and the symptoms pointed to the obvious — she had COVID-19.

Flores, one of more than seven million Americans infected with the highly contagious disease in 2020, most likely caught the virus from her daughter, Marisa. The 23-year-old nurse tested positive after caring for an elderly COVID patient. The family had already self-quarantined.

"It was the worst feeling I ever had in my life. I've been sick before but never like that," said the St. Patrick parishioner who developed migraines, blisters, and respiratory issues. "A couple of times I thought about going to the hospital, but I was afraid that if I went in, I might not come out."

Instead of receiving in-person medical treatment, Flores relied on over-the-counter products to treat symptoms. Her fiancé, Mike Olier, donned a hazmat suit before

bringing in meals and medicines to the bedridden Flores and her daughter.

"There were nights when I cried and feared not waking up," the payroll/bookkeeper recalled.

She credits faith, friends, and comforting texts from her pastor, Father John Robert Skeldon, for pulling her through the health crisis. Reading inspirational books recommended by the priest boosted her resilience.

"We prayed a lot at home, and good friends kept us in their prayers," the cradle Catholic added. "That's all we could do."

Flores' battle with COVID lasted a month and subsided after an urgent care doctor prescribed steroids and antibiotics. Grateful to live through a virus that's killed more than 210,000 Americans, the COVID survivor said the experience changed her.

"I learned life is very short and you never know what's going to happen next," Flores mused. "I talk to my family members more and express how I feel."



Ginger Benes, director of youth and Confirmation at Holy Trinity Parish, shows a photo depicting some of the relatives she lost to COVID-19.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

St. Patrick Cathedral parishioners Selena Flores (right), her fiancé Mike Olier, and Selena's daughter, Marisa (left), all caught COVID-19 and are grateful to have recovered from the virus.

Suffering with the coronavirus also made her stronger spiritually. Putting her fate in the hands of the Lord helped Flores cope with the mental and physical pain of the disease.

"This virus is bigger than us. We knew we needed to leave it in the hands of God and pray for healing," she said emotionally. "It renewed my faith. I still can't believe we survived."

THIS VIRUS IS REAL. IT HURTS.

Elvia Acevedo finds comfort in spending time in the Adoration chapel at St. Peter the Apostle Parish. The death of her father and two other relatives from the coronavirus within a two-week period is still too much to bear. Quiet meditation eases her grief.

"When I found out my dad tested positive for COVID, I felt helpless,"

Continued on Page 24



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 23

remembered the marriage preparation coordinator who had a special relationship with her dad. “I wanted to go home and be with him but knew I couldn’t.”

Her parents, who lived in Aurora, Illinois — about 30 miles west of Chicago — followed quarantine guidelines. Antonio Acevedo only left his house to go grocery shopping with his son. But a week before Easter, the 79-year-old began feeling sick and went to the emergency room for coronavirus testing. Dizzy, light-headed, and weak, the elderly patient was told to isolate at home. A few days later, an ambulance returned him to the hospital where his health deteriorated. Acevedo’s mother and brother were also infected with the virus but recovered.

“I reached out to Father Manuel [Holguin, former pastor at St. Peter,] and told him what was going on,” the church worker explained. “We prayed. He was very available to me and asked for updates.”

The outreach soothed her nerves and helped when her father died April 25 in the ICU. Talks with Sister Ines Diaz, SSMN, offered another layer of comfort and consolation.

Prayer groups at her parish, St. John the Apostle, and Holy Trinity in Azle where her husband, Jesus, assists as a candidate for the diaconate, provided Acevedo with additional support.

“Even though I wasn’t close to people physically, I felt the warmth and prayers from everyone,” she said tearfully. “We prayed for the best [outcome]. That helped a lot.”

Shortly after her father passed away, an uncle died from COVID on Mother’s Day weekend, and days later her husband’s aunt succumbed to the virus in Mexico City.

“Remember to support not only the person who is ill, but also the family surrounding them with prayer and positive words,” Acevedo advised. “This virus is real. It happens and it hurts.”

LET’S TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER

When three members of Ginger Benes’ extended family died from the coronavirus within days of each other, Holy Trinity parishioners rallied around her.

“My church community was amazing,” said the director of youth and Confirmation. “We’re blessed to have a group within our church community we can immediately reach out to for prayer. They bring us comfort.”

Described as faith-filled and loving, Benes’ aunt and uncle were in their 80s but led an active lifestyle in San Angelo. Their son was a healthy 63-year-old who was raising his grandchildren after their mother died from brain cancer. All perished over a weekend.

“It felt like a storm raging that we had no control over,” said Benes, who kept in frequent contact with relatives through texts and social media during the crisis. “We found shelter in our prayers, faith, and love for one another.”

A double funeral for Adela and Joe Trevino was held in San Angelo but attendance was limited because of health concerns.

“I just prayed over their gravesite,” said Benes, who was unable to attend any Masses. “I have a huge, loving family. Not being together to hold each other as we grieved was difficult.”

Affected dramatically by the coronavirus, the Azle resident is a strong advocate for wearing a mask, social distancing, and taking other preventive measures to avoid infecting others.

“My aunt and uncle did what they were supposed to do but they were around somebody who didn’t,” she said. “It’s important to remember what Jesus told us to do — love one another — take care of one another.”

Following public health advice is one way we obey His command.


“We do that through social distancing, through masks, sanitization — all the things Bishop Michael Olson set out so we can participate in the Mass,” she pointed out. “Just do it. Let’s take care of each other.” 🇺🇸



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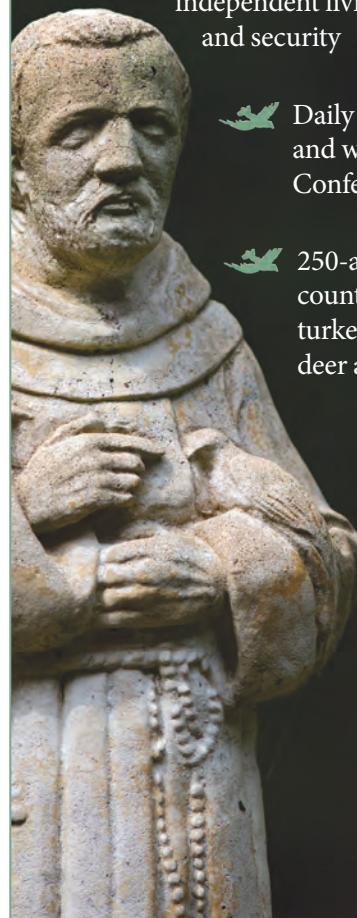
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#iGiveCatholic on December 1 raises awareness and provides opportunity to give thanks and give back

By Matthew Smith

Faithful in North Texas will soon be able to tap into a convenient, community-driven way of giving financial support to local Catholic parishes, nonprofits, and schools.

Declared the “most successful Catholic crowdfunding event to date” by the *National Catholic Register*, #iGiveCatholic is a 24-hour giving day held nationally on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, Black Friday, and Cyber Monday.

Bishop Michael Olson recently approved the diocese’s participation in the #iGiveCatholic Giving Day, which falls on Dec. 1 this year. Although this marks the diocese’s first year of participation, the program is in its sixth year.

Kristine Webb, development director of Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine, called it a great evangelization opportunity for the diocese in general and its schools in particular.

“It will be a one-stop shop for Catholics to give to Fort Worth Catholic organizations to strengthen our community,” Webb said. “It will also help engage many Catholics in our diocese about our schools and their vast needs. And the platform will make it easy for them to learn more about each school and how their gift can make a difference.”

Webb also noted that many schools have modified or cancelled their traditional fundraisers this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Participation in the program is open to every parish, school, ministry, and nonprofit within the diocese, and at least 50 are participating to date, said Renée Underwood, chief operating officer of the Diocese of Fort Worth Advancement Foundation.

Through one landing page the diocese will host individual profile pages for each participating entity and allow for secure online and offline donations to the entities of the donor’s choosing.



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- www.FortWorth.iGiveCatholic.org
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- #iGiveCatholic Giving Day: December 1

“Each [participating entity] gets to choose what they want their funds from that day to go toward,” Underwood said. “So maybe that’s a building campaign for a parish, tuition assistance for a school; it’s up to them.”

“What’s special about #iGiveCatholic is that all our Catholic entities in the diocese are simultaneously going to use the full force of our social media, email channels, and bulletins to have one collective voice,” Underwood continued.

Katelin Cortney, strategic communications and creative director of Catholic Charities Fort Worth, which has also signed on to participate, agreed.

“We’re grateful to use our voice in this campaign to reach people in our diocese who may not have engaged with us before,” Cortney said. “We are honored to stand in solidarity with Catholic organizations who continue to make life-changing impacts on our communities.” 🇺🇸

a FIGHT for FAITH

Father James Flynn shares his experiences as a pastor and U.S. Army Ranger as he urges men to wear the armor of God

By Lance Murray

For thousands of years, there's been a war underway between people of faith and Satan. And Father James Flynn says that men must don the breastplate of righteousness and set the tone for their families and society itself in fighting for the salvation of souls in a troubled world.

Fr. Flynn, pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, delivered a powerful message in his presentation "Wearing the Armor of God," Sept. 26 during the North Texas Catholic Brothers for Christ's ExSpiritus 2020 Conference.

Fr. Flynn's address was filled with personal experiences from his time fighting for his nation as a U.S. Army Ranger sniper in the first Gulf War, as well as scriptural lessons about using faith and courage in the fight against Satan.

"It's important for men to take up their battle position. It's important for men to be leaders," Fr. Flynn said. "The only way to do that is to put on the armor of Christ."

A native of Granbury, Fr. Flynn knows firsthand about putting on

military armor in the defense of the nation, and his Catholic faith gives him insight and courage in the fight against Satan.

He joined the U.S. Army as a young man and went through both the U.S. and German Army ranger schools. Eventually, he was trained as a sniper and served in the first Gulf War where he witnessed intense battles and proof that having the right protective gear can save lives.

"I went through sniper school — it was a great experience," Fr. Flynn said. "The Germans were very good marksmen and they were amazing teachers."

As a soldier he learned that "it is important to have armor," because armor gives you confidence. "It gives you the ability to do things you wouldn't normally choose to do."

Similarly, having the right spiritual armor is important in the battle against Satan.

Fr. Flynn reminded, "Satan never quits. He never gives up. He never tires. He doesn't sleep. He doesn't eat. He doesn't do anything but think about the destruction of souls."

In *Ephesians 6:11-17*, Fr. Flynn said, Scripture details the armor of God:

"Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.

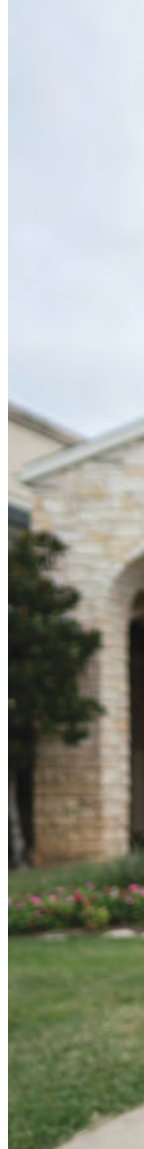
Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground.

So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Fr. Flynn has spent his adult life in service to nation and God.

During his military service, Fr. Flynn spent time in Oberammergau, Germany, which is famous for its Passion play that has been performed every 10 years since 1634 by the inhabitants of the village.

"After high school, I really got into atheism. I was not interested





Father James Flynn, pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, stands outside the Keller church. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

in God,” Fr. Flynn confided. “I was not interested in the restrictions of God and what He would put on me. And so, going to Oberammergau and that region really meant nothing to me.”

But Fr. Flynn said there was one image from his youth that stayed with him and helped steer him to a life in the Church.

“We would go to Mass every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation in the household. Every Sunday, my father would come back from Communion, he would come back from receiving the Lord’s Body and Blood, and he would kneel down,” Fr. Flynn told listeners.

“He would take off his glasses and put his hands over his face and he would pray. I remember that kind of burned into my brain. So even when I was away, even when I was away from the faith and away from God, and an atheist, that image always was there for me. And I think it was one of those things that helped bring me back.”

Fr. Flynn said, “You know, for a three-war Marine Corps colonel to have that sort of humility of faith, I think that’s what helped me gain a humility to bring me back to the faith. So, within that, we come to understand what it is the man is supposed to be doing — fighting the battle, going before the family, showing them the way to be a leader.”

It defines how a man must lead.

“We’ve learned far too often you can’t lead from the back. You can’t lead from cowardice. You have to lead with a sense of purpose,” he said.

“It’s important, maybe more important than ever, that men stand up and become the spiritual leaders of their household,” Fr. Flynn said.

“You know, you can go through life and you can fake a lot of things, but when it comes to praying, your children know above all else whether you’re faking or not. They can see whether you pray or not, they can

see whether you’re serious about faith or not, they can tell whether you’re hypocritical in your faith, or not.”

He continued, “That’s why it’s so important for fathers, especially, to be the spiritual leader of their household showing the love of our Heavenly Father.”

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the event this year was a virtual gathering of Catholic men from across North Texas. It was livestreamed from the gymnasium at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton with social distancing and in-person attendance restrictions in place, said Bill Kula, the director of communications for North Texas Brothers for Christ.

Catholic Brothers for Christ was formed in 2011 to coordinate an annual North Texas Catholic Men’s Conference. It is made up of men from parishes throughout North Texas who are committed to building Christ’s body, according to its website. 🇺🇸



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

faithful CITIZENS

How you can make your “prophetic voice”
heard this election season

By Susan Moses

Father Balaji Boyalla, SAC, has an important milestone coming up — his first opportunity to vote in a United States presidential election.

A native of India, the pastor of St. Michael Parish in Bedford became a U.S. citizen on March 10, 2019. In his journey to American citizenship, the Pallottine priest saw the hand of God at work. The process of getting a visa, then a green card, then qualifying for citizenship “went so easily. Maybe God has called me to work here a long time,” he said.

Now, as a citizen, he stated, “My first responsibility is to vote. I am going to vote. I am not going to miss it. Everybody should vote. That is how we can make our prophetic voice heard, like Isaiah.”

The Catholic Church has much to say about the responsibilities of faithful citizenship, one of which is the duty to vote. However, the Church does not tell its faithful for which particular party or candidate to vote. Instead, the Church sees her role “in the formation of conscience and the corresponding moral responsibility of each Catholic to hear, receive, and act upon the Church’s teaching in the lifelong task of forming his or her own conscience,” according to *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, a Call to Political Responsibility* issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Those teachings are lenses through which candidates and political issues should be viewed, and they are founded on the four basic principles of

Continued on Page 30

From Page 29

Catholic social doctrine: the dignity of the human person, subsidiarity, the common good, and solidarity.

THIS TIME AND PLACE

Our responsibility as Catholics to make our voices heard in the public arena is a function of where and when we are living, explained Dr. David Upham, a professor of American politics at University of Dallas.

In the first few centuries after the resurrection, Christians lived under centralized despotism and did not have the opportunity to participate in governance. Living the Gospel, spreading the Gospel, and avoiding persecution — often unsuccessfully

— were the priorities of early Catholics.

Fast forward to Catholics living in the United States today. Dr. Upham observed, “Where we find ourselves right now, in the providence of God, is we are a large — significantly large — minority in a free republic. We still have an enormous amount of political authority. Whether we like it or not, we share the throne.

“When God in His providence makes you a co-king, even though we’re one of 300 million, we probably then have a responsibility to try to take care of this community that’s been given to us to take care of as citizens with whatever we have: our voice, our money if we have some (consistent with our other obligations), and our vote,” he continued.

The professor, who is a parishioner at St. Francis of Assisi in Grapevine, cited three examples of when Catholic voices and votes have “been able to maintain a certain light in the darkness” during the previous century: against coercive sterilization of criminals and mentally handicapped individuals, against abortion, and in favor of racial equality.

He said, “It’s often obscured right now, but in the mid-20th century, one of most prominent public institutions in favor of desegregation was the Catholic Church,” which challenged laws prohibiting interracial marriage more than 20 years before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the subject.

Dr. Upham said U.S. bishops are often at the forefront of advocating for the common good and the dignity of each person. In their role as bishops, they have the authority and duty to speak on matters of faith and morals in accordance with the magisterium of the Church.

The professor and lawyer pointed out that the bishops, using their teaching authority, emphasize “principles like the duty of the community to protect the common good, or that the chief part of the common good is the protection of the lives of the innocent, including the duty to protect the lives of the unborn.”

Also, Dr. Upham added, an individual bishop may speak about a particular situation in a community in his role as a prominent citizen.

THE FOUR PILLARS

If the Catholic Church does not prescribe how to vote to its members, what help can the Church offer in the cacophony found in election year advertising, social media, and conflicting news reports?

Father John Robert Skeldon, rector of St. Patrick Cathedral, said the Church brings “centuries of ethical and moral reflection upon core principles like the common good, solidarity among people, and the

Continued on Page 33



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Applying Catholic Teaching

A POLICY POSITIONS PRIMER FOR CATHOLIC VOTERS*



ABORTION: The deliberate killing of a human being before birth is never acceptable and must always be opposed.



HOUSING: The U.S. bishops support a renewed commitment to increase the supply of safe, affordable housing through public/private partnerships.



CLONING: The cloning and destruction of human embryos for research are always wrong.



THE POOR: Social and economic policies should create jobs with decent working conditions and just wages. Barriers to equal pay for women and minorities must be overcome.



EUTHANASIA: The purposeful taking of human life by assisted suicide and euthanasia are an unjustifiable assault on human life.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: Religious liberty should be protected and promoted vigorously, both at home and abroad.



END OF LIFE: The USCCB calls for greater assistance through health care, palliative care, and hospice for the sick and dying.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE: An ethic of responsibility, rehabilitation, and restoration should be the focus of a reform of our broken criminal justice system.



FERTILITY: The U.S. bishops oppose contraceptive and abortion mandates in public programs and health plans.



DEATH PENALTY: America's continued reliance on the death penalty cannot be justified because there are other ways to protect society that are more respectful of human life.

*Positions and explanations are provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops teaching document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*.

Happy Thanksgiving

*From your
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dignity of the human person.”

In lifetimes of teaching, plus hundreds of papal encyclicals, Vatican documents, and statements from the USCCB, the Catholic Church has expounded on the four principles of Catholic social teaching, which are “the expression of the whole truth about man known by reason and faith” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 160*). The dignity of the human person, subsidiarity, the common good, and solidarity, when taken together, “anchor the Catholic commitment to defend human life, from conception until natural death, in the fundamental moral obligation to respect the dignity of every person as a child of God” (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, 40*).

The dignity of the human person begins with the right to life, beginning at conception. The sanctity of human life is threatened by abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, the death penalty, human cloning, in vitro fertilization, and the destruction of human embryos for research.

Bishop Michael Olson said, “We must begin with respect and protection of the inviolable right to life, and we as Catholics cannot end there. To respect the inviolable right to life means that we must continue by respecting and advocating for the other necessary human rights that are contingent upon the right to life. We cannot consider that the indispensable and just opposition to all direct assaults on human life, especially abortion, is sufficient in itself for our responsibility to foster justice. It is also wrong to relativize abortion by claiming that it is just one of several equally important political issues.”

Catholic teaching on the dignity of life compels the faithful to oppose racism, torture, unjust war, and human trafficking. Understanding the sacredness of life calls us to strive to overcome starvation, poverty, and suffering.

In his homilies and pastoral letters, Bishop Olson frequently expounds on the rights that derive from considering the dignity of each human person.

He stated in his Sept. 20 homily, “To be clear, the right to life is the preeminent human right established and given by God Himself as the right upon which all other human rights depend” including: the integrity of human sexuality, marriage between one man and one woman, the right to religious liberty, the right to live in peace and security, the right to basic healthcare, and many others.

Subsidiarity, simply put, means to start small. It recognizes that matters should be handled by the smallest or lowest competent authority. Respect for the family, the fundamental unit of society, should be considered in a community’s policies and programs, and the parents’ rights and responsibilities to care for their children should be defended and strengthened.

“The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that larger institutions in society should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions, yet larger institutions have essential responsibilities when the more local institutions cannot

Continued on Page 34

POLICY POSITIONS CONTINUED



HEALTH CARE: Accessible and affordable health care is a fundamental human right. Millions of Americans still lack health care coverage.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE: Catholic social teaching upholds economic freedom, the rights of workers to organize, and the right to private property. Workers and employers must work to create a more just economy.



EDUCATION: Parents, as the first and fundamental educators, have the right to choose the education best suited to their children, including public, private, or religious schools.



IMMIGRATION: The Gospel call to “welcome the stranger” requires Catholics to care for newcomers, authorized and unauthorized, including refugees, asylum-seekers, and victims of human trafficking.



PAYDAY LENDING: Catholics should support legislation that protects consumers from the exploitative and excessive interest rates charged by payday lenders.



DISCRIMINATION: America’s bishops call us to combat any unjust discrimination, whether based on race, religion, gender, age, or disability.

From Page 33

adequately protect human dignity, meet human needs, and advance the common good” (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 48).

The common good indicates “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 20).

Beyond the right to life, human beings have “a right to access those things required for human decency — food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religious and family life,” stated the U.S. bishops in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*.

In that document, the U.S. bishops

encourage Catholics to look beyond their own self interests when voting and consider the common good, which includes ensuring the economic system serves people instead of vice versa and observing the duty to care for God’s creation.

Solidarity highlights the equality of all in one human family, regardless of our nationality, race, or socioeconomic background.

As Catholics, we promote peace and pursue justice, welcome the stranger, and embrace the vulnerable and most in need.

“A basic moral test for any society is how it treats those who are most vulnerable” (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 53).

Bishop Olson, in his editorial in the September-October issue of the

NTC, encouraged the faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth to read the USCCB document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* before the election. Not only does the statement from the U.S. bishops expand on the four pillars, but it summarizes how these principles can be applied to more than a dozen issues, from education to the media.

The document was first issued in 2007 and has been re-released every four years ahead of the presidential election.

THE STARTING POINT

Before we take our understanding of Catholic social teaching to the ballot box, we need to pray. Bishop Olson, Fr. Skeldon, and Fr. Boyalla emphasized the importance of prayer.

In addition to praying for a proper formation of conscience, Fr. Boyalla also mentioned regular prayer that God’s will be done, that good leaders will govern the country, and that the country will act morally for the common good of society. “We must pray for our country every day. It’s a responsibility recognized by Saint Peter and Saint Paul,” said the priest.

Fr. Skeldon recommended reading the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* to gain a deeper understanding of Catholic social teaching. Studying Scripture helps, too.

He said, “The Bible has all of these stories of welcoming or receiving the stranger, the Other, precisely in their Otherness, honoring their dignity.”

The Other, he explained, includes both the unborn child and the undocumented immigrant. They both deserve respect and welcoming and reception because of their dignity as human persons created in the image and likeness of God.

Studying Scripture, Fr. Skeldon suggested, “may be a way to help people understand ‘Maybe I need to let loose of group think, of tribal think, of party think that I’m sort of indoctrinated in, and let the bigger picture come into focus.’”

Continued on Page 36



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP AND CONSCIENCE FORMATION, PART 2

In my last article I encouraged each of us to begin with prayer for the right formation of our consciences in discharging one of our responsibilities of faithful citizenship, that is, voting. In this article, I will continue to offer guidance for the ongoing formation of our consciences. I would offer that a reflection on the Ten Commandments can give us a good structure for prioritizing the number of issues we consider in the formation of our consciences.

We must remember that the commandments are the Covenant first made by God with Moses which makes the disparate group of refugee slaves into one chosen people — God’s chosen people on pilgrimage to the Promised Land. The commandments are not an arbitrarily placed list of single and distinct imperatives united only in that they are ordered by God and intended for human obedience. They are, in fact, God’s plan for us to flourish as humans — individually and communally — to achieve the fulfillment He desires and intends for us. As the Covenant, the commandments are binding

and follow each other in a clearly ordered and inherently united sense. Within God’s Covenant, each commandment follows the previous one by drawing God’s people more deeply into the loving and just relationship of belonging to Him and to each other. Just as the commandments belong to each other in both substance and order; God’s people belong to each other in both the substance of family life and in the order of political life, language, and culture.

It is important to note that the first three commandments articulate what we as human beings justly owe God, which is the virtue of piety. The Fourth Commandment follows up on this debt to God with what we owe other human beings, which is the virtue of justice. This human debt begins with our parents, father and mother, and what follows in the subsequent commandments are the just delineations of other human relationships within and with society.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls us to consider that the Fourth Commandment establishes the foundation and order for

the subsequent commandments revealed to Moses. It is the Fourth Commandment that establishes the necessity for the just rule of law required to govern human society because it “extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country and to those who administer or govern it. This commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents, instructors, teachers, leaders, magistrates, those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons” (*CCC 2199*).

The subsequent commandments not only serve for the salvation of the world, but also articulate human rights: among these are the right to life, the integrity of human sexuality and marriage, the right to property, the right to be told the truth, and the right to a good name. Thus, the Fourth Commandment “constitutes one of the foundations of the social doctrine of the Church” (*CCC 2198*).

The extreme positions of various political factions currently have

Continued on Page 37

From Page 34

PARTY PRIMARY

The divisions in society created by a hyperpartisan political atmosphere can be destructive. Fr. Boyalla has seen situations where church members, brothers and sisters, or even a husband and wife, are separated because they support different candidates or political parties.

He said, “We are called to pray together as one family, and politics can separate the Church family, so it’s always good to be people of God in one Church, putting politics away.”

But faithful Catholics are called to more than shunning division. They are called to be peacemakers, said the pastor.

“We also should serve as agents for reconciliation in a politically divided society. We should not become partisans.

“No politics, no personal differences should come in our way to think, to speak, or to do for the common good. No personal interests should disturb our work for the common good,” continued Fr. Boyalla.

Like Fr. Boyalla, Fr. Skeldon

decried what he termed the “tribe of party” that has pervaded American society. He said by identifying more closely with one’s political party than one’s identity as a Catholic, the political party “sets the parameters, the boundaries, the definitions. That’s very limiting to the real truth of the Church’s social doctrine and teaching.”

He recommended Catholics can be peacemakers in the public sphere by “preaching, teaching, living, and talking ... about the fullness of Catholic social doctrine and teaching, which is very rich. That can be brought to the conversation.”

In *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. bishops acknowledge, “These four principles and related themes from Catholic social teaching provide a moral framework that does not easily fit ideologies of ‘right’ or ‘left,’ ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative,’ or the platform of any political party. They are not partisan or sectarian, but reflect fundamental ethical principles that are common to all people.”

Furthermore, Bishop Olson said, “We also cannot misrepresent the

Gospel of Life as only one part of a partisan platform or the fragmented positions of political candidates of any political party. To succumb to this temptation would make the Church subordinate to the power of the state through the public endorsement of candidates or the alignment of the Church with any one political party.”

Fr. Skeldon pointed out that in most cases, neither candidate will represent the totality of Catholic teaching, which necessitates the Catholic voter possess a well-formed conscience.

The ballot may look simple, but developing a well-formed conscience is a task for a lifetime. However, the Catholic Church has developed a moral framework to defend human life and dignity and to protect the weak and vulnerable that helps build a kingdom of peace and justice at all times, not just in election years.

Fr. Boyalla, preparing for his first U.S. presidential vote, gave advice that will last longer than any politician’s term in office. He said, “Most important, pray and reflect and look for the will of God in every choice you make.” 🇺🇸



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FURTHER READING

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship is the U.S. bishops’ teaching document outlining the political responsibility of Catholics. Read it at: FaithfulCitizenship.org.

BISHOP, from Page 35

something in common in that they both distort the Fourth Commandment. Furthermore, they each ignore the essential role of the family and foist upon the people a notion of government whereby persons become entitled to take little, if any, responsibility for their own actions or the actions of the society of which they are a part. This includes both the statist approach of the socialists who overemphasize the role of the state to the detriment of the family, and the libertarian approach of government espoused by many voices in contemporary conservatism that overemphasizes the role of the individual to the detriment of the family. It is this commandment that establishes the requirement for the just rule of law to govern human society.

The Fifth Commandment then indicates that the right to life is the preeminent human right established and given by God Himself. It is the right upon which all other human rights depend, including: the right to the biologically determined and gendered integrity of human sexuality and marriage between one man and one woman, the right to family life, the right to religious liberty, the right to live in peace and security with sound borders, the right to immigrate to sustain one's life and the life of one's family, the right to labor and a just and living wage, the right to private property, the right to clean and potable water, the right to be told the truth, the right to a good name, the right to basic healthcare, the right to access to an education sufficient for participation in the common good of a particular society, to

name but a few such rights.

Thus, direct assaults on human life, especially upon vulnerable human life, through such social policies and practices as abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, and the current practice of capital punishment, cannot be supported or even tolerated for the sake of other rights or social goods to be enjoyed by others. We must begin with respect and protection of the inviolable right to life, but we as Catholics cannot end there. To live according to the high moral standards that God calls us to and binds us to, standards which form an indivisible whole, we must begin by respecting the inviolable right to life and to continue by respecting the other necessary human rights that are contingent upon the right to life.

The fallen world entices us to break these rights apart and to mistreat them only as isolated and competitive points of self-interest within a partisan agenda; the commandments are in contradistinction with that. Through prayer and the grace of God, we can find that the commandments are an excellent guide for us as we continue the formation of our consciences and prepare not only for the upcoming election but also for our contribution and advocacy for the right to life and the common good as Catholic and faithful citizens. ✚

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



POLICY POSITIONS CONTINUED



ENVIRONMENT: The U.S. bishops support taking concrete steps addressing global climate change and protecting the land, water, and air we share.



MARRIAGE: The needs of families should be national priorities. Marriage must be defined and protected as a lifelong exclusive commitment between a man and a woman.



GLOBAL SOLIDARITY: The great interconnectedness of our world calls for dependence on the virtue of solidarity. The U.S. must be a leader in building a more peaceful and just world.



THE FAMILY: The ideology of "gender" as nothing more than a social construct undermines the family and must be dismissed. Policies on taxes, work, and welfare must uphold the value of marriage and family.



COUNTERING VIOLENCE: Curbing violence in media and supporting reasonable restrictions on assault weapons and handguns are particularly important in our "culture of violence."

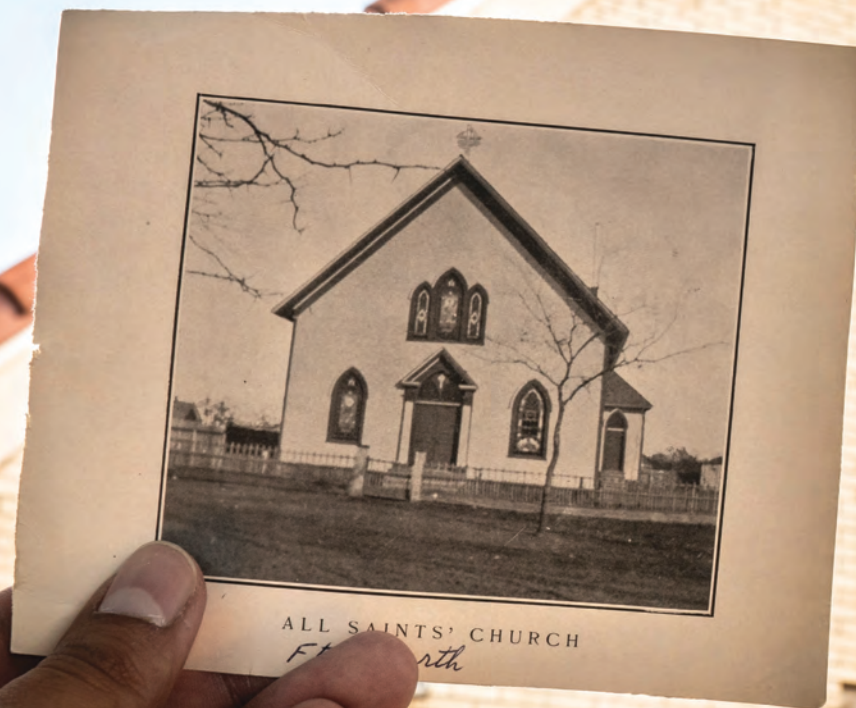


HEALTH CARE: The nation's health care system should respect human dignity, human life, and respect the principle of subsidiarity. Employers should be able to offer health care without compromising their moral convictions.

HISPANIC ROOTS run deep

Latino community continues legacy
of carrying the cross for Christ

By Jerry Circelli



Founded in 1902, All Saints Parish has grown from a 12-family community to a primarily Hispanic parish with more than 900 registered families and an average total Mass attendance of 3,200 people each weekend. (NTC photo illustration/Juan Guajardo)



How deep are the roots of the Hispanic-Latino community of Catholics in Texas, and in particular, the present Diocese of Fort Worth? To put it in perspective, those roots were established more than 300 years before Texas became a U.S. state and more than 425 years before our diocese was established.

As early as 1541-42, Spanish-speaking Franciscan friars with the Francisco Vázquez de Coronado expedition were likely trekking through the northwestern portion of our present diocese, possibly in Knox, Foard, and Hardeman counties.

In the same timeframe, noted historians track the Luis de Moscoso expedition entering the eastern portion of the present Diocese of Fort Worth and traversing deep within or completely across it. Again, Spanish-speaking Franciscan Friars, along with Dominicans, were an integral part of the mission. The friars likely celebrated the first Masses and baptized the first Catholics on our diocesan soil during these explorations more than 475 years ago.

While the Conquistadors were driven to conquer new lands and seek riches for Spain, friars were intent on saving souls for Christ. Their actions led to martyrdom for many.

Continued on Page 40

From Page 39

In the footsteps of those friars have been countless men and women who have gone to great lengths to build and preserve the Catholic Church in the Lone Star State.

CATHOLIC HISPANIC ROOTS RUN DEEP IN TEXAS

While Catholics in Texas were originally under the care of Spanish-born Franciscan priests, the responsibility shifted to native-born Hispanic priests by the early 1800s.

At the time, Texas Catholics were part of the Mexican Diocese of Linares-Monterrey. Before becoming the Diocese of Fort Worth in 1969, the region has been a part of the Diocese of Galveston, the Diocese of Dallas, and the Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth.

Father Sergio Rizo, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Cleburne, said it is important to remember the roots of many Hispanics can be traced directly to the soil that is now part of Texas. The facts bear him out.

The land we know as Texas had a long history of being part of New Spain until Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821. Fifteen years before Mexican independence, about 7,000 people lived in present-day Texas, according to the Texas State Historical Association. By 1831, that number had nearly tripled to 20,000, according to the same report.

By 1876, when the first parish — St. Stanislaus, later to become St. Patrick — was established in the present diocese, migration to North



Parishioners pray during Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Wichita Falls, Aug. 30. The parish has seen rapid growth during its 93 years. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Texas was coming from all directions. Hispanics, whose native roots in Texas extended generations, joined immigrants from Mexico, Germany, Italy, Poland, and countless other nations, as well as several U.S. states, to settle in North Texas. At the time, our diocese was still part of the Diocese of Galveston.

By 1900, 17 of the parishes we worship in today had been formed. At that time, our diocese was part of the Diocese of Dallas. Among those churches was St. Joseph in Cleburne, where Fr. Rizo has served for 28 years.

Incorporated into the present St. Joseph Church foundation is an engraved block that was once part of Mission San José in San Antonio in 1741. The cornerstone reinforces in many ways the foundation of the Catholic Church in Texas, dating back to the influence of the Hispanic cultures of the mission era.

RESPONDING TO GROWING HISPANIC POPULATION

Shepherds caring for our local parishes have long appreciated the gifts brought by the faithful of Latino descent.

A diverse group, Catholic Hispanic-Americans generally hail from or have family roots in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and other nations in Central and South America, as well as Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other Caribbean countries.

By 1925, Dallas Bishop Joseph P. Lynch said the challenge of keeping up with the growing number of Hispanic Catholics “became pressing.”

The bishop wrote, “To alleviate the condition, I made a trip to Madrid [Spain] ... for the sole purpose of interesting the General of the Claretians to send additional missionaries.”

Bishop Lynch was successful in his bid, as a long line of Claretian priests subsequently

came to serve the growing Hispanic population in North Texas.

In 1955, Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth Bishop Thomas K. Gorman trusted the missionaries to care for All Saints Parish on the Northside of Fort Worth, during its merger with San Jose Church. San Jose Parish was established in 1909 within the boundaries of All Saints to serve the needs of Spanish-speaking Catholics in the area. With the 1955 unification of a strongly Hispanic San Jose and the traditionally Anglo All Saints, the new church, which kept the name All Saints, became a bilingual, bicultural parish. The missionaries also enlisted the help of the Guadalupan Catechist Sisters to open and administer catechism centers in the parish and throughout Fort Worth.

Fourteen years after the bicultural parish took root, the Diocese of Fort Worth was established in 1969. Its first



Father Sergio Rizo preaches during a Mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Cleburne in 2019. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

DYNAMIC CATHOLIC HISPANICS TODAY

Today, as the Diocese of Fort Worth surpasses 1 million Catholics, it has become one of the fastest growing dioceses in the nation. The Hispanic population, by far, is increasing at a greater rate than any other cultural group, according to statistics prepared for V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry.

In 2018, V National Encuentro gathered 3,000 Hispanic leaders from dioceses, schools, universities, and other Catholic organizations across the nation. It was the fifth such gathering since 1972 and was held in Grapevine, in the Diocese of Fort Worth. Its purpose has been to determine how the Church can best minister to Hispanics and how they, in turn, can better engage with the Church.

Based on V Encuentro's statistics from the year 2016, the Catholic population in the Diocese of Fort Worth stood at 762,000 people. Of those, 51 percent were Hispanic.

Additionally, this study showed that 46 of the 90 parishes (at the time) in the diocese maintained an organized Hispanic ministry.

One of those is Our Lady of Guadalupe in Wichita Falls. For the past 25 years, the parish has benefited from the tireless work of Anastasio Perez, who became its bilingual permanent deacon after his retirement as a welder.

"Deacon Perez was the very first deacon assigned to Our Lady of Guadalupe," said Maria Kalbfliesh, the church's pastoral assistant. "He has been assisting our priests with Baptisms, funerals, marriage preparation, bilingual Masses, and wherever he is needed. The people here just love Deacon Perez.

"As many people know, our priests are always very busy, and for a parish to have a deacon who speaks both languages, English and Spanish, is wonderful."

Continued on Page 42

shepherd, Bishop John J. Cassata, was trusted not only with administration of a new diocese, but also with carrying out many changes in the Church as a result of the Second Vatican Council. One of those changes involved celebrating Catholic Mass in the familiar language of the faithful.

Bishop Cassata stressed that the shift from celebrating Mass in Latin to the vernacular of the local faithful "gives people a more intimate part in the Liturgy. And this is important if we are to come to an intimacy with Christ."

One of the bishop's most important

and far-reaching acts as shepherd involved his strong encouragement for seminarians to learn Spanish and to develop a deeper understanding of Mexican-American culture. A forward-looking leader, Bishop Cassata knew this would go a long way toward strengthening the diocese's rapidly growing Catholic population.

Following Bishop Cassata's retirement in 1980, the welcomed challenge of reaching out to an ever-expanding Catholic population has been met by subsequent bishops, including Bishop Michael F. Olson.

Deacon Bradley Samuelson gives his homily during Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Wichita Falls, Aug. 30, 2020. (NTC/Ben Torres)



From Page 41

Kalbfliesh said.

“Our priest needed help and that’s what really motivated me to become a permanent deacon,” a humble 89-year-old Dcn. Perez said. “I thought I really needed to do something to help. I have enjoyed doing everything. I just enjoy serving people. That’s what a deacon is, a server. I’ll keep doing it as long as I can.”

With 700 families regularly attending weekly Masses in both English and Spanish, Our Lady of Guadalupe has experienced rapid growth during its 93 years.

Not only has the bilingual church grown from an increasing number of Catholics residing inside its parish boundaries, but from the faithful living in the greater area.

“We have Catholics not only from Wichita County attending Masses, but also from surrounding counties as well,” Kalbfliesh explained. “They come to attend Mass that is celebrated in their language.”

To keep up with growth, its pastoral assistant said Our Lady of Guadalupe Pastor Raul Martinez Lopez has been busy with myriad tasks, including recent church renovations.

“And now our church has been blessed with another bilingual deacon,” Kalbfliesh said. Joining Dcn. Perez is a new permanent deacon, Bradley Samuelson.

Ordained by Bishop Olson on August 10, 2020, for the Diocese of Fort Worth, Dcn. Samuelson said he left his private practice as a cardiologist to more fully serve Christ’s Church.

The deacon earned two Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) degrees — one from the United States and one from Colombia — and maintained a cardiology practice in Wichita Falls for more than 25 years before

answering God’s new calling for him.

A decision to visit Colombia as an undergraduate ultimately led Dcn. Samuelson to his mission as a Catholic deacon.

The son of a Lutheran minister, the young college student enjoyed his stay in Colombia so much that he later decided to study medicine there and stayed for nine years. During his many years there, Dcn. Samuelson met his wife who, he said, helped him discover the rich spiritual teachings of Catholicism. He was welcomed into the Catholic

Church in 2001.

Through the years, the doctor’s family, as well his faith, continued to grow. With his wife and family, the man who now serves the diocese as a permanent deacon has

MORE PHOTOS

See the photos of Dcn. Samuelson’s first Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. Visit NorthTexasCatholic.org and click on ‘Photo Gallery.’



SPANISH MASSES in the Diocese of FORT WORTH



The growing numbers of Hispanic Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Worth has led to a coinciding growth in Spanish-language Masses. There are currently 45 parishes with Spanish liturgies on the weekends. (NTC/Michael Sherman)

first came to the parish more than a quarter century ago, Hispanic Catholics in the diocese were concentrated mainly on the north and south sides of Fort Worth.

“Today, they are everywhere,” Fr. Jasso said, illustrating his point about the growing Catholic population with a demographics map.

A veteran of the Korean War, Fr. Jasso has been a priest for 55 years, including 24 years in Mexico City and four years in Peru before coming to Fort Worth. Prior to his retirement, he was involved in multiple civic boards and organizations.

The presence of Hispanic Catholics over the years, he said, has not only strengthened the diocese but also renewed the vitality of communities throughout the Metroplex.

“I learned about the ‘ministry of presence’ from Pope Francis,” Fr. Jasso said. “Wherever you are, whether you are a Catholic priest, a Catholic layman, part of a Catholic family, wherever you are, your presence is the evangelization of others.”

His ministry of presence as a longtime pastor to the faithful

Continued on Page 44

worked as a missionary in Haiti for the past 24 years and in Guatemala for 10 years.

“When I look back and see the Lord’s work preparing me for this ministry, at this particular time, it is mind blowing. How I was called to be here at this point in order to do this ministry, in this exact way, is just amazing to me,” Dcn. Samuelson said.

The new deacon said his

work as a cardiologist and his duties as a permanent deacon have their similarities and differences.

“They are similar because of the quantity of work you have to dedicate to each job,” Dcn. Samuelson said. “What is different is that in cardiology work, you are interested in ‘doing’ — doing something to make people better. As a deacon it is all about ‘being’ — being

there to provide people with the support they need.”

CURRENT PROGRESS WILL CONTINUE

Progress being made today around the diocese in Hispanic ministry was detailed in a January 2018 interview with Father Stephen Jasso, TOR, then pastor of All Saints Parish in Fort Worth.

Father Jasso said when he



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B. Paid/Requested Circulation		
1) Outside County Mail	30,659	30,659
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1) Free Distribution Outside County	877	870
2) Free Distribution In-County	801	787
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4) Free Distribution Outside the Mail	0	0
E. Total Free Distribution	1,678	1,657
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From Page 43

at All Saints is a testament to the value of Hispanic ministry in the Diocese of Fort Worth and North Texas.

As for the future, statistics show growth will continue. According to Catholic News Agency, the Hispanic Catholic population in the United States is particularly large among youth and young adults, comprising the biggest percentage of Hispanic Catholics in the nation.

“The young Hispanics are those who will take up the cross, who will continue to profess the faith in the future,” said Francisco Joel Rodriguez, director of

Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese of Fort Worth. “They are the Church and the Church is Christ.”

Rodriguez added, “The disciples who are being created now, today, are the ones who will continue to carry the cross of Christ and continue the perpetuity of the Church.”

For the past four years, Rodriguez’ goal has been “to welcome and promote the cultural identity of the faces of our local Church, and to build a deeply Catholic and multicultural identity” through a collaborative effort involving the bishop, pastors, and the community.

Rodriguez said the 2018 V Encuentro

convocation showed the progress being made in ministering to Hispanic Catholics as they strengthen Christ’s Church, not only in the Diocese of Fort Worth but also across the nation.

According to Rodriguez, the message in the first Encuentro, held in 1972, entailed the question posed by the Church to Hispanics: “What do you need?”

Now, he said, it has evolved into the Hispanic Catholic population asking, “How can we serve?”

“The contributions that we bring are our availability and the desire to serve our Church. There is a huge desire to serve, to help in any way we can.” 🇺🇸

STAYING POWER



Hoang Trong Phuc Pham holds his plaque congratulating him for completing Stay the Course. He now pursues a bachelor's degree at Texas A&M - Commerce. (NTC/ Ben Torres)

By Mary Lou Seewoester

Despite a global pandemic, the Catholic Charities Fort Worth program Stay the Course® not only met, but exceeded many of its 2020 goals.

Stay the Course helps low-income Tarrant County College students overcome non-academic barriers to graduation such as transportation, housing, budget, or time management challenges.

“We initially anticipated a big drop off in our students because of the pandemic. Not only did we not lose students, but we graduated one more than we anticipated,” Judith Priest, director of client navigation for CCFW, said.

The program had 57 spring graduates, 26 summer graduates, and Priest anticipates at least 32 more graduates in December. Students graduate from Stay the Course when they complete an associate degree or transfer to a four-year college.

By September, Stay the Course already had exceeded its annual out-of-poverty goal of 10, with 12 students reaching that goal. CCFW defines out of poverty as earning a living wage, having assets totaling at least

\$1,000 per household member, no negative debt, and demonstrating six months of savings behavior within 12 months.

Additionally, 16 full-time navigators, or case managers, served 626 unduplicated clients by September, putting them on track to meet or exceed their goal of 704 by the end of the year.

Priest said Stay the Course offers “supercharged” case management that includes low caseloads for navigators, holistic wrap-around services, and long-term involvement with each student.

She said traditional case managers serve about 100 clients, meeting with them only once a month or less. In contrast, Stay the Course navigators work with 35 to 40 students, meeting face-to-face with them every two weeks, and connecting with them weekly by text, email, or phone.

Hoang Trong Phuc Pham graduated from Stay the Course in 2019 and currently pursues a B.S. in chemistry from Texas A&M-Commerce. While at TCC, he applied for Stay the Course with the goal of completing an associate degree. Today he dreams of earning a Master’s and eventually a Ph.D. in order to do scientific research.

With his navigator’s support, Pham

applied for and received a TCC scholarship, learned how to file income taxes, and how to find a doctor to treat a badly blistered foot after an accident with boiling water.

“If I didn’t have a navigator, I don’t know how I would finish school,” he said.

Robin Dunlap, who has worked with her Stay the Course navigator for a year, said organizational, financial, and personal challenges “had been holding me back.” She said her navigator is “someone you can really lean on, who can motivate you and give you tools so that you can support yourself . . . even after you are out of the program.”

Dunlap currently works full-time, attends TCC, takes online classes from Tarleton State University, and will graduate from Stay the Course in December.

Stay the Course began in 2013 as a research project with the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO) at the University of Notre Dame and TCC.

LEO no longer collects that data because it has proven that the program works in Tarrant County. However, the program lives on, reducing dropouts one student — one relationship — at a time. 🇺🇸





GOSPEL *TO GO*

The call to remember the poor is flourishing at St. John the Apostle Parish

By Sandra Engelland

In early 2019, Mickey Flood visited the Social Ministry Outreach building for St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills and met Colleen Cargile, the program’s coordinator.

Flood, a St. John parishioner since 1976, told Cargile, “I’d like to do something, but I don’t know what the Lord wants me to do.”

Cargile told Flood they needed new freezers. Flood looked around and said, “Colleen, you need a whole new building.”

Flood said he knew at that moment what God wanted him to do. He and his

wife, Ellen Flood, helped start a campaign to raise funds for a new building, giving generously to the cause.

Fast forward to Sept. 21, 2020, and the Floods — joined by Bishop Michael Olson, Father Jack McKone, parishioners John and Eva Salazar, North Richland Hills Mayor Oscar Trevino, and Cargile — broke ground on a new building next to the church office.

The 4,000-square-foot facility will replace their current building, a former rehabilitation hospital a block north of the church.

At the groundbreaking, Bishop Olson said St. John the Apostle has always had

the value of remembering the poor at their heart.

Parishioners not only alleviate the suffering of those in need, they help them get out of poverty, Bishop Olson said.

COVID-19 BRINGS CHANGES AND MORE NEED

Since the pandemic hit in March, parishioners are finding new ways to serve those in need through the social ministry outreach.

Before March, they had 60 to 80 clients a week coming into their facility who were served by 50 volunteers. Now they help about 100 clients a week with a

SEE THE VIDEO

A look at who serves, and why, at St. John the Apostle food pantry: NorthTexasCatholic.org/video-gallery



From left, Colleen Cargile, Ellen and Mickey Flood, Bishop Olson, and Oscar Trevino break ground for a new social outreach building at St. John the Apostle Parish. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

drive-through system staffed by fewer than a dozen volunteers.

“Caring for the poor is always part of our faith,” said Fr. McKone. “Our relationship with the Lord is enhanced. It’s our avenue, our opportunity to walk in Christ’s footsteps.”

For two hours a day Monday through Thursday, volunteers and workers at the outreach office distribute bags of meat, bread, produce, pantry items, and dairy, along with diapers, formula, and toiletries when needed.

Cargile, a St. John the Apostle parishioner and the program coordinator for the past 12 years, said COVID-19 brought new challenges because it reduced the number of services the ministry could offer but also resulted in new opportunities to partner with other churches and organizations.

Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville has long been a partner in the ministry, focusing mainly on supplying diapers. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller also has contributed.

In recent months, Gateway Church in Roanoke and Compass Bank in Colleyville reached out to offer assistance, giving food and toiletries.

Cargile said, “It’s beautiful to see parishes in our diocese partner with each other, then to see it go beyond that and have ecumenical participation. I love that.”

The groups are getting involved because people want to help.

“They see our brothers and sisters who are struggling,” she said.

Before COVID-19 hit, the ministry conducted client interviews to assist people with rent and utilities, helped with prescriptions, taught English as a Second Language, and offered baby clothing and other needed items. Because of the virus, many of their older volunteers were unable to help, and organizers wanted to simplify their services while still providing much-needed help, Cargile said.

Volunteer Lynna Werline of Haslet, a parishioner and parent of St. John the Apostle Catholic School students, helped interview clients before the pandemic for the financial assistance program. She now dons a mask and helps sort and distribute food and other items.

“I find it very fulfilling,” Werline said. “All my kids have gone to school here, and it’s just a great way to be involved.”

Before the pandemic, clients could enter the building and select baby, toddler, or preschooler clothing. When assistance became exclusively drive through, Cargile discovered that Christ’s Haven for Children in Keller, which provides housing for children in need, could make good use of the items.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Cargile hopes the ministry will move to the new facility next spring. Placing the building in a central location on the church

campus is no accident.

“We want parishioners to know that we’re all in this together, to be able to greet them and include them,” she said.

Since its founding 55 years ago, St. John the Apostle Parish has always had a social ministry component. The food pantry outreach began in the 1980s, with Sister Patrice Sullivan, CDP.

Fr. McKone said, “The lesson of the Good Samaritan is ‘who is my neighbor?’ My neighbor is not just the person who looks like me, speaks the same language, or listens to the same music. It’s anyone we come across.”

Another big change is a transition in leadership. Cargile is handing over the reins of the coordinator position to Sharon Matsari, who comes to the area from the Netherlands where she was a social worker with a program assisting low-income families.

“Working with a charity is very different,” Matsari said. “Everyone here is so welcoming, so positive. We’re like one big family doing this together.”

At 67, Cargile plans to stay involved in the ministry while stepping back from the lead role. She came into the job the week after her youngest son started college.

“I’ve never had a better job for me,” she said. “I read the Gospel, I come here, and I live it. I can’t imagine a better way to live. In your gut, you know God has called you to it.” 🇺🇸



Trusting the action of God

HE IS: Father Jim Angert, TOR, pastor of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington since 2018.

GROWING UP: He grew up with nine sisters and four brothers in a small town in western Pennsylvania where people were farmers, steel workers, or coal miners. “A very Catholic area,” he said, where “every family was, so to speak, poor, but on the other hand, we were rich in friendships.”

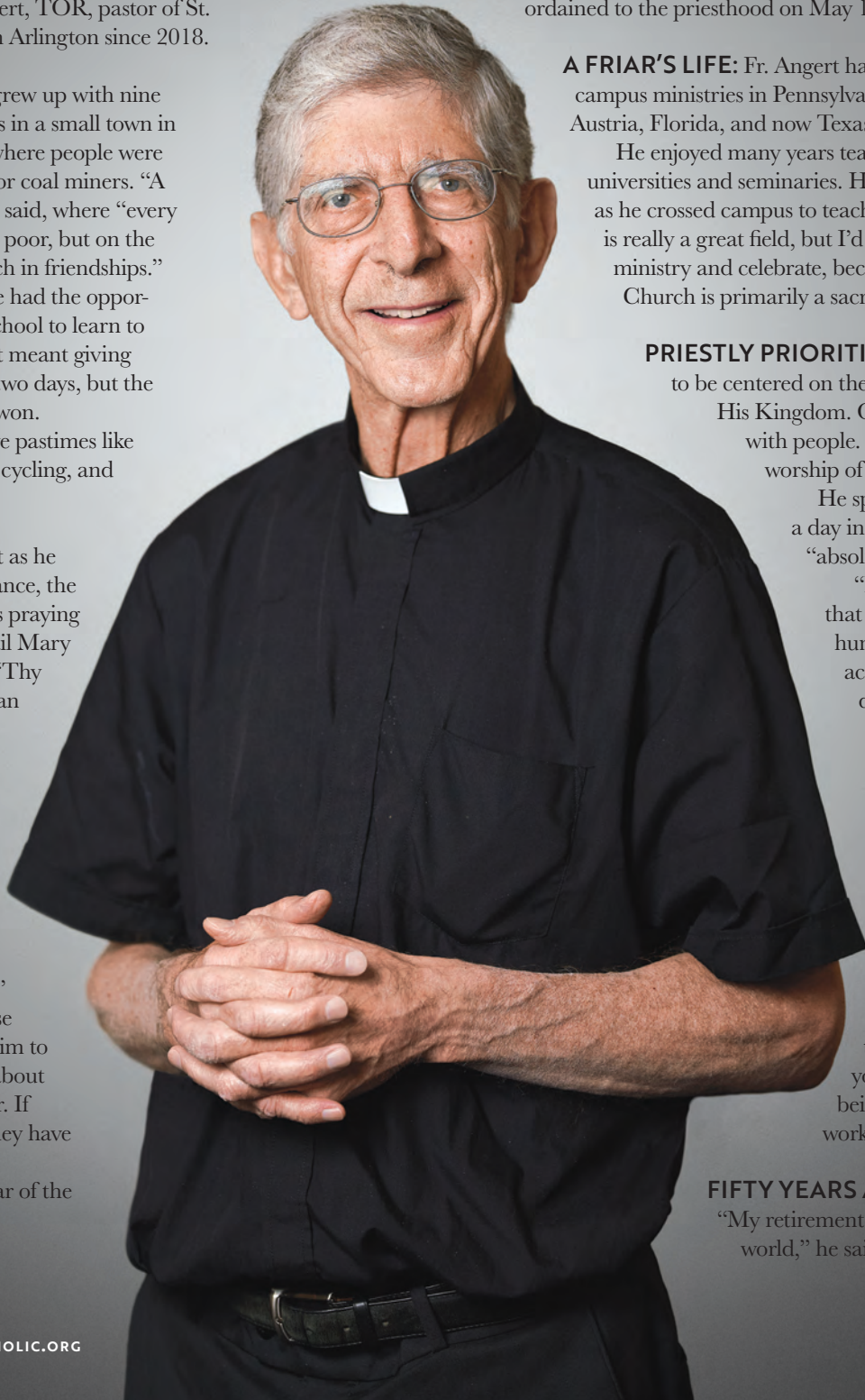
In second grade, he had the opportunity at his Catholic school to learn to be an altar server, but it meant giving up recess. He tried for two days, but the playground ultimately won.

He still enjoys active pastimes like downhill skiing, tennis, cycling, and walking.

THE CALL: One night as he walked home from a dance, the high school student was praying the Our Father and Hail Mary for his family. Praying “Thy Kingdom come, I had an incredible experience of the presence of the Lord. I was overwhelmed with the Lord’s love, peace, joy, and goodness. All I could say was ‘Lord, Lord.’ It was really pure grace, nothing to do with me.”

Then he had a sense that the Lord wanted him to “Go, tell other people about my love. Go to the poor. If people have my love, they have everything.”

The Franciscan friar of the third order regular was



ordained to the priesthood on May 15, 1971.

A FRIAR’S LIFE: Fr. Angert has served in parish and campus ministries in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Austria, Florida, and now Texas.

He enjoyed many years teaching at Franciscan universities and seminaries. He remembers thinking as he crossed campus to teach a class, “Academics is really a great field, but I’d like to get back into ministry and celebrate, because our Catholic Church is primarily a sacramental church.”

PRIESTLY PRIORITIES: “Your heart has to be centered on the Lord and building His Kingdom. Our first ministry is not with people. Our first ministry is worship of the Lord.”

He spends at least an hour a day in prayer, which is “absolutely crucial.”

“I don’t think it’s all that complicated. In all humility, it’s trusting the action of the Lord, and doing what God wants, and seeing God work in a lot of different ways.”

SCRIPTURE SUGGESTION: When reading the Bible, “The key thing is the action of God, and then also, how God wants to act in our lives, how you yield to that. . . being open to how God is working.”

FIFTY YEARS AND BEYOND: “My retirement plan is out of this world,” he said with a laugh. 🇺🇸



Light in the Darkness

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (*John 1:1*).

A few months ago, our lives changed drastically. From one day to the next, everything was different. We woke up one day with a new lifestyle that required social distancing. There has been confusion, insecurity, fear, sadness, uncertainty, and even violence.

It has been a hard and painful time for everyone. Life, as we know it, led us to another horizon that we did not expect. It has been, and continues being, a path in which we have had to learn to live in a different way with many limitations, restrictions, doubts, despair, and regrets.

If we look for answers in the political realm, we only hear the confusing noise of contradictory opinions. If we seek answers in science, there is still no clarity. At times, it even creates more confusion. And in such a way, the deepest doubts launch us in a desperate search for answers that only faith can give us.

For a Christian, and especially to the one who listens to God's call, his hope

and response in this difficult time that we live in are only found in Jesus Christ. It is

He and only He who gives us strength day by day to continue our journey in this world. It is Jesus Christ the eternal Word that shines in the dark. He is the living water that quenches our thirst. He is our God and Lord who walks with us.

Hence, whoever discerns his vocation to the priesthood must be detached of his human

hopes in order to embark on the wonderful adventure of faith in the One for whom all things have been made, and for whom everything has consistency.

The vocational response to any adversity, no matter how dark it may seem, is found in the One who is the very mystery of life. Jesus Christ is the eternal Word revealed to men, by which we obtain life and our being has its deepest meaning.

It is Jesus Christ who continues to call real men who are protagonists of history, and who sends them to tell the world that He lives and that His love fills everything. Therefore, for the discerning young man in this time of confusion and violence in the world and in our nation, the answer is

found in the One who is the Light.

This is a time of response to Jesus Christ as the light that illuminates the world and the water that satisfies humanity's thirst for eternity. For this reason, in the midst of this confusion and time of great challenges, it is necessary for the young man who feels called to the priesthood to be attentive to the signs of the times that need hope, not an empty hope, but rather one that emerges from the voice of the One who is the eternal Word, and in whom mankind finds its fullest realization.

To you, young man who feels called to the priesthood, do not be afraid to open your heart to God. In these difficult times, your brothers and sisters need decisive men who would speak in His name and who are willing to leave everything behind to follow the Lord, and to illuminate the darkness of a humanity that is in so much need of Him. ✝



Fr. Manuel Holguin

Father Manuel Holguin serves as Pastor of All Saints Parish in Fort Worth and as Vocations Liaison with the Vocations Office.

TRANSMITIENDO LA FE virtualmente

Los fieles católicos de la Diócesis se mantienen creciendo en su fe a través de la formación virtual

Por Susan Moses

Como todas las clases de educación religiosa de la Diócesis de Fort Worth se llevarán a cabo en línea este otoño, se puede decir que las formas tradicionales de transmisión de la fe han cambiado.

Sin embargo, hay una constante que permanece. “Todo se comienza con una oración al Espíritu Santo. Le pedimos al Espíritu Santo que santifique y bendiga lo que estamos haciendo, y que se haga lo que se supone se debe hacer”, explicó Silvia Lesko, la Directora de Educación Religiosa de la Parroquia de Santa María de Gainesville.

Los catequistas y el personal parroquial responsable de la formación de la fe han hecho planes nuevos, utilizando innovadora tecnología y nuevos recursos para educar a los niños y los adultos. A pesar de que implementar los cambios podría ser una tarea difícil, todos están dispuestos a acometerla con entusiasmo y empuje.

La Directora de Educación Religiosa de la Parroquia del Santo Nombre de Jesús de Fort Worth, la Hermana Eva Sánchez, MCSH, dijo que ella y los 85 catequistas de

la parroquia que es predominantemente de habla hispana, “nos sentimos desafiados, pero nos gusta. Buscamos nuevas formas de ser creativos”.

La Hermana Eva desarrolló dos planes de enseñanza en junio: un modelo híbrido que combina la educación a distancia y las clases presenciales; y un programa que comprende la educación a distancia solamente. Luego de que el Obispo Michael Olson, en consulta con el personal diocesano y los funcionarios de salud pública, solicitara que todas las clases de educación religiosa del otoño se llevaran a cabo sólo en línea, la parroquia hizo arreglos para que los catequistas transmitieran en vivo su clase, según el itinerario establecido en años anteriores.

Algunos catequistas han decidido enseñar desde las aulas de la parroquia para evitar un ambiente hogareño que pueda distraer a los estudiantes o una tecnología que sea poco confiable. La mayoría de los catequistas enseñarán a los 800 estudiantes registrados para las clases a través de Zoom desde sus propios hogares.

Los catequistas del Santo Nombre de Jesús compartieron valiosos consejos para las presentaciones en línea y han aportado

varias ideas, como, por ejemplo, mejorar el Wi-Fi en las antiguas aulas de ladrillo de la parroquia, para ayudar a que el comienzo de las clases de formación religiosa de kindergarten al duodécimo grado, el programa de RICA, educación especial y preparación sacramental en septiembre sea exitoso.

La directora de formación religiosa cuenta con una licenciatura en catequesis y lleva más de tres décadas con las Catequistas Misioneras de los Sagrados Corazones de Jesús y María. La Hermana Eva añadió: “Yo deseo dar acogida a todas estas experiencias”. Ella está “rezando mucho por la formación de los catequistas”, que ha sido siempre una gran prioridad para la religiosa incluso en tiempos normales.

La Hermana cuenta que los padres se han mostrado muy complacientes este año. Ella escribió la orientación para los padres de cada clase; describió en detalle los planes de educación en línea; y presentó las expectativas para los estudiantes, los padres y los catequistas. La Hermana Eva comentó que los padres estuvieron receptivos a los cambios tras recibir la información completa del

El instructor Jorge Hernández enseña sus clases virtuales de Confirmación para los estudiantes en sus casas desde la Parroquia del Santo Nombre de Jesús. (NTC/Ben Torres)



programa de este año.

SEGÚN LOS NÚMEROS

Las parroquias informan que el número de estudiantes registrados para la educación religiosa ha disminuido, en un pequeño por ciento para la preparación sacramental y el programa de RICA, pero en un tercio o más para la educación religiosa de los niños de escuela primaria.

Brad Horn, Coordinador de la Pastoral Juvenil y de la Confirmación de la Parroquia de San Marcos, realizó actividades virtuales en la primavera y el verano para los adolescentes de la parroquia de Denton: estudio bíblico en línea, sesiones de café y oración, noches de Lífé Teen, noches de juegos e incluso una discusión sobre los aspectos de la fe demostrados en “El Señor de los Anillos”.

Como estaba acostumbrado a tener un grupo grande de adolescentes, el ministro de jóvenes señaló que se nota una gran diferencia. Algunas actividades tienen en estos momentos solamente 10 ó menos participantes.

No obstante, en lugar de estar ansioso por la participación tan baja, recordó una cita de Santa Teresa de Calcuta, “Nunca



Una pantalla muestra el contenido de la lección de la clase virtual de Confirmación que el catequista enseñó a los estudiantes en sus casas el 23 de septiembre del 2020. (NTC/Ben Torres)

te preocupes por los números. Ayuda a una persona a la vez y comienza siempre con la persona más cercana a ti”.

Antes de la pandemia, Horn ya había considerado hacer la transición en el programa de jóvenes para pasar de los eventos grandes al discipulado en grupos pequeños. El distanciamiento social hizo

más fácil realizar ese plan.

Cuando se tienen grupos pequeños, agregó, “uno puede concentrarse más en atender sus necesidades. El ministerio relacional está floreciendo de esta manera”.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 52

La instructora Teresa Vargas hace una pregunta a sus estudiantes mientras conduce una clase de Confirmación virtualmente el miércoles. (NTC/Ben Torres)



DE LA PÁGINA 51

Aún así, piensa en los jóvenes que no están participando. “Los jóvenes anhelan la comunidad. Los jóvenes anhelan la espiritualidad”, dijo. Sin el atractivo de una actividad de grupo grande, “es difícil llegar a los adolescentes desinteresados. Una vez que estemos en persona, será interesante ver qué chicos tienen el ardor de la pasión, quiénes están buscando más y quiénes están contentos de estar donde están”.

A pesar de que Horn ha servido como ministro de la pastoral juvenil en San Marcos por cinco años, comentó que los rápidos cambios traídos por la pandemia “me hacen sentir como si éste fuera mi primer año en el ministerio de jóvenes. Es completamente diferente, es como un torbellino”.

CAMINAREMOS CONTIGO

Trisha Vásquez, la Directora de la Formación en la Fe de la Parroquia de

Santa Ana de Burseson dijo que no son sólo los formadores de la fe los que están un poco perplejos ante las nuevas prácticas modificadas.

Ella ha observado que los padres se sienten abrumados, debido a que la situación de su empleo y la educación de sus hijos pueden haber cambiado rápidamente y las rutinas diarias de la familia han sido trastocadas.

Vásquez comparó la situación actual con la de los discípulos en el camino a Emaús. “Estaban confundidos, ansiosos y angustiados. No reconocieron a Jesús en medio de ellos”, explicó.

Ella desea asegurar a las familias: “Sabemos que los tiempos son difíciles. Estamos aquí para ayudar. Caminaremos el viaje con ustedes, para ayudarnos mutuamente a mantener nuestros ojos en la cruz”.

Muchos padres han expresado que se sienten inadecuados para enseñarles la fe a sus hijos, según Vásquez. En años

anteriores, la Parroquia de Santa Ana ofreció un curso de todo un año sobre Jesús, la historia de la salvación y los sacramentos para los padres de los niños en el programa de RICA. Este otoño, la serie es virtual y todos los padres están invitados a asistir.

Vásquez, quien ha ocupado su cargo durante ocho años, dijo que ella y los catequistas están buscando formas de aumentar la participación de los estudiantes. Por ejemplo, los estudiantes de intermedia y preparatoria, que tendrán videos de Life Teen y sesiones de Zoom la mayor parte de las semanas, se reunirán ocasionalmente en la iglesia para una Misa y Adoración y mantendrán el distanciamiento social. Los estudiantes de primaria tienen una lección en línea cada semana, que pueden completar en casa en el momento que le sea más conveniente. Los catequistas planean vestirse como santos para ciertas reuniones virtuales especiales que se lleven a cabo en días

festivos importantes de la iglesia o para celebrar las diferentes temporadas litúrgicas.

“¿Cómo podemos superar todo esto como parroquia? Al seguir enfocándonos en Jesús. La batalla ya se ganó. Se trata de la fe que triunfa sobre el miedo”, afirmó ella.

CENTRADO EN LA FAMILIA

La Parroquia de Santa María de Gainesville instituyó hace varios años el modelo de formación de la familia, en la que los padres juegan un papel importante en la educación religiosa de sus hijos. El programa comprende los niños desde el kindergarten hasta el octavo grado.

Esto ha sido “una gran bendición”, según Lesko, la Directora de Educación Religiosa de la parroquia, la que fue fundada en el 1879 y es la segunda parroquia más antigua de toda la diócesis.

A pesar de la pandemia, ella señaló que el modelo ha sido muy exitoso.

“Ha dado buenos frutos en las familias. Vemos una mayor participación de los padres. Llegan inicialmente por los sacramentos, pero las familias se sienten curiosas por conocer más acerca de su fe y se involucran más en su parroquia”, dijo Lesko. La Directora tiene 15 años de experiencia, de los cuales lleva cinco en Santa María.

El uso del modelo de formación familiar en los grados primarios ha facilitado la transición al aprendizaje virtual de este otoño. En lugar de reunirse en persona con los padres dos veces al mes para repasar las lecciones que enseñarán a sus hijos, esas reuniones se realizan actualmente por videoconferencia.

Sin embargo, dijo Lesko, “la escuela secundaria resulta ser un mayor desafío”.

Anteriormente, los adolescentes se reunían en persona en un grupo grande, pero ahora se reúnen en el ciberespacio. Lesko informa que los adolescentes están decepcionados, pero “se dan cuenta de que estamos intentando hacerlo de la mejor manera posible”.

Lesko pasó el verano aprendiendo los nuevos recursos y tecnologías que están disponibles para mantener interactivas las presentaciones virtuales, para lo que los adolescentes no sólo vean en las sesiones una cara que habla. Las encuestas, los emojis, los avatares, los videoclips y

El instructor Octavio Aguayo realiza sus clases virtuales de Confirmación con sus estudiantes. (NTC/Ben Torres)



dividirse en pequeños grupos virtuales son herramientas para ayudar a mantener el interés de los estudiantes. “Es una forma completamente nueva de mirar y examinar lo que hacemos”, añadió.

Una parroquia rural como la de Santa María tiene desafíos adicionales, explicó Lesko. El servicio de Internet puede ser irregular y algunos estudiantes no tienen en sus hogares tecnología con capacidades de video y audio. “Podemos conectarnos, pero no podemos vernos”, dijo.

A pesar de los inconvenientes, Lesko ha notado algunas ventajas. “Los jóvenes no llegan tarde, porque no tienen que conducir después de las prácticas en sus escuelas. Nadie tiene tanta prisa y llegan a tiempo. No hay tampoco problemas de transporte”.

Ella está también complacida con el retiro de la Confirmación que realizó virtualmente en el verano para los jóvenes, pues recibió varias respuestas positivas. El programa, que duró casi todo el día, incluyó algunas presentaciones en línea, lectura y reflexión independientes de las Escrituras y discusión de algunos temas.

Lesko ya decidió que uno de los ajustes hechos a la formación virtual de la fe virtual se va a seguir.

Señaló que muchas, si no la mayoría, de las sesiones mensuales de capacitación de catequistas de la Parroquia de Santa María continuarán en línea en el futuro previsible. Esto elimina las molestias de

tener que encontrar una niñera o tener que ir corriendo a casa desde el trabajo sólo para salir de casa de nuevo para tomar la clase de capacitación.

Lesko ha encontrado que hasta ahora los ajustes hechos en la formación de la fe son “más difíciles, pero más gratificantes”. Ella menciona la oportunidad que brindan de una interacción más personal, que permite reunirse individualmente con los candidatos del programa RICA y hasta llamar a las familias que no se presentan a las sesiones.

Piensa a menudo en una cita del prolífico autor católico G.K. Chesterton: “Si vale la pena hacer algo, vale la pena hacerlo mal”.

Ella explica lo que la cita significa para ella. “Haz lo mejor que puedas. No te esfuerces por ser perfecto. Esfuérzate siempre, pero incluso si no puedes hacerlo a la perfección; aún si no puedes hacerlo de manera asombrosa, sigue intentándolo. Vale la pena evangelizar, incluso si no se hace a la perfección”.

Para ilustrar ese punto, Lesko compartió que cada año después de la Primera Comunión hay a menudo un comulgante joven que está un poco decepcionado porque no experimentó esa Misa exactamente como él o ella la había imaginado. Ella le dice: “Al final, ¿sientes que te acercaste a Jesús? Si es así, entonces lo estamos haciendo bien”. 🇺🇸

I-D; San Nectarios de Aegina,
Venerable Henriette DeLille, San
Cayetano. (NTC/Maria Diaz)



AMIGOS EN el cielo

Una letanía de santos con historias de trabajo complicadas

Por Kiki Hayden

El desempleo, los entornos laborales tóxicos y la pobreza han estado desenfrenados durante la pandemia del 2020. Hay que considerar que más de 40 millones de estadounidenses quedaron desempleados o se vieron obligados a trabajar menos horas en el mes de junio de este año, según la Oficina de Estadísticas Laborales. Además, un estudio global reciente de 200,000 personas indicó que el 79 por ciento de las personas que dejan sus trabajos citan la “falta de reconocimiento” como su razón principal para haber renunciado, lo que confirma aún más la prevalencia de entornos laborales tóxicos. Finalmente, los titulares de los últimos meses han puesto de manifiesto lo común que ha sido el acoso en el lugar de trabajo. Podríamos decir que no es una exageración pensar que estos problemas se han visto agravados por la pandemia actual.

Quizás se encuentren en una de estas situaciones desafortunadas. Los santos podrían entender e identificarse con esto, ya que muchos perdieron sus trabajos o tuvieron que soportar un terrible abuso mientras se dedicaban a vivir su ministerio y su vocación. Por eso, desean ayudarles.

En este tiempo de distanciamiento social, el poder recurrir a la comunión de los santos es de vital importancia. San Pablo dice en su Carta a los Hebreos:

“Innumerables son estos testigos, y nos envuelven como una nube. Depongamos, pues, toda carga inútil, y en especial las amarras del pecado, para correr hasta el final la prueba que nos espera” (*Hebreos 12,1*). A continuación, veremos algunos santos que pueden inspirarnos e interceder por nosotros durante este momento tan difícil.

DESEMPLEADOS

La pérdida de empleo, la pobreza y las dolorosas transiciones no perdonaron ni a la Sagrada Familia. Cuando San José huyó a Egipto con María y Jesús, tuvo que dejar atrás su taller de carpintería, sus herramientas y su red de clientes. Tuvo que empezar nuevamente de cero. Al regresar a Nazaret, tuvo que restablecerse una vez más. Suena disparatado que Dios llamara a la Sagrada Familia a esas situaciones y los llevara a través de la inestabilidad laboral (*Mateo 2,13, 19-23*).

La persecución hizo que muchos cristianos primitivos huyeran de sus hogares (y de sus trabajos). Pablo se encontró con los fabricantes de carpas Priscila y Aquila, que se habían refugiado en Corinto (*Hechos 18, 2*). Como José, tuvieron que conseguir nuevos clientes en su nuevo hogar. Incluso en esta situación estresante, continuaron su ministerio a muchos. San Juan Crisóstomo escribió sobre Priscila y Aquila: “... ciertamente podría llamar a su casa una iglesia, o incluso, el cielo mismo”.

Muchos siglos después, San Nectario de Egina, un santo ortodoxo, fue golpeado

en su primer trabajo y se le negó la paga. Más tarde, cuando era obispo, sus celosos colegas difundieron rumores sobre él y lo degradaron. Según el escrito *‘Las Vidas de los Santos’* de la Iglesia Ortodoxa de los Estados Unidos, “Su carta de suspensión sólo decía que había sido destituido ‘por razones conocidas por el Patriarcado’, lo que indica que creyeron todas las calumnias que se levantaron contra él”. Nectario se quedó sin trabajo, sin hogar y con muchas luchas. Sus muchos dones fueron ignorados hasta que un amigo le encontró un puesto como predicador, pero aún así, siguieron burlándose de él y atormentándolo.

San José, Santa Priscila, Santo Aquila y San Nectario, oren por todos los que buscan trabajo, para que puedan sobrellevar sus tribulaciones con paciencia, puedan encontrar un camino laboral productivo y que confíen en Dios.

TRABAJOS ESTRESANTES

Al igual que San Nectario, Santa Teresa de Ávila y San Juan de la Cruz no eran populares debido a su gran devoción a Cristo, lo que les causó un gran sufrimiento en sus vidas. Juntos reformaron el orden carmelita. Según la autora María Morera Johnson, Santa Teresa de Ávila “fundó dieciséis conventos y quince monasterios ... a pesar de la oposición de su propia orden, del clero de su comunidad y de los habitantes de las aldeas donde estableció nuevos

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 56

DE LA PÁGINA 55

claustró”. San Juan de la Cruz fue perseguido varias veces por sus hermanos sacerdotes. “Su reforma, aunque fue aprobada por la orden general, fue rechazada por los frailes mayores, quienes ... lo encarcelaron”, escribió el Padre Alban Butler en *Las Vidas de los Santos*.

La Venerable Henriette DeLille de Nueva Orleans tampoco fue ajena a la falta de apoyo por parte de sus colegas. Según la página web de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos, ella tuvo que enfrentarse a “la resistencia de la población gobernante a la idea de una congregación religiosa negra; la falta de financiamiento para hacer su labor; las burlas y la incredulidad de la gente en su misión; la falta de apoyo tanto de la Iglesia como de la autoridad civil; y la mala salud”. Ella superó todo esto para fundar la Orden de las Hermanas de la Sagrada Familia en dicha ciudad. La orden, que ahora cuenta con 300 miembros, continúa sirviendo a los pobres en varios lugares de los Estados Unidos.

No nos olvidemos de los mártires. Por ejemplo, San Nicandro y San Marciano, soldados de Roma que vivieron a principios del siglo IV y que “decidieron renunciar a sus carreras cuando se publicaron edictos imperiales contra los cristianos”, según lo describen David y Mary Ford en *El matrimonio como camino a la santidad*. El gobernador, que era su jefe, los presionó para que se reincorporaran al ejército. Cuando Nicandro y Marciano se mantuvieron firmes en su decisión y se negaron, fueron encarcelados y luego ejecutados.

Santa Teresa de Ávila, San Juan de la Cruz, San Nicandro, San Marciano y Venerable Henriette DeLille, oren para que nosotros perseveremos incluso cuando sufrimos persecución o abuso en el trabajo.

ESPERANZA INSPIRADORA

El patrón católico oficial del desempleo es San Cayetano. Un sacerdote que experimentó un estrés laboral extremo durante la Reforma a principios del siglo XVI y “se dedicó a cuidar a los afectados por la peste”, según el Padre

Butler. Además, el apóstol San Judas es literalmente el santo patrón de las causas desesperadas, por lo que tiene mucha experiencia orando en circunstancias muy difíciles. Estos dos santos son excelentes intercesores para los trabajadores médicos, cuyos trabajos son muy estresantes en este momento). San Antonio de Padua es un intercesor fiel y rápido para las personas que buscan cualquier cosa, incluido un trabajo. Y, por supuesto, Nuestra Señora intercede por todos nosotros, sus hijos. Meditar en las imágenes de la Santa Protección de la Madre de Dios y Nuestra Señora Desatadora de Nudos puede ayudar a cualquiera a sentirse protegido y defendido.

No ajeno a las críticas desde dentro y fuera de la Iglesia es San Josemaría Escrivá, quien escribió: “No es difícil convertir el trabajo en un diálogo orante... un pequeño sacrificio aquí, una sonrisa allá para quien nos molesta; comenzar por el trabajo menos agradable, pero el más urgente, ante todo; cuidar de los pequeños detalles del orden y tener perseverancia en el cumplimiento de nuestro deber...” Esta práctica espiritual nos ayuda a entrar en una relación íntima con Jesús, que trae alegría incluso en los tiempos difíciles. Santa Teresa de Lisieux, que ofreció sus sufrimientos diarios como flores para Jesús, escribió en su autobiografía, *Historia de un alma*, “La felicidad no tiene nada que ver con las cosas materiales que nos rodean; habita en lo más profundo del alma. Uno puede ser tan feliz en una prisión lúgubre como en un palacio”.

AMIGOS EN EL CIELO

Los santos no son sólo personajes históricos a los que admirar. Están vivos en el cielo, orando con nosotros, lo sepamos o no. Entonces, cuando nos sentimos desesperados en el trabajo (o lejos de él), nos hace bien pedir a la “nube de testigos” que oren por nosotros. Nos dirigirán siempre hacia Jesús, quien tan a menudo nos dice en las Escrituras: *no temas*. 🇺🇸

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



ciudadanos FIELES

Cómo hacer que su voz profética se escuche durante esta temporada electoral

Por Susan Moses

El Padre Balaji Boyalla, SAC, va a celebrar un momento muy importante en su vida: su primera oportunidad de votar en una elección presidencial de los Estados Unidos.

El párroco de la Parroquia de San Miguel de Bedford, que es oriundo de la India, se convirtió en ciudadano estadounidense el 10 de marzo del 2019. El sacerdote palotino vio la mano de Dios en acción durante su jornada hacia la ciudadanía estadounidense. El proceso para obtener la visa, luego, la tarjeta verde y más tarde, calificar para la ciudadanía “fue muy fácil. Quizás Dios me llamó a trabajar aquí en este país desde hace mucho tiempo”, dijo.

Como ciudadano creo que: “Mi primera responsabilidad es votar. Voy a votar. No me lo voy a perder. Todo el mundo debería votar. Así es como podemos hacer oír nuestra voz profética, como Isaías”.

La Iglesia Católica tiene mucho que decir sobre las responsabilidades que implica la ciudadanía fiel, una de ellas de mayor importancia es el deber de votar. Sin embargo, la Iglesia no les dice a sus fieles por cuál partido o candidato

en particular deben votar. En cambio, la Iglesia ve su papel “en la formación de la conciencia y la correspondiente responsabilidad moral de cada católico de escuchar, recibir y actuar según la enseñanza de la Iglesia en la tarea de por vida de formar su propia conciencia”, según se declara en el documento *Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles*, una reflexión y llamado a la responsabilidad política de cada católico emitida por la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos.

Esas enseñanzas son el lente a través del cual deben verse los candidatos y las cuestiones políticas, y las mismas se basan en los cuatro principios básicos de la doctrina social católica: la dignidad de la persona humana, la subsidiariedad, el bien común y la solidaridad.

EN ESTE TIEMPO Y LUGAR

Nuestra responsabilidad y deber como católicos de hacer que nuestras voces se escuchen en la arena pública depende de dónde y en qué tiempo vivimos, explicó el Dr. David Upham, profesor de política estadounidense de la Universidad de Dallas.

En los primeros siglos después de la Resurrección de Cristo, los cristianos vivieron bajo un despotismo centralizado

y no tuvieron la oportunidad de participar en el gobierno. Las prioridades de los primeros católicos fueron vivir el Evangelio, difundir el Evangelio y evitar la persecución, a menudo sin éxito.

Pasemos rápido las páginas de la historia de nuestra Iglesia a los católicos que viven hoy día en los Estados Unidos. El Dr. Upham declaró: “La realidad en que nos encontramos en este momento, según la providencia de Dios, es que somos una gran — significativamente grande — minoría en una república libre. Todavía tenemos una enorme autoridad política. Nos guste o no, compartimos el trono”.

“Cuando Dios en Su providencia nos convierte en co-monarcas, a pesar de que individualmente somos uno de los 300 millones de habitantes, probablemente entonces tendremos el deber de tratar de cuidar de esta comunidad de la cual somos ciudadanos con lo que tengamos: nuestra voz, nuestro dinero si tenemos alguno (en consonancia con nuestras otras obligaciones) y nuestro voto”, continuó diciendo.

El profesor, que es feligrés de la Parroquia de San Francisco de Assisi de Grapevine, citó tres ejemplos de cuando

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 58



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

DE LA PÁGINA 57

las voces y los votos católicos fueron “capaces de mantener cierta luz en medio de la oscuridad” durante el siglo anterior: contra la esterilización coercitiva de los criminales y las personas mentalmente discapacitadas, contra el aborto, y la lucha a favor de la igualdad racial.

El profesor agregó: “A menudo no se habla de eso en este momento, pero a mediados del siglo XX, una de las instituciones públicas más prominentes a favor de la desegregación fue la Iglesia Católica”, que desafió las leyes que prohibían el matrimonio interracial más de 20 años antes de que el Tribunal Supremo emitiera su dictamen al respecto.

El Dr. Upham dijo que los obispos estadounidenses están a la vanguardia en la defensa del bien común y la dignidad de cada persona. En su papel de obispos, tienen la autoridad y el deber de hablar sobre los asuntos de la fe y la moral de acuerdo con el magisterio de la Iglesia.

El profesor y abogado señaló que los obispos, ejerciendo su autoridad magisterial, enfatizan “principios como el deber de la comunidad de buscar y proteger el bien común, y que el elemento

principal del bien común es la protección de la vida de los inocentes, incluyendo el deber de proteger la vida de los seres humanos, incluso antes de haber nacido”.

Además, el Dr. Upham añadió que un determinado obispo puede hablar además sobre cualquier situación particular de una comunidad en su papel de ciudadano prominente.

LOS CUATRO PILARES

Si la Iglesia Católica no prescribe cómo votar a sus miembros, ¿qué ayuda puede ofrecer la Iglesia en la cacofonía que se encuentra en la publicidad del año electoral, las redes sociales y los informes contradictorios de las noticias?

El Padre John Robert Skeldon, rector de la Catedral de San Patricio, dijo que la Iglesia aporta “siglos de reflexión ética y moral sobre los principios fundamentales como el bien común, la solidaridad entre las personas y la dignidad humana de la persona”.

Durante siglos de enseñanza, además de los cientos de encíclicas papales, documentos del Vaticano y declaraciones de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos, la Iglesia Católica ha expuesto los cuatro pilares o principios de la doctrina social católica, que son

“expresión de la verdad íntegra sobre el hombre conocida a través de la razón y de la fe” (*Compendio de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia, 160*). La dignidad de la persona humana, la subsidiariedad, el bien común y la solidaridad, en conjunto, “anclan el compromiso católico de defender la vida humana, desde la concepción hasta la muerte natural, a la obligación moral fundamental de respetar la dignidad de cada persona como hijo o hija de Dios” (*Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles, 40*).

La dignidad de la persona humana comienza con el derecho a la vida, que comienza en la concepción. La santidad de la vida humana está amenazada por el aborto, la eutanasia, el suicidio asistido, la pena de muerte, la clonación humana, la fertilización in vitro y la destrucción de los embriones humanos para la investigación científica.

El Reverendísimo Obispo Michael Olson afirmó que: “Debemos comenzar con el respeto y la protección del derecho inviolable a la vida, y nosotros, como católicos, no podemos quedarnos ahí. Respetar el derecho inviolable a la vida significa que debemos continuar

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 60

Aplicando la Doctrina Católica

RESUMEN DE LAS POSTURAS POLÍTICAS PARA LOS VOTANTES CATÓLICOS*



LA MIGRACIÓN: El llamado del Evangelio de “acoger al forastero” requiere que los católicos se ocupen de los recién llegados, autorizados y no autorizados, incluidos los refugiados, los solicitantes de asilo y las víctimas de la trata de personas.



LA DISCRIMINACIÓN: Los obispos de los Estados Unidos nos llaman a combatir la discriminación injusta, ya sea por motivos de la raza, la religión, la etnia, el sexo, la edad o la condición de incapacidad.



EL MATRIMONIO: Las necesidades de las familias deben ser prioridades nacionales. El matrimonio debería ser definido, reconocido y protegido como un compromiso exclusivo para toda la vida entre un hombre y una mujer.



LOS POBRES: Las políticas sociales y económicas deben crear puestos de trabajo con condiciones laborales dignas y salarios justos. Hay que erradicar las barreras existentes que no permiten la igualdad de los salarios para las mujeres y las minorías.



LA EUTANASIA: El quitar deliberadamente una vida humana mediante el suicidio asistido y la eutanasia es un asalto injustificable a la vida humana.



LA ATENCIÓN DE LA SALUD: La atención médica asequible y accesible es un derecho humano fundamental. Millones de estadounidenses carecen todavía de cobertura de salud.



EL FIN DE LA VIDA: La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos llama a una mayor asistencia a través de la atención médica, los cuidados paliativos y terminales para los enfermos y moribundos.



LA EDUCACIÓN: Los padres, como los primeros y más importantes educadores, tienen el derecho fundamental a elegir la educación que mejor responda a las necesidades de sus hijos, incluidas las escuelas públicas, privadas y religiosas.



EL ABORTO: El asesinato deliberado de un ser humano antes del nacimiento nunca es moralmente aceptable y siempre debe ser rechazado.



LA LIBERTAD RELIGIOSA: La libertad religiosa se debe proteger y promover con vigor, tanto en nuestro país como en el extranjero.

*El resumen de las posturas y las explicaciones son proporcionados por el documento publicado por la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos *Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles*.

respetando y defendiendo los demás derechos humanos necesarios que dependen del derecho a la vida. No podemos considerar que la indispensable y justa oposición a todos los ataques directos a la vida humana, especialmente el aborto, sea suficiente en sí misma para cumplir nuestra responsabilidad de promover la justicia. Es también erróneo relativizar el aborto alegando que es sólo uno de varios temas políticos igualmente importantes”.

La enseñanza católica sobre la dignidad de la vida obliga a los fieles a oponerse al racismo, la tortura, la guerra injusta y la trata de personas. La comprensión del carácter sagrado de la vida nos llama a esforzarnos por combatir el hambre, la pobreza y el sufrimiento.

En sus homilías y cartas pastorales, el Obispo Olson habla con frecuencia sobre los derechos que se derivan de la dignidad de cada persona humana.

En su homilía del 20 de septiembre, el Obispo declaró: “Para ser claros, el derecho a la vida es el derecho humano preeminente que es establecido y otorgado por Dios mismo. Es el derecho del que dependen todos los demás derechos humanos”.

La subsidiariedad, en pocas palabras, significa comenzar con lo más pequeño. Reconoce que los asuntos deben ser manejados por la autoridad o institución competente más pequeña, o más baja. El respeto a la familia, que es la unidad fundamental de la sociedad, debe ser considerada al establecerse las políticas y programas de una comunidad, y deben defenderse y fortalecerse los derechos y las responsabilidades de los padres de cuidar a sus hijos”.

“El principio de la subsidiariedad nos recuerda que las instituciones más grandes de un país no deberían abrumar o interferir con las instituciones que son más pequeñas o tienen carácter local. Sin embargo, las instituciones más grandes tienen responsabilidades esenciales cuando las instituciones locales no pueden adecuadamente proteger la dignidad humana, responder a las necesidades humanas y promover el bien común” (*Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos*)



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

fieles, 48).

El bien común es “el conjunto de condiciones de la vida social que hacen posible a las asociaciones y a cada uno de sus miembros el logro más pleno, y más fácil de la propia perfección” (*Gaudium et Spes, 26).*

“Más allá del derecho a la vida, cada ser humano tiene un derecho fundamental que hace posibles todos los demás derechos, y el derecho a tener acceso a aquellas cosas que requiere la decencia humana: alimento y albergue, educación y trabajo, cuidado médico y vivienda, libertad religiosa y vida familiar”, declararon los obispos de los Estados Unidos en *Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles*.

Los obispos alientan en este documento a los católicos a mirar más

allá de sus propios intereses al ejercer su derecho al voto y considerar el bien común, lo que incluye garantizar que el sistema económico esté al servicio de la gente, y no al contrario; y observar el deber de cuidar de la creación de Dios.

La solidaridad confiere particular relieve a la igualdad de todos como una sola familia humana, independientemente de nuestras diferencias nacionales, raciales, étnicas o socioeconómicas.

Como católicos hemos de promover la paz y buscar la justicia; hemos de acoger al forastero entre nosotros y atender a los más pobres, débiles y necesitados.

“Una prueba moral básica para cualquier sociedad es la forma en que trata a los más vulnerables” (*Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles, 53).*

El Reverendísimo Obispo Olson,



en su editorial de la edición de septiembre-octubre de *North Texas Catholic*, alentó a los fieles de la Diócesis de Fort Worth a leer antes de las elecciones el documento de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos, *Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles (FaithfulCitizenship.org)*.

La declaración de los obispos no sólo describe los cuatro pilares de la doctrina social católica, sino que además resume cómo estos principios se pueden aplicar a más de una docena de cuestiones de nuestra sociedad, que incluyen desde la educación hasta los medios de comunicación.

El documento se publicó por primera vez en el 2007 y se sigue publicando cada cuatro años antes de las elecciones presidenciales.

EL PUNTO DE PARTIDA

Antes de llevar nuestro conocimiento de la doctrina social católica a las urnas de votación, debemos orar. El Obispo Olson, el Padre Skeldon y el Padre Boyalla enfatizaron la gran importancia de la oración.

Además de rezar por una adecuada formación de la conciencia, el Padre Boyalla también mencionó la necesidad de hacer oración constantemente para que se haga la voluntad de Dios, para que buenos líderes gobiernen el país y que el pueblo actúe moralmente por el bien común de la sociedad. “Debemos orar por nuestro país todos los días. Es una responsabilidad que fue reconocida por San Pedro y San Pablo”, dijo el sacerdote.

El Padre Skeldon recomendó leer el *Compendio de la doctrina social de la Iglesia* para obtener una comprensión más profunda de la doctrina social católica. El estudio de las Escrituras también ayuda.

El sacerdote añadió que “Encontramos en la Biblia todas estas historias de acoger o recibir

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 62

CIUDADANOS FIELES Y LA FORMACIÓN DE LA CONCIENCIA: SEGUNDA PARTE

En mi último artículo exhorté a cada uno de nosotros a comenzar a orar por la recta formación de nuestra conciencia en el desempeño de una de nuestras responsabilidades de ciudadanía fiel, es decir, votar. En este artículo seguiré ofreciendo una guía para la formación constante de nuestra conciencia.

Una profunda reflexión sobre los Diez Mandamientos puede darnos una buena estructura para priorizar las diferentes cuestiones que hemos de considerar en la formación de nuestra conciencia.

Debemos recordar que los mandamientos son la alianza que Dios hizo por primera vez con Moisés y que convierte al grupo dispar de esclavos refugiados en el pueblo elegido: el pueblo elegido de Dios en peregrinación a la Tierra Prometida. Los mandamientos no son una lista colocada arbitrariamente de imperativos individuales y distintos unidos sólo en el que están ordenados por Dios y destinados a la obediencia humana. En realidad, son el plan de Dios para que prosperemos individual y comunitariamente, para lograr la plenitud que Él desea y quiere para nosotros como seres humanos.

Como la Alianza de Dios y su pueblo, los mandamientos son vinculantes y se suceden uno al otro en un sentido

que está claramente ordenado e inherentemente unido. Cada uno de los mandamientos sigue al anterior llevando más profundamente al pueblo de Dios a la relación amorosa y justa de pertenecer a Él y a los demás. Los mandamientos corresponden unos a otros tanto en su sustancia como en el orden. El pueblo de Dios se pertenece el uno al otro, tanto en la esencia de la vida familiar como en el orden de la vida política, el idioma y la cultura.

Es importante señalar que los primeros tres mandamientos articulan lo que nosotros como seres humanos le debemos justamente a Dios, que es la virtud de la piedad. El Cuarto Mandamiento da seguimiento a esta deuda con Dios en relación con lo que debemos a los demás seres humanos, que es la virtud de la justicia. Esta deuda humana comienza con nuestros padres, es decir, padre y madre; y en los mandamientos subsiguientes se establecen las justas delineaciones de las otras relaciones humanas dentro y con la sociedad.

El *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* nos llama a considerar que el Cuarto Mandamiento establece el fundamento y orden de los mandamientos siguientes

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 63

DE LA PÁGINA 61, CIUDADANOS

al forastero, al Otro, precisamente en su condición única, en honor a su dignidad”.

Explicó que el Otro incluye tanto al bebé por nacer como al inmigrante indocumentado. Ambos merecen el respeto, la acogida, y ser recibidos debido a su dignidad como personas humanas creadas a imagen y semejanza de Dios.

El Padre Skeldon sugirió que el estudio de las Escrituras “podría ser una manera de ayudar a la gente a entender que ‘Quizás necesito soltar el pensamiento grupal, el pensamiento tribal, el pensamiento partidista en el que estoy adoctrinado y permitir que el cuadro general, más amplio, sea el foco’”.

EL PARTIDISMO

Las divisiones en la sociedad creadas por una atmósfera política excesivamente partidista pueden ser destructivas. El Padre Boyalla ha visto situaciones en las que miembros de la iglesia, hermanos y hermanas, o incluso marido y mujer, se separan porque apoyan a diferentes candidatos o partidos políticos.

“Estamos llamados a orar juntos como una sola familia, y la política puede crear separación en la familia de la Iglesia, por lo que siempre es bueno buscar ser el pueblo de Dios en la Iglesia que es Una, dejando la política a un lado”, comentó.

“No obstante, los fieles católicos están llamados a algo más que simplemente evitar la división. Están llamados a ser constructores de paz”, dijo el párroco.

“Deberíamos además servir como agentes de reconciliación en una sociedad políticamente dividida. No debemos convertirnos en partidistas”.

“Las diferencias políticas o personales no deberían interponerse en nuestra forma de pensar, hablar o hacer en aras del bien común. Ningún interés personal debe perturbar nuestra obra por el bien común”, continuó diciendo el Padre Boyalla.

Al igual que el Padre Boyalla, el Padre Skeldon denunció lo que llamó la “tribu de partido” que ha impregnado la sociedad estadounidense. Dijo que, cuando una persona se identifica más estrechamente con el partido político que con su propia identidad como católico,

entonces el partido político es el que “establece los parámetros, los límites y las definiciones. Eso limita significativamente la verdad real de la doctrina y la enseñanza social de la Iglesia”.

El sacerdote indicó que los católicos pueden ser pacificadores en la esfera pública “al predicar, enseñar, vivir y hablar... sobre la plenitud de la doctrina y la enseñanza social católica, que es muy

rica. Eso se puede llevar a la conversación y discusión pública”.

En el documento *Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles* los obispos estadounidenses reconocen que: “Estos cuatro principios y los temas relacionados de la doctrina social católica proporcionan un marco moral que no se ajusta fácilmente a las ideologías de ‘derecha’ o ‘izquierda’, ‘liberal’ o ‘conservadora’,



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

o la plataforma de cualquier partido político. Los principios no son partidistas ni sectarios, sino que reflejan los pilares éticos fundamentales que son comunes a todas las personas”.

Por otra parte, el Obispo Olson dijo: “Tampoco podemos tergiversar el Evangelio de la Vida como sólo una parte de una plataforma partidista o de las posiciones fragmentadas de los candidatos políticos de cualquier partido político. Sucumbir a esta tentación haría que la Iglesia se subordinara al poder del estado mediante el respaldo público de los candidatos o la alineación de la Iglesia con cualquier partido político”.

El Padre Skeldon señaló además que, en la mayoría de los casos, ninguno de los candidatos representará la totalidad de la doctrina católica, lo que requiere que el votante católico posea una conciencia bien formada.

La votación puede parecer simple, pero desarrollar una conciencia bien formada es una tarea constante de toda la vida. Sin embargo, la Iglesia Católica posee un marco moral para defender la vida y la dignidad humana, y proteger a los débiles y vulnerables que nos ayuda a construir un reino de paz y justicia en todo momento, no sólo en los años de elecciones.

El Padre Boyalla, que se está preparando para su primera votación presidencial en los Estados Unidos, dio un consejo que durará más que el término de cualquier político de turno. Dijo: “Lo más importante es orar, reflexionar y buscar la voluntad de Dios en cada decisión que tomes”. 🇺🇸

DE LA PÁGINA 61, OBISPO

revelados a Moisés. El Cuarto Mandamiento es el que establece la necesidad del estado de derecho justo requerido para gobernar la sociedad humana porque “se extiende a los deberes de los alumnos respecto a los maestros, de los empleados respecto a los patronos, de los subordinados respecto a sus jefes, de los ciudadanos respecto a su patria, a los que la administran o la gobiernan. Este mandamiento implica y sobrentiende los deberes de los padres, tutores, maestros, jefes, magistrados, gobernantes, de todos los que ejercen una autoridad sobre otros o sobre una comunidad de personas”. (CIC 2199)

Los mandamientos subsiguientes no sólo sirven para la salvación del mundo, sino que también articulan los derechos humanos: entre ellos se encuentran el derecho a la vida, la integridad de la sexualidad humana y el matrimonio, el derecho a la propiedad, el derecho a que la verdad sea dicha y el derecho a una buena reputación. Así, el Cuarto Mandamiento “constituye uno de los fundamentos de la doctrina social de la Iglesia”. (CIC 2198)

Las posiciones extremas de varias facciones políticas actuales tienen algo en común, ya que ambas constituyen una distorsión del Cuarto Mandamiento. Además, cada una de ellas ignora el papel esencial de la familia y le impone a la gente una noción de gobierno por la cual las personas tienen derecho a asumir poca o ninguna responsabilidad por sus propias acciones o las acciones de la sociedad de la que forman parte. Esto incluye tanto el enfoque estatista de los socialistas que pone demasiado énfasis en el papel del estado en detrimento de la familia, como el enfoque libertario del gobierno adoptado por muchas voces del conservadurismo contemporáneo que hace demasiado hincapié en el papel del individuo en detrimento de la familia. Es el Cuarto Mandamiento el que establece como requisito que el estado de derecho justo gobierne la sociedad humana.

El Quinto Mandamiento indica entonces que el derecho a la vida es el derecho humano preeminente que es establecido y otorgado por Dios mismo. Es el derecho del que dependen todos los demás derechos humanos, entre ellos se incluyen: el derecho a la integridad de la sexualidad humana biológicamente determinada y según el

género, y el matrimonio entre un hombre y una mujer, el derecho a la vida familiar, el derecho a la libertad religiosa, el derecho a vivir en paz y seguridad con fronteras seguras, el derecho a inmigrar para sustentar la vida de sí mismo y la de la familia, el derecho al trabajo y a un salario justo y digno, el derecho a la propiedad privada, el derecho al agua limpia y potable, el derecho a que la verdad sea dicha, el derecho a una buena reputación, el derecho a la atención médica básica, el derecho al acceso de una educación suficiente para participar en el bien común de una sociedad en particular, y otros tantos.

Por lo tanto, los ataques directos a la vida humana, especialmente a la vida humana vulnerable, a través de políticas y prácticas sociales como el aborto, el suicidio asistido, la eutanasia y la práctica actual de la pena de muerte no pueden ser apoyados ni tampoco tolerados en nombre de otros derechos o bienes sociales que los demás pueden disfrutar. Debemos comenzar por el respeto y la protección del derecho inviolable a la vida, pero aún más, nosotros como católicos, no podemos quedarnos ahí. Para vivir de acuerdo con los altos estándares morales a los que Dios nos llama y nos une, estándares que forman un todo indivisible, debemos comenzar por respetar el derecho inviolable a la vida y continuar respetando los demás derechos humanos necesarios que dependen del derecho a la vida.

El mundo corrompido y alejado de la gracia de Dios nos seduce y nos lleva a separar estos derechos y a tratarlos incorrectamente sólo como puntos aislados que compiten entre sí en busca del interés propio dentro de una agenda partidista; los mandamientos están en contraposición con esto.

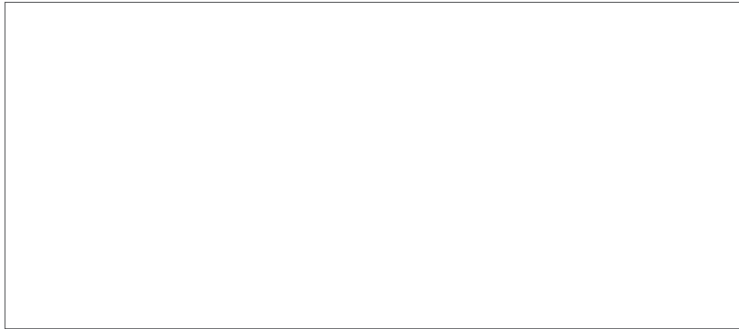
A través de la oración y la gracia de Dios, podemos descubrir que los mandamientos son una excelente guía para nosotros mientras continuamos la formación de nuestra conciencia y nos preparamos no sólo para estas elecciones, sino también para nuestra contribución y defensa del derecho a la vida, y la promoción del bien común como ciudadanos católicos y fieles. 🇺🇸



OBISPO MICHAEL OLSON
es el cuarto Obispo de la
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