

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



10 YEARS

ad multos annos!

JAN - FEB 2024
VOL. 40 | NO. 1

Pearl of great price

I've never exchanged more than pleasantries with these men, yet their silent witness each Sunday at Mass provides inspiration to me.

The first gentleman sits in the back corner. He moves gingerly, using a walker. The fact that he makes such an effort to be present at Mass is admirable.

When the "Lamb of God" prayer begins, he starts his slow walk from the last pew to the front to receive Holy Communion. By the time he approaches the priest, the effort has left him out of breath.

He could remain in the last pew, and an usher would direct an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to bring the Eucharist to him, but he doesn't. Instead, he gives his all to receive the Precious Body, like the merchant who sells all that he has in order to buy the one pearl of great price.

He sacrifices his comfort and energy to receive the One who made the greatest sacrifice.

When have I given my all to obtain such a treasure?

On the other side of the church, an older man, impeccably dressed, pushes his friend in a wheelchair to receive the Body of Christ each Sunday. I've seen them for years, and I assumed they must be related in some way.

But I introduced myself to them briefly at a parish event some time ago, and I learned they are friends, not relatives.

They remind me of so many occasions in the Gospels when a person encounters the Lord and is compelled to share Him with others, from the Samaritan woman at the well to Saint Andrew, who sought out his brother, Simon Peter, and brought him to meet Jesus.

Is there someone I can bring to encounter the Lord, present at every Mass in the Eucharist?

By their faithful actions, these men attest that the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is worth effort and worth sharing. They understand that God is with us — Emmanuel — in the newborn babe born in Bethlehem and in the breaking of the bread.

Susan Moses

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

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Bishop Michael Olson leads Adoration at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller on June 23, 2019. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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A bride of Christ



Mary Del Olmo receives consecration to a life of virginity for women living in the world



Mary Del Olmo at her consecration at St. Patrick Cathedral on Nov. 22. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FORT WORTH — On Nov. 22 at St. Patrick Cathedral, Mary Del Olmo received consecration to a life of virginity for women living in the world from Bishop Michael Olson. From physical therapy to serving on mission to working on her family's ranch, Del Olmo lives for the Lord.

In his opening remarks, Bishop Olson mentioned that consecration to a life of

virginity may seem new to us, but is truly quite old: The order of virgins has existed in the Catholic Church since its earliest days.

Accompanied by two attendants, Del Olmo wore a white dress and veil, symbolizing that consecration confers a lasting identity upon her as a Bride of Christ.

A parishioner of Sacred Heart Parish

in Muenster, Del Olmo discerned her vocation for years. She considered religious orders, but she felt limited by their specific charisms.

Now 42, Del Olmo is also a physical therapist with a clinical doctorate working in home health. She serves on the Board of Trustees for the Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House in Lake Dallas and is training to be a spiritual director. She serves in music ministry and as a sacristan at Sacred Heart. She has done mission work in Guatemala and Haiti.

All these are roles she can continue as a consecrated virgin. "With consecrated virginity, you remain rooted in your local church; in your parish — you don't leave," she said. Del Olmo hopes to "open a pathway" for other women who feel called to complete dedication to Christ, but don't fit in with a religious community.

After the consecration, Del Olmo's life will look similar to her previous life: "prayer, work, penance, service, and of course some recreation," she stated.

— Kiki Hayden



NTC/Rodger Mallison



Give thanks for Catholic schools

FORT WORTH — The Nov. 10 meeting for teachers and staff of the 17 diocesan Catholic schools had a terrific start — the celebration of Mass with Father Brett Metzler, the chaplain of Nolan Catholic High School.

Enthusiasm continued to build throughout the morning when teachers had opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration and confession, followed by an inspiring talk by Father James Gigliotti, TOR,

pastor of St. Andrew Parish.

But the message of gratitude for Catholic education hit its peak when six turkeys made a surprise appearance.

Faculty and staff laughed at the unexpected sight, but the lighthearted turkeys carried a serious message of appreciation — a bonus check for all school employees.

An anonymous donor set up an endowment to help fund tuition assistance and benefit Catholic education in the future and also contributed \$100,000 to be split among the school employees immediately.

The Diocese of Fort Worth matched that amount for a total of \$200,000.

Views from the Pews

In every space and in every place, Christians are called to be holy. With the saints as our examples and intercessors, we can seek God, love Him, and serve Him from the football field to our parish pews.

Football fever. Future Viking prospects from kindergarten to sixth grade trained and played flag football under the watchful guidance of Nolan Catholic High School students and faculty on Oct. 21.

Four-legged blessing. Father Ray McDaniel, pastor of St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound, donned his boots and cowboy hat to bless the animals before the North Texas High School Rodeo Association in Saginaw on Oct. 28.

Called to be saints. Some familiar faces, such as St. Rose of Lima and St. Teresa of Calcutta, attended Mass at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Classical School in Fort Worth on All Saint's Day, Nov. 1. More than 80 students researched and dressed up as saints.



NTC/Jayne Donahue



NTC/Rodger Mattison



NTC/Juan Guajardo

THERE'S
MORE



See more photos from these events and more at [North-Texas-Catholic-smugmug.com](https://www.north-texas-catholic-smugmug.com).

Honoring Our Mother

Parishes across the diocese celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12 with Mass, music, flowers, and *matachines* dancers.

At right, an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is surrounded by hundreds of flowers donated by parishioners of Fort Worth's Holy Name of Jesus.

Below left, the faithful of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Fort Worth honored the Blessed Mother with music and dancing as dawn broke.

Below right, a statue is surrounded by roses at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine.

See more photos of the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe at North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com.



NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Scott Wagner



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Trains, St. Nick, and 200 Nativities



Faithful in the Northwest deanery observe Advent with tradition and mission

WICHITA FALLS — Advent activities in the Northwest Deanery gave parishioners opportunities to grow closer to God while having fun with their families.

The annual Nativity scene display at Christ the King Parish in Iowa Park started 20 years ago, said Marilyn Putthoff, one of the event’s chairwomen. “It’s kind of nice. Every year, it’s a little different,” Putthoff said.

Parishioners and community members are invited to display their Nativity scenes.

This year’s collection totaled about 200 and included a tremendous variety, from a large lighted outdoor Nativity scene to a tiny one with figures that were just a few centimeters tall. Some scenes hung on the wall; others were made of many different types of

materials, including metal, ceramic, cardboard, wood, and even chocolate.

In nearby Wichita Falls, families flooded into the Sacred Heart Parish Hall after the 10 a.m. Mass on Sunday, Dec. 10 for the Knights of Columbus Council #10998 annual Breakfast with St. Nicholas.

Each year, one of the Knights dresses as the fourth-century bishop of Myra, St. Nicholas. This year, it was the Council’s Grand Knight, Michael Moulds, complete with a red miter — the ancient headdress of a bishop — and a golden crosier — the symbolic shepherd’s staff.

A new addition to the festivities this year was a Christmas-themed model train set provided by parish pastor, Father



St. Nick and Father Jonathan Demma (NTC/Jenara Kocks Burgess)

Jonathan Demma.

Later that evening, Sacred Heart Parish hosted a two-night Advent Mission for the

Northwest Deanery with guest speaker Jon Leonetti, author and radio host.

— Jenara Kocks Burgess



Read the full versions of these articles at NorthTexasCatholic.org.

Diocese happenings



Father Anto Vijayan Carlose, SAC, speaks at the Diocesan Mission Awareness Day on Dec. 9 at Holy Family Church in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Sister Mary Grace, SV, speaks during a Young Adult Evening of Reflection on Dec. 10 at St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

Doors opened, blessed at St. Peter the Apostle



The new spacious narthex at St. Peter the Apostle Parish. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FORT WORTH — None of us on Earth know if St. Peter will welcome us at the gates of heaven, but a statue of St. Peter, standing with the keys to the kingdom of heaven, now greets the faithful as they enter the new narthex of St. Peter the Apostle Parish.

Bishop Michael Olson blessed the new narthex and church renovations at the west Fort Worth Parish on Nov. 20.

About 250 parishioners attended the Mass and blessing of the completed construction, which include a large narthex, additional seating in the sanctuary, new audio equipment, a larger choir space, and new restrooms.

Previously, some Masses exceeded seating capacity and parishioners stood along the walls and back of the sanctuary.

Planning and fundraising for the much-needed expansion began in 2018, and on Jan. 21, 2023, ground was broken and blessed for the construction.

Still of service



Purple Heart, Silver Star veteran George Webster lives to serve country, church

FORT WORTH — U.S. Army Sgt. Major George Webster, retired, a parishioner at St. Rita Church in Fort Worth, has lived a life of service to his country and to the Catholic church.

A decorated veteran of the Vietnam War who has become a popular usher at St. Rita, Webster was made a member of the Purple Heart Hall of Honor in New Windsor, New York.

It's in recognition of Webster's heroic actions in 1968 while a member of Company D, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division during the Vietnam War.

At St. Rita, Webster is known for his good nature and his booming voice, fellow usher

Dino Ferralli said.

Ferralli said Webster greets parishioners with a big smile when he opens the door for them to enter the church.

"You know, he's just full of real love for people," Ferralli said. "He just makes people feel good coming through the door. He's just full of happiness when he's in the church."

Beyond his jovial nature, Webster, who is 84, is always on guard to ensure no disruptions happen.

"He's kind of a protector in the church," Ferralli said. "He's always got his eyes open, making sure everything goes smoothly."

— Lance Murray



St. Rita parishioner George Webster (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Listening to His Design

Six deacons dive into Catholic Social Teaching at Washington, D.C., workshop

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In fraternity and prayer, six of the diocese’s deacons followed God’s call to learn the complexities of Catholic Social Teaching in late October.

Chosen to attend the annual Catholic Social Teaching program hosted by the Catholic University of America from Oct. 22 to 27 were Deacon Rigoberto Leyva of Fort Worth’s St. Peter the Apostle Parish; Deacon Scott France of Aledo’s Holy Redeemer Parish; Deacon Mark Gannaway of Fort Worth’s Holy Family Parish; Deacon Gus-

tavo Garcia of Arlington’s St. Matthew Parish; Deacon Mauricio Hernández of St. John the Baptizer in Bridgeport, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Decatur, and St. Mary in Jacksboro Parishes; and Deacon Paul Mahoney of Grapevine’s St. Francis of Assisi Parish.

Over the course of a week, the deacons learned from a bevy of dynamic speakers on a wide range of issues branching from the core of Catholic Social Teaching and its three principles.

Human dignity, Dcn. Leyva summarized, is



(L-R): Deacons Gustavo Garcia, Scott France, Paul Mahoney, Mauricio Hernández, Mark Gannaway, Rigoberto Leyva, and Joel Rodriguez. (Courtesy photo/Dcn. Leyva)

the practice of “not treating people as objects”; solidarity is “how the Church should be accompanying people, walking with them, being with them; and subsidiarity, how the Church is giving the flock and those in

need tools for success in life.”

The end result of the whirlwind week of seminars, Dcn. France said, was a certification, a challenge, and a replenished faith.

– Christina Benavides

Generous Giving

#IGiveCatholic donations surpass a million dollars

FORT WORTH — As a result of this year’s #IGiveCatholic 2023 campaign, the 52 participating parishes, schools, and ministries in the Diocese of Fort Worth will receive support from the generous round of stewardship from 1,768 donors for a grand total of \$1,006,713.

The Advancement Foundation team stated that the contributions will “have an incredible impact on building His Kingdom” within the diocese.

They also reported

that “nationwide, \$20,026,981 was raised from 47,665 donors for 1,646 ministries in 52 participating dioceses.

“Fort Worth represented 5.02 percent of all dollars raised during #IGiveCatholic.”

Topping the diocesan leaderboard, Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine raised \$258,870, followed by St. Andrew Catholic School in Fort Worth which raised \$155,534.

2023
IGIVE CATHOLIC

“These gifts ensure that, as a Church, we will continue to thrive and flourish. We are sincerely grateful.”

-Wendy Collins,
Director of Giving at the Advancement Foundation

1,768
FAITHFUL IN THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH GENEROUSLY DONATED FOR A GRAND TOTAL OF:
\$1,006,713

TOP RECIPIENTS

\$258,870 HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRAPEVINE 85 DONORS	\$155,534 ST. ANDREW CATHOLIC SCHOOL FORT WORTH 262 DONORS	\$141,126 MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH ARLINGTON 164 DONORS
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TOTAL RECIPIENTS

18 MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS	17 DIOCESAN SCHOOLS	18 CATHOLIC PARISHES
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HIGHEST # OF DONORS

262 ST. ANDREW CATHOLIC SCHOOL FORT WORTH	169 ST. MARIA GORETTI CATHOLIC SCHOOL ARLINGTON	164 MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH ARLINGTON
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Honored for service

KELLER — Students and faculty at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School celebrated Veterans Day with a program that honored family and friends who served in the U.S. Military.

Deacon Larry Sandoval, who served in the Air Force and Air Force Reserves for a combined 20 years, served as the emcee. The retired lieutenant colonel and graduate of the Air Force Academy flew search and rescue and special operations helicopters, jet trainers, and global cargo and tanker aircraft around the world. The First Gulf War veteran has been a deacon for 14 years.

Several priests and deacons in the diocese are veterans. Read “From enlistment to ordination” at NorthTexasCatholic.org/feature-articles to learn how skills and insights gained from military service prepared them to serve as clergy.



Ray Rottinghaus speaks with Deacon Larry Sandoval. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

REV. SAM FERIX ANTONY JESU ANTONY, SAC

Has been appointed **Adjutant Judicial Vicar**, without prejudice to his current assignment as Parochial Vicar of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Decatur, St. Mary Parish in Jacksboro, and St. John the Baptizer Parish in Bridgeport, effective Nov. 1.

REV. CHRISTOPHER COLOMBUS, SAC

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Mineral Wells and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Graford, effective Nov. 1.

REV. CLAUDIUS STEPHEN MNDOLWA, SAC

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Rita Parish in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Martin de Porres Parish in Prosper, effective Nov. 20.

REV. JOHN PAUL POLISHETTI, SAC

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, effective Nov. 20.

REV. GERARD THOMAS QUIRKE, FSSP

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth, effective Nov. 25.

DEACON MICHAEL JAMES BETANCOURT

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been assigned to St. Mark Parish in Argyle, effective Nov. 27.

MISTER RUBEN CASTAÑEDA

The Holy See has granted the petition of Ruben Castañeda and has dispensed him of the obligation of celibacy and has returned him to the lay state, effective Nov. 27.

SISTER SUSANA ISLAS, MCSH

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been assigned to Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Fort Worth, effective Oct. 30.

IN MEMORIAM



Sister Mary Immaculate of the Holy Spirit, OCD

Sister Mary Immaculate of the Holy Spirit, OCD, died Nov. 9 at the Carmelite monastery.

Born April 6, 1935, in Tampa, Florida, Stella Elizabeth Warner came from a large family.

In 1955, she became a member of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Arlington, where she devoted herself to prayer.

She celebrated her Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession in 2007.

Small Start, Big Impact

Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur mark 150 years of Texas presence

By Matthew Smith

With an attitude in part perhaps, stemming from their modest beginnings, the Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur (SSMN) have long characterized their role as simply trying to do a little good.

“We started out very poor and didn’t have much, just humble beginnings and determination,” Sister Patricia Ridgley said. “I don’t think anybody then thought this was the beginning of a religious order.”

Many others, however, note the sisters’ historic and ongoing contributions as deeply impactful and lasting.

“They have shaped the Church and all of us in profound ways,” said Oblate and former St. Andrew Catholic School Principal Clarice Peninger. “We stand on their shoulders and acknowledge the great debt that we all have for these amazing women.”

About 200 supporters, former students, and fellow religious joined the sisters Nov. 12 at Nolan Catholic High School to celebrate the SSMN’s 150th anniversary in Texas. A significant anniversary, Sr. Patricia said, and one that reminds the sisters of the order’s 1819 founding in Namur, Belgium.

“Though we are firmly rooted in Texas, we are also part of a larger group,” Sr. Patricia said. “That larger group helps us to have deeper, longer roots. It also keeps things in perspective.”

Nonetheless, since the sisters’ 1873 arrival in Waco via train, they went on to found or cofound, among other accomplishments,



About 200 attended the reception in honor of the 150th anniversary of the Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur’s arrival in Texas, held at Nolan Catholic High School on Nov. 12. (NTC/Susan Moses)

numerous Catholic schools including Nolan, Fort Worth’s Our Lady of Victory, and the University of Dallas. Sr. Patricia credited those and other achievements to the grace of God and support of many through the years.

“I want to take this moment to recognize their treasured presence,” Sr. Patricia said. “They had a huge hand in getting us to 150 years.”

Five members of the order traveled to the U.S. in 1863 intent on teaching and helping the poor and disadvantaged. Arriving during the tumult of the Civil War, the sisters settled in Lockport, New York, and quickly established schools. Ten years later, they arrived in Waco greeted by anti-Catholic sentiment, Texas heat, dirty streets, and tornadoes. The sisters nonetheless founded Sacred Heart Academy one week after arriving in Waco and went on to found or cofound additional Texas schools in the years after.

Fort Worth’s St. Joseph Catholic School, founded in 1926 and later merged with All Saints Catholic School, served the city’s Hispanic population whose parents had fled religious prosecution following the 1910 Mexican Revolution and consistently outperformed the neighborhood’s public school.

Our Lady of Victory, then an academy, became in 1956 the first Fort Worth school to desegregate.

“We still have sisters working in schools, parishes, working with refugees and immigrants, outreach, spiritual direction, and retreats,” Sister Yolanda Cruz said. “Catechesis and sacramental preparation is at the heart of what we’re doing in a lot of our parishes.” 🇺🇸

MOMENTOUS

BISHOP OLSON AND PRIESTS GATHER TO CELEBRATE ORDINATION JUBILEES

On Nov. 29, Bishop Michael Olson and the priests of the Diocese of Fort Worth gathered to recognize priests who celebrated milestone anniversaries in 2023.

The event expressed gratitude for priestly vocations and affirmed the collegiality between brother priests. Bishop Olson reminded all the priests, “Your people love you very much. They’re very faithful and protective of you, and they appreciate all of the good work that you do on their behalf. And so do I.”

A few of the honored priests took a moment to share some thoughts with the *NTC*:



55 Years

MONSIGNOR PUBLIUS XUEREB
HOLY REDEEMER PARISH, ALEDO

ON SAINTS:

You go to St. Michael, you can overcome anything. He defends us in the battle — any type of battle.

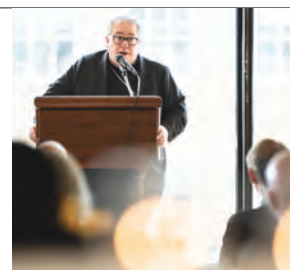
ON PRIESTLY SUPPORT:

The best way to support the priest or the Catholic Church is through prayer. Parishioners may see their priest on Sunday; they may or may not talk to him, but prayer is the most important thing.

**VIEW
MORE
PHOTOS**



View all of the photos of the priests who attended the ordination jubilee: North-Texas-Catholic.Smugmug.com/2023-Ordination-Julibee/ or scan the QR code.



MILESTONES



25 Years

FATHER PHILIP BREMBAH
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL PARISH,
ARLINGTON

ON THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH:

It reminds me of the universality of the Church; the Church is a missionary Church. It reminds me that people everywhere, irrespective of background and culture, are humans, the same people trying to do the best that we can to serve our God and to serve humanity.

ON THE SACRAMENTS:

All the sacraments are very important to me. For instance, baptism gives me the opportunity to be part of the beginning of the journey of faith. The sacraments also give you the opportunity to be with the person, even to the point of death because you performed the sacrament of anointing — a time that you are invited to be with a family, with an individual who has been baptized into the faith. That, for me, is a privilege.

Being able to be part of a sacred moment of a person's life, leading that person from baptism to the point we depart from this earth to our creator is very, very important to me. Besides that, the Eucharist, which is the center of our lives, is also very dear to my heart.



25 Years

FATHER HOA NGUYEN
HOLY FAMILY PARISH,
FORT WORTH

ON HABITS:

I think my best habit is praying, constantly praying. I also like to play golf with fellow priests or parishioners, so we have a connection with each other.

ON ACCOMPANIMENT:

It's a wonderful privilege for us to share with the people the good times, the bad times; in the moment they're in the hospital, in the moment they lost a loved one; the moment of the birth of their child, the moment of the wedding. It's the greatest privilege to share the intimate moments of their life, their family ups and downs, and walk with them, cry with them, laugh with them, and share joy.

Continued on Page 14



15 Years

**FATHER REEHAN ANTONY, SAC
ST. ANN PARISH, BURLESON**



5 Years

**FATHER GERARD QUIRKE, FSS
ST. BENEDICT PARISH,
FORT WORTH**

ON PERSEVERANCE:

Saying a daily Rosary to the Blessed Mother, reading the Scriptures, and the celebration of the Eucharist — these are the things that keep me going in my priestly ministry.

ON THE BLESSINGS OF PRIESTHOOD:

People accept you as their own. Even from the little ones to the eldest ones — they recognize you as their pastor, as their own, and it gives a lot of joy and contentment in my ministry.

ON THE MASS:

It's the source and the summit of our faith and it's the complete nourishment for all that we do. All comes from and centers in that. For me, that's primary.

ON JOY:

What brings me joy is tapping into the service of the priest, being there for people — particularly through the sacraments — and providing for them spiritually. ✚



Bishop Michael Olson shares a laugh with Monsignor Publius Xuereb, who celebrated 55 years of priestly life, during the ordination jubilee celebration on Nov. 29. (NTC photo illustration/Juan Guajardo)

Congratulations to all anniversary celebrants

35 years **FRIAR LUIS GERARDO ARRAIZA, OFM Cap.**
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fort Worth

30 years **REV. GEORGE PULLAMBRAYIL**
St. Mark, Argyle
REV. CHANG JUN LEE
Korean Martyrs, Hurst

25 years **REV. JOHN SWISTOVICH**
Retired

20 years **REV. ROSALINO AGUIRRE BAHENA, CORC**
Holy Name of Jesus, Fort Worth

15 years **REV. JACK MCKONE**
St. John the Apostle Parish, North Richland Hills
REV. MARIANNA FRANCIS CHINTHAMALLA, HGN
St. Joseph, Rhineland; Santa Rosa, Knox City

15 years **REV. ALBERT FRANCIS KANJIRATHUMKAL, HGN**
St. Mary, Henrietta; St. Jerome, Bowie; St. Joseph, Nocona; St. William, Montague

REV. MARIA JOSEPH KIRAN KUMAR PUDOTA, SAC
St. Rita, Ranger; Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, Cisco; St. Francis Xavier, Eastland; St. John, Strawn
REV. JOHN SHANAHAN, TOR
St. Andrew, Fort Worth
REV. VICTOR MANUEL CONTRERAS JUÁREZ, CORC
St. Matthew, Arlington

10 years **REV. PRAKASH DIAS, SAC**
Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Mineral Wells; St. Francis of Assisi, Graford
REV. JOHN PAUL POLISHETTI, SAC
St. Maria Goretti, Arlington

5 years **REV. JONATHAN DEMMA**
Sacred Heart, Wichita Falls
REV. MAURICE MOON
St. Joseph Seminary, Covington, Louisiana



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THE WAY OF THE • wise

Three Kings Day traditions close the Christmas season with cultural and spiritual meaning

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

D*ía de los Reyes* (Three Kings Day) was always a significant holiday for Wanda Ortiz and her family.

“It was a big deal because my mother, Maria Delores, was born on Jan. 6, the Feast of the Three Kings,” explained the native of San Juan, Puerto Rico. “We celebrated for three days.”

When Ortiz moved to Kentucky, she joined relatives in Puerto Rico after Christmas and remained there until the Three Kings Day festivities were over.

Watching three men dressed as kings bring their gifts up to the altar made the *Misa de los Reyes Magos* (Mass of the Wise Men) the most beautiful liturgy of the Christmas season for Ortiz, an All Saints Church in Fort Worth parishioner.

“When we came home from Church, we opened our gifts,” Ortiz remembered. “My grandfather always said my mother’s birth was his gift from the Reyes.”

FOLLOW THE STAR

Little is known in Scripture about the Three Kings who arrived in Bethlehem from the Orient to pay homage to a newborn Jesus. How many visitors came to see the Holy Family, what their status in life was, is unknown.

In his Gospel, Matthew does not call the travelers kings, but the gifts they bring to the Christ child — gold, frankincense, and myrrh — hint at wealth, power, and influence. Their ability to recognize that a significant event in history had occurred by the appearance of a star fulfills a prophecy found in the

Old Testament.

“Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the Lord.” (*Isaiah 60:6*)

Two thousand years later, the Three Kings are remembered every Jan. 6 on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord for their part in the Nativity story and salvation. It’s one of the oldest Christian celebrations dating back to the second century.

In many Western Christian traditions, 12 days of Christmas start with the birth of Jesus on Dec. 25 and culminate with the visit of the Magi — the first Gentiles to witness the manifestation of God in the world.

“They show us that God intends to bring salvation to the whole world and not just a select group,” pointed out Father Tim Thompson, pastor of All Saints Parish.

Scholars believe the Nativity visitors were multicultural astrologers who may have come from different parts of the East.

“The wise men were studying the stars and that’s what led them to Christ,” the pastor added. “It tells us God operates in many ways and means to reach people — even non-Christians.”

The word Epiphany means “manifestation” and several moments in Christ’s early life and ministry are considered “epiphanies,” including His birth in Bethlehem, the visit of the Magi, His baptism by John, and the first miracle at Cana.



A view of a set of statues of the Three Kings at St. Michael Church in Bedford on Dec. 4. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

BEARING GIFTS

Since 1970, U.S. Roman Catholics have observed the Epiphany on the first Sunday after Jan. 1, which falls on Jan. 7 in 2024. The day is recognized liturgically, but in other parts of the world, the arrival of the magi is greeted with parades, special foods, and gift giving.

While American children go to bed on Dec. 24, hoping Santa Claus leaves presents to open the next morning, gifts are delivered by the Magi on Jan. 6 in most Hispanic countries with deeply Catholic roots.

“The Three Kings gave Jesus His first presents, so that’s a big difference between how we exchange gifts in Latin American countries and here,” said Arturo Marrero, a diocesan employee and former resident of Puerto Rico. “Three Kings Day is the biggest celebration of Christmas with a lot of festivities and singing.”

On the eve of Three Kings Day, children are encouraged to fill a shoebox with grass for the camels to eat — a custom

similar to leaving carrots for Santa’s reindeer.

“Santa [has a] commercial purpose, but Three Kings Day is biblical so that’s a different story,” emphasized Marrero, a U.S. Army veteran.

Part of the holiday involves teaching children who the Three Kings were, what they brought, and the meaning of it all. Decorations depicting the Magi are displayed in homes throughout the year and are an important part of Puerto Rican culture.

“I have a picture of the Three Kings with the Puerto Rican flag in my office,” Marrero said proudly. “I miss Three Kings Day — not only the celebrations inside the church but also the community events.”

Growing up in the Basque region of northern Spain, Father Luis Arraiza, OFM Cap., describes the night before *Día de Los Reyes Magos* as a magical time for children.

“It was like believing in Santa, but it was the Three Wise Men who were going

to bring you the gifts,” explained the pastor at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth. “We left milk for the three kings and hay for the camels. Our presents were left by the Nativity set or under the tree.”

Many of the Three Kings Day traditions practiced in Latin American countries today originated in Spain. One of the more flamboyant is the *Cabalgata de los Reyes Magos*, or Three Kings Day parade on Jan. 5. Anticipating the arrival of Three Kings Day, Spanish towns and cities host a festive procession led by three men dressed in turbans and full royal regalia. Accompanied by camels or horses, these pretend kings walk the streets throwing candy to youngsters. Floats, dancers, and music add to the revelry.

Pedro Moreno, who was born in New York City but moved to Puerto Rico as a teenager, learned quickly the advantages to celebrating the Christmas customs of

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both countries.

“We got presents on Christmas and Three Kings Day,” boasted Moreno, a seasoned catechist who teaches adult formation at Our Lady of Guadalupe. “The way it worked in our house was you got new clothes for Christmas but toys for Three Kings Day.”

The bishops in Puerto Rico try to guide their flocks to a proper Advent season, but it’s hard to compete with the enthusiasm the Hispanic culture has for Christmas and *Día de los Reyes*, he observed.

“In New York, you’d see Christmas trees at the curb on Dec. 26, but in Puerto Rico, Christmas is a season that never ends,”

Moreno continued. “Even getting ready for Three Kings, there is so much singing and food.”

ENDURING TRADITION

Rosca de Reyes (or King’s bread) is a staple for the holiday. Baked into the sweet dough is the tiny figure of baby, and finding the trinket symbolizes Jesus revealing Himself as the Son of God to the kings.

Despite the festivities and special dishes, Three Kings Day remains a very religious holiday in the island country. When a designated trio of men dress up as kings to visit the various churches and towns in the days before *Día de los Reyes*, their appearance is announced in the parish bulletin so children can greet them.

“The Three Kings that came to see Jesus are not Jews or Romans. They are from the Orient and receive a message, in their own way, that God has come to visit us,” Moreno asserted. “And they bring Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh — gifts representative of the life of Jesus.”

Gold indicates He is a King; frankincense is offered to gods; and myrrh symbolizes the suffering that is part of His future.

“Epiphany is the manifestation of God not just to Hebrews but the whole world,” he continued. “Other nations are represented in the Magi, and they demonstrate salvation is for everyone. It’s a wonderful example of evangelization.”

After leaving Cuba, Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda’s parents relocated to Puerto Rico where she celebrated the Christmas holidays with a Cuban flavor.

“I was in a culture that celebrated the Three Kings in a special way as part of Christmas,” said the Catholic author of books on Blessed Stanley Rother, Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe, and Mary of Nazareth. “It wasn’t until I moved to the States, married, and started having kids that I had to figure out how do we do that here.”

When her children were young, the mother of four carried on the Jan. 6 tradition by setting out boxes of hay for the camels and then leaving her youngsters three simple gifts to find in the morning.

Today, Scaperlanda carries on the rituals of her heritage with grandchildren who, in full costume, reenact the Nativity and the visit from the Three Kings on the Epiphany. Having an older grandchild read Scripture and blessing the house with holy water are part of the family’s celebration.

All three generations of Scaperlandas gather to print the initials of the three kings (traditionally known as Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar) with the year above the home’s front door in chalk.

“You do this on Three Kings Day to symbolize how you should welcome people into your home,” the Catholic journalist said, explaining the ancient tradition. “It’s a reminder of the welcome the Magi gave to Jesus.”

It is also popularly believed the Three Kings’ initials stand for “*Christus mansionem benedicat*” (“Christ bless this house”), and serve as a way of dedicating the home and the New Year to God.

“Traditions that combine our faith with our culture are essential,” Scaperlanda said. “Recognizing celebrations like Three Kings Day help us witness to other people that Christmas is not over after the New Year. We seek Jesus, and we want to welcome anyone looking for faith into our circle.” 🇵🇷



(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



'Tis always the season

“Christmas time is here, families drawing near. Oh, that we could always see such spirit through the year.” This lyric from Vince Guaraldi Trio dates back to 1965 and the first showing of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. It’s one of my favorite Christmas songs from a favorite Christmas program.

The sentiment in this verse speaks of the joy, comfort, and closeness we feel with our families over the holidays. There are so many traditions around food, decorations, gift-giving, and movie-watching, and these experiences bring us together and help us celebrate. Added to these are the spiritual rituals like Advent calendars, St. Nicholas shoes, Posada celebrations, Nativity scenes, and Christmas Mass.

Reflecting on this lyric got me wondering why it’s hard to have the closeness we feel around Thanksgiving and Christmas all year long. I imagine there are a variety of reasons, one of which is intentionality. The holidays have a lot of traditions that come along with them and we make sure we don’t miss any of them.

There are movies we never miss,

be that *A Christmas Story*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *It’s Wonderful Life*, or the prolific spate of Hallmark Christmas movies begging for a family marathon with cocoa and marshmallows. There are traditions around trimming the tree and decorating the house, preparing particular foods, and let’s not forget about the Christmas carols that some people start listening to when they turn off the porch light on Halloween night.



Jeff Hedglen

Each of these (and many other) traditions we painstakingly make sure happen. In other words, we are intentional about how we celebrate these holidays. But the rest of the year we are somewhere between lackadaisical to clueless when it comes to being intentional with our families. Once Jan. 2 hits, we are back to the normal routine.

Imagine for a moment what it would be like if our families had a monthly game night, or a standing weekly dinner that everyone made a priority, or an evening ritual of lighting a candle and saying a few prayers. If our families are separated by distance we can schedule video calls, send cards for birthdays and anniversaries, send surprise gifts

through the mail, or just send random texts. Simple, intentional things like this can foster the spirit we feel during the Christmas season, in all the seasons of the year.

The celebrations around the birth of Jesus are special mostly because we are celebrating the coming of our Savior. Yet sadly even the sacredness of this truth can too often be packed up and stored away with our decorations in the attic until the next year. Somehow, we can forget that Jesus, and His mercy, is born anew each day.

Taking time each day, even just a couple of moments, to remember that God loves us so much that He came to earth as a little child, lived, suffered, died, and rose again for us, can bring the joy of Christmas to us every day.

The truth, beauty, and goodness of Christmas is not confined to just one season. With a little planning, a little focus, and a little intentionality, we can find that Christmas time is here all through the year. 🇺🇸

Jeff Hedglen is the campus minister at the University Catholic Community at the University of Texas in Arlington.



Kristin O'Brien (left) and Clara Liduzka (right) pray the Rosary outside Planned Parenthood in east Fort Worth on Dec. 4. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

SUPPORT ON THE SIDEWALKS

Sidewalk advocates in Arlington and Fort Worth support mothers in crisis with God's love and kindness

By Christina Benavides

Christine Antolin, the Respect Life coordinator of St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, had been volunteering with 40 Days for Life when she came across a sidewalk advocate who expressed the need for more people to help bring a “loving, peaceful, woman-oriented solution to abortion” through “prayer and peaceful outreach.”

Working closely with the parish groups who make their vigil at the locations for 40 Days for Life as well as for other ministries, sidewalk advocates are volunteers who receive training and

pledge a “commitment to a peaceful, prayerful, and law-abiding approach” to provide women who visit abortion clinics with resources and information.

After all, Antolin noted, “so many people may know where the Planned Parenthood is in the neighborhood, but they don’t know about the pregnancy resources.” Once the information is shared, women have an opportunity to realize “there’s hope, and there are people out there, a community, and places that will offer them assistance, whether it’s financial, medical, spiritual, or things like that.”

Since joining other volunteers

in praying outside of three Planned Parenthood locations in the Diocese of Fort Worth, Antolin has helped equip countless women with support and kindness.

As a Sidewalk Advocate for Life, Antolin believes, “It is so important that people are there to let [the mother in crisis] know that you’re not alone, whether it’s your job or you don’t have a supportive family member or support system, there are people that will walk with you through this journey.”

Daylong training for new sidewalk advocates is often hosted at different parishes, Antolin said. However, just as the



Kristin O'Brien prays the Rosary outside Planned Parenthood in east Fort Worth on Dec. 4. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

advocates strive to provide warm support to the women they encounter, new advocates are welcome to remain in prayer until “the Holy Spirit gives the opportunity, and then we just share.”

Antolin’s husband, for example, “initially didn’t feel comfortable offering or approaching anyone,” she shared. But at the sight of a couple of teenagers sitting in a car, “the Holy Spirit just kind of moved in his heart to reach out, and the [girl’s] friend took the information.”

Some people, she explained, are quick to step into the role and others learn more gradually. But the entire experience is “such a beautiful gift” to help women and provide them with information and services that other pregnancy resource centers provide.

“You hear so many of these stories of people saying, ‘If somebody had been there; had I known; had somebody been there to offer help’; or ‘I wish I had never had the abortion,’” Antolin described.

Providing that support and access to alternative options is what drives her to invite others to join her in her sidewalk advocacy.

“We are striving to cover the three locations,” Antolin said. “Our aim and

our goal is to cover every hour that they’re open in prayer. It would be an ideal situation to have at least one person praying while the other person is there available for sidewalk advocacy.”

The community of people praying outside the centers represent all different types of backgrounds, professions, or faiths, and who, like Antolin, are very aware that abortion is now illegal in Texas.

“It does not mean it’s not happening,” she stated, which is why “when we’re out there, we’re still thinking of all our brothers and sisters in all the other states and countries where it occurs, so we’re praying locally and across the boundaries of people.”

The occupational therapist admitted to nighttime thoughts of “the women who are in the middle of the abortion pill process at home, alone, and very scared.”

In one of her greatest moments of need, a woman will wake up in pain and see red.

“How much blood is too much blood?” Antolin imagines more than one young girl has asked herself during the night after taking the abortion pills.

“These young girls and women are

having the abortion at home [with the use of abortion medication], and going through all this trauma,” she said.

Antolin’s prayers and volunteer work as an advocate help her focus on the hope that abortion will end.

The inconveniences and difficulties she may weather “are nothing compared to how that woman, or that young teenage girl, feels like when she’s at home, alone, or when she’s at the abortion center.”

Antolin admires how, as an organization, the Sidewalk Advocates for Life — a national program based in Allen, Texas, that coordinates the support, tools, and training for the hundreds of advocacy programs in the country — places importance on protecting and loving the mother in crisis.

God is always first and foremost in the advocates’ minds, Antolin stated, which is how they can “approach the woman first with her in mind, and then the baby, and then [address] God.

“Because if she’s just in that storm of turmoil and anxiety and something has made her think that her only best option is for her child’s life to end, and if we can address that issue and make her feel safe, then everybody wins.” 🇺🇸



More than just an EDUCATION

Current and former students and teachers in the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth weigh in on the importance of Catholic education

By Sandra Engelland

When Clint Bezner graduates from Sacred Heart Catholic School in Muenster in the spring, with plans to attend the University of Texas at Arlington next fall, he takes with him a solid foundation in both academics and faith.

Bezner said the small class sizes and one-on-one attention from teachers has helped him thrive academically as he is both challenged and encouraged.

But even more important is his faith that has been strengthened, from pre-school through high school.

He's had the opportunity to attend Mass several times a week and to learn how education and faith are intertwined.

"We're exposed to faith constantly," he said, not just in religion class and Mass, but understanding the material with the view of religion.

"It's not religion *and* life; it's integrating faith into your life and becoming more and more integrated," Bezner said.

Sacred Heart has helped him develop his skills in his two favorite activities: music and art.

He recently began playing piano at Mass.

His art classes have helped him learn the creative process and get exposure as

◀ Nolan Catholic High School opened its school year with Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson on Aug. 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. More than 600 students attended the liturgy. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

an artist by entering and winning awards at contests for the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo and the Catholic Daughters of the Americas.

Next, he's planning to use his art skills and creativity in studying architecture at UTA.

For anyone considering attending Catholic schools, Bezner said, "It's worth it."

"We know we're all a family, and we can step up for each other in the faith and in whatever happens," he said.

FIRM FAITH

For Patrice Hall, Catholic schools have been a part of her family for as long as she can remember.

Her parents and grandparents attended Catholic schools.

She went to St. Rita Catholic School in Fort Worth and Nolan Catholic High School. Her husband, Wes Hall, attended St. Andrew Catholic School in Fort Worth and Nolan.

Their four children have all attended Catholic schools, first St. Andrew, then Nolan. They now have a junior and a freshman still at Nolan, one at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, and a recent college graduate.

Patrice and Wes Hall wanted their children to attend Catholic schools for the academics because they both were well prepared for college.

"What we learned later on as parents was the strong spiritual foundation they were getting," Patrice said.

Because of what her children were learning about the Catholic faith, Patrice found her own faith growing.

In today's American society where strong values may be criticized — what Patrice called "a sort of educational emergency, culturally" — she sees her children as spiritually mature and firm in the faith.

"Spiritually, Wes and I are really grateful for the evangelization that has



The school day begins with Mass celebrated by Father Hoa Nguyen on the first day of school for Holy Family Catholic School, Aug. 15. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

come to us through them," Hall said. "We're grateful as parents to see the faith of our college and high school-age children."

While teaching third grade at Holy Family Catholic School in Fort Worth, Patrice is continuing her Catholic education, studying for a master's of school leadership at Benedictine College.

TEACHING TRUTH

Kenny Scagel, who teaches Latin, theology, and literature at Cassata Catholic High School, didn't grow up attending Catholic schools, although his mother did in the 1950s.

He began to connect with his faith at

age 24 while a student at the College of St. Thomas More in Fort Worth, which closed in 2014.

Scagel began to learn how everything connects to God and the Church.

"The Western tradition in humanities grows out of the Church," he said.

To try to teach intellectual concepts without God is to ignore "the fullness of truth," but much of the current education system tries to do just that, he said.

Students at Cassata Catholic High School also have the opportunity to practice their faith by praying and attending Mass.

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“We see theology not as a side extra, but as the center of intellectual life,” Scagel said.

He called Cassata “the best place I’ve ever worked.”

The faculty work well together and give students plenty of individual attention so they can progress at their own pace.

Some of their students have attended Catholic schools since pre-K, while others are previously unchurched. Seeing those students with no church background grow in their faith is a wonderful reward.

“My favorite thing is to have a kid who says, ‘I didn’t think this was what Christians were like,’” he said.

JESUS AT THE CENTER

Regina Praetorius has a freshman son at Cassata who grew up in Catholic schools, first attending St. Maria Goretti Catholic School in Arlington.

She called Cassata “a beautiful blessing.” Her son is blossoming academically there because of the personal attention he’s received and the ability to go at his own pace.

“He enjoys school, and they’re able to tailor his education for what he feels God is calling him to do,” Praetorius said.

Her younger son is a fifth grader at St. Maria Goretti.

She grew up attending Catholic schools, as did both of her parents, although they had to sacrifice to make tuition payments.

Praetorius wants other families in the diocese to know that there is financial assistance available.

She hopes to see more students attending Catholic schools in the diocese because of the strong academics and how faith is woven into every content area imaginable, she said.

The classical, faith-filled education prepares students for the challenges they face now and in the future.

Praetorius wants her sons to “keep Jesus at the center of everything they do” and to love others.

“I hope that ‘love one another’ is always at the forefront of how they treat others,” she said.

GLORIFY GOD

Natalie Paulus, who has been teaching for 18 years at Immaculate

Conception Catholic School in Denton, said she enjoys helping her first-grade students learn about the liturgical year and sharing the love of Jesus.

She said that Catholic education helps them thrive intellectually and spiritually.

“Academically, the curriculum challenges their intellect, and I would say produces compassionate, critical thinkers,” she said.

Daily instruction is balanced with virtue, discipline, and making connections to God’s abiding beauty.

“Our students are taught to look at the world through the lens of God,” she said. “They learn to be stewards of the Earth, become servant leaders, and respect and treat all persons with dignity.”

The students’ spiritual development is a priority.

The highlight of the week is celebrating the Eucharist with the community, she said, and students also have opportunities to experience Adoration and pray throughout the day.

“They learn that there is something greater than themselves and that they are called to use their God-given gifts to glorify God,” Paulus said. 🇺🇸

Bishop Michael Olson talks with students at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Classical School during his visit on Sept. 21, 2022. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)





Front: Harleigh Fowler. Back from left to right: Melody Sanchez, Navigator; Laura Sotelo, Director of Endowment; and Alyse Chung, Director of Communications. (Courtesy photo/CCFW)

A decade's time in Wichita Falls

By Mary Lou Seewoester

“Our life before Catholic Charities was hard,” Blanca Gutierrez recently told an audience at a Creating Hope event for Catholic Charities Fort Worth Northwest Campus.

“Catholic Charities played a big role in making sure we were set up for success,” she added.

After graduating high school, Gutierrez enrolled in the Licensed Vocational Nursing program at North Central Texas College in Graham, but did not have the funds to finish. She tried several times to return to school, but financial and situational barriers kept her out of the classroom. Everything changed in 2018 when she discovered Education Navigation at CCFW Northwest Campus in Wichita Falls.

Gutierrez and her husband, Victor, worked with a CCFW navigator on time management, goal setting, and creating a budget. With that guidance and support, Blanca exceeded her original goal and earned a master’s degree in nursing. Today,

she works as a nurse practitioner and serves on the NCTC Graham Board of Regents.

As the Northwest Campus approaches its 10th anniversary this March, Education Navigation has become its largest program, serving 454 students in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Laura Sotelo, who was director of CCFW’s Northwest Services when the campus opened in 2014, said she and the campus planning committee, Northwest Advisory Board, and Father Jack McKone, then pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls, worked together for several years to bring the permanent campus to Wichita Falls. Since then, CCFW Northwest has served about 8,000 people and has grown from a handful of staff to a team of 28 supporting three major programs, Sotelo said.

The **Veterans Service Center** offers on-site mental health counseling for veterans, active-duty military, their families, and spouses of deceased veterans. Legal Aid of Northwest Texas consults with veterans twice monthly, and a partnership with Recovery Resource Council finds housing

for homeless veterans.

The **Community Connections Program** served nearly 500 in 2023 with strategic financial assistance, help with medical and pharmacy costs, and holistic case management.

Education Navigation began in 2015 with one navigator at NCTC in Graham. Today, 11 navigators at eight junior colleges and three universities help students reach educational goals and financial stability.

Education Navigation student Harleigh Fowler told the Creating Hope audience that she was born with multiple medical problems including club feet and a cleft palate which contributed to struggles with her confidence. Her navigator supported her with more than goal-setting and financial help.

“My navigator, Melody, has brought me out of my darkest times,” she said. “[She] always encourages me and reminds me of who I am and how far I have come.

“I look forward to the day that I can be a donor to a student who has felt the way I do and give them the hope that I was given,” she added. 🇺🇸



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LEANING INTO LENT

New approaches to old traditions of fasting,
prayer, and almsgiving

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Holiday wreaths and ornaments were just taken down, people are still vacuuming up pine needles left behind by the Christmas tree, and it's already time to start thinking about Lent.

Ash Wednesday falls on Feb. 14 — Valentine's Day in 2024. The onset of the penitential season is early, coming a scant 12 days after Candlemas, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, on Feb. 2. Some Catholics consider Candlemas the official end of Christmas.

Entering into a time of fasting and sacrifice after weeks of celebration can be difficult, observed Jodi Hunt, executive director of the Neuhoff Institute for Ministry and Evangelization at the University of Dallas. But there are strategies to make the transition easier.

"Our liturgical seasons are set up in a way that allows you to lean in and lean back. If you embrace the idea that Christmas is a time to wind down, it prepares you for the desert of Lent a little bit more," she advised.

The seasoned theology professor admitted giving up simple pleasures like chocolate or coffee while coping with chilly winter weather and post-holiday letdown can become overwhelming for some people.

"When Lent comes up so quickly [after

Christmas], I tell people to think of it as a time of discernment and quiet solitude rather than a period of 'I can't have this or that,'" Hunt continued. "Think of ways you can disengage [from the secular world] and embrace God's love in a way that renews you. Lean into what the season offers and evaluate where you are spiritually."

A colleague of the educator turns off her phone every Sunday after Mass until sundown. Disconnecting from social media for those few hours was "life-changing" for her friend.

Giving up social media is a popular and positive Lenten practice, she said, adding, "scrolling on your phone is a mindless activity and you forget how those behaviors consume you."

Other people the director knows give up meat entirely during Lent or impose dietary restrictions that allow them to engage in the season sacrificially. One former co-worker declined invitations to parties and another avoided shopping trips. Some of her friends turn off the car radio and travel to work in silence to prompt moments of meditation.

"It [a Lenten practice] doesn't have to be anything monumental — just small, daily life things as long as they are intentional," she pointed out. "Be creative. Use what you



Father Reehan Antony, SAC, imposes ashes during an Ash Wednesday Mass at St. Mary Church in Jacksboro, March 2, 2022. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

do to engage God and really think about Him.”

And if life circumstances prevent “giving up” something physically, Hunt encouraged “giving more” during Lent. The traditional pillars of Lent include prayer and almsgiving along with fasting.

“Decide this year you’re going to be more fruitful by saying a daily Rosary or going to daily Mass,” she suggested. “Volunteer for a ministry or increase tithing. Don’t box yourself in to spending Lent the same way every year. It really is a spiritual process.”

Some people just naturally lean into the sacrificial life, but others shouldn’t feel “less than” if they’re unable to do that.

“The season is different for every single person and that’s okay,” Hunt explained. “As long as you’re prayerfully discerning, exploring, and thinking through how you can connect to God

during this important time, it’s all He’s asking you to do.”

LENTEN CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

During Lent, Catholics worldwide unite in ways that help them contemplate the suffering of Christ through prayer and selfless acts. Aside from the days of fasting and abstinence mandated for the universal Church, there are devotions and ethnic customs unique to different countries and cultures during the penitential season.

In the Maronite Catholic Church, the Season of Great Lent begins on Ash Monday, a day of fasting that requires members to abstain from eating and drinking (except water and medicine) from midnight until noon. The rest of the day’s normal meals can be taken without meat.

Many Maronite Catholics of Lebanese heritage continue to adhere to the Church’s traditional Lenten dietary restrictions that include eliminating fish, dairy, and eggs from their meals along with meat. Members are exempt from fasting and abstaining on Saturday, Sunday, and feast days. During the week, cooked meals are vegetarian or vegan.

Residents of Mexico celebrate Día de La Samaritana on the fourth Friday of Lent by giving away water, ice cream, and fruit to passersby as a way of remembering the Samaritan woman who gave Jesus water at the well.

Another Lenten custom is devoted to the Blessed Virgin. Known as Viernes de Dolores or Friday of Sorrows, the people of Mexico prepare altars with images of Calvary at the entrance of their homes

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Deacon Mauricio Hernandez imposes ashes on parishioners during an Ash Wednesday Mass at St. Mary Catholic Church in Jacksboro on March 2, 2022. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



Brianna Hernandez (center) and her sister (right) pray after receiving ashes during the Ash Wednesday Mass at St. Rose of Lima Parish on Feb. 22, 2023. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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on the Friday before Palm Sunday. The altars are filled with lit candles or fire pots to represent the immense pain the Blessed Virgin experienced during the passion and death of her son.

Holy water, for use in blessing homes, is traditionally passed out during Lent in Italy. In Bermuda, families fly kites made with wooden sticks on Good Friday to symbolize both the cross Jesus died on and His Ascension.

Members of the Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate came to Fort Worth in 2011 bringing with them many of their Vietnamese customs and traditions. During Lent, the religious order follows Church teaching by engaging in various

acts of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving along with some special practices.

“We have Stations of the Cross every Friday rather than one Friday a month, which is what we do during Ordinary Time,” said Dominican Sister Anne Frances Ai Le. “Spiritually, each sister strives to do extra prayers of choice to grow closer to Christ.”

As a community, the congregation eats no meat on Wednesdays in addition to small meatless meals on Fridays.

“At the end of Lent, the money that is saved from those meals is donated to a particular cause or family in need,” disclosed the sister, who works as assistant director of intellectual formation in the diocesan permanent diaconate program.

The educator thinks Christians shouldn’t think of Lent only in terms of sacrifice and drudgery.

“The purpose of Lent is to cultivate virtues — not just give up things,” Sr. Anne Frances explained. “Put into practice good habits and spiritual exercises. That’s what helps us conform to Christ.”

TEACHING HOW TO GIVE

Learning about the Lenten practices of almsgiving, fasting, and prayer starts early at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound.

Students in kindergarten through 12th grade religious education program support two charities with their prayers and donations — the Haitian Pilgrims



A young man prays alongside his family after Ash Wednesday Mass at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Glen Rose, Feb. 22, 2023. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

and the Divine Face in Nigeria.

“It’s important for any Catholic parent to help their child understand what it means to be Catholic and giving, especially during Lent. Knowing the three practices of Lent is a huge lesson to learn,” said Kim Carr, director of elementary formation. “Teaching these habits when a child’s heart is young and pure helps them as they age and go into adulthood.”

Each Lent, the youngsters and teens are asked to abstain from a favorite food, activity, or shopping and put the money saved into a special alms box.

“One child started a lemonade stand. Her mother put it on social media, and she raised \$500,” enthused the seasoned catechist who’s worked at the parish 17 years. “Another child held a family art show, sold her art, and donated the money. We encourage them to be inventive.”

Last year, students raised \$2,600 which was split evenly between both charities. Praying the Haitian and Nigerian youngsters can have a better life is part of the project.

“It helps them understand all the things we take for granted that these children don’t have: food, shelter, education, and clothing,” Carr explained. “Their faces are priceless when we count and sort the money at the last class before Easter. They’re always so happy to know we’re helping other children.”

MAKING LENT MEANINGFUL

The late Pope Benedict XVI called observing Lent “the very badge of Christian warfare ... Should mankind grow remiss in its observance of Lent, it would be a detriment to God’s glory, a disgrace to the Catholic religion, and a danger to Christian souls.”

Want to make Lent more meaningful and positive? Try these suggestions:

1. Read the *Gospel of Mark*; the most concise story of Jesus’ life.
2. As part of almsgiving, learn more about a particular social issue like human trafficking, child poverty, or racism. Donate money to an organization that supports the dignity of the human person.
3. Contact important people in your life you’ve lost touch with over the years. Make 40 phone calls.
4. Join or start a spiritual book club.
5. Become inspired by the Corporal Works of Mercy as described in *Matthew 25:31-46*. Choose an act of service .🇺🇸

NOW AND TEN

A look at the first decade of
Bishop Michael Olson's episcopacy

By Susan Moses

Where do the years go? In a bustle of ordinations, confirmations, parish dedications, and much more — if you are Bishop Michael Olson, who will mark the 10th anniversary of his ordination and installation as the fourth bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth on Jan. 29.

His leadership has been demonstrated in the expected — population growth in North Texas — and the unexpected — a global pandemic.

Here's a brief look at some of the major events and accomplishments from the first 10 years of Bishop Olson's episcopacy.

SECURING THE FUTURE

In many parts of the country, dioceses must shut down or consolidate parishes due to a shrinking Catholic population.

Not so in the Diocese of Fort Worth, which currently has construction projects underway totaling \$105 million to construct, expand, or renovate 39 parishes and schools. And that doesn't count recent expansions at St. Andrew Catholic School,

Nolan Catholic High School, St. Francis of Assisi Parish, and Holy Cross Parish.

In the 10 years since Bishop Olson's installation, the estimated number of Catholics in the diocese has grown from 700,000 to 1.2 million, and Bishop Olson has established three new parishes. The research process of projecting demographic growth and finding sites for future parishes continues.

Stephen Becht, chief operating officer and chief financial officer for the diocese, said the bishop's decisions on new locations, church design, and financial obligations look ahead to the future spiritual and fiscal stability of the diocese.

NO ONE TOO SMALL

The diocese comprises more than a million Catholics, 28 counties, and nearly 24,000 square miles, but Bishop Olson stated, "No one is too small; no one is too far."

Some communities are large, such as Hispanic ministry. "It's wonderful the way [Bishop Olson] is not just providing what

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▲ Bishop Michael Olson prays during the 50th Anniversary Mass for the Diocese of Fort Worth, held Aug. 21, 2019, at the Fort Worth Convention Center. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Han pasado diez años

Una mirada a los
primeros diez años del
episcopado del
Obispo Michael Olson

Por Susan Moses

¿Cómo pasa el tiempo!
Los pasados diez años se esfumaron en medio del bullicio de numerosas ordenaciones, confirmaciones, dedicaciones de parroquias y muchísimas otras cosas... para el Obispo Michael Olson, que cumple el 29 de enero el décimo aniversario de su ordenación e instalación como el cuarto obispo de la

Diócesis de Fort Worth.

Su liderazgo ha quedado demostrado tanto en los sucesos que se anticipaban, como por ejemplo el gran crecimiento de la población del norte de Texas, como también en los acontecimientos inesperados como la pandemia global del COVID-19.

En este artículo se dará un breve resumen de los principales eventos y logros

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we need for our growth, but he's walking with us as well, being present in different events," said Deacon Rigoberto Leyva, diocesan director of Hispanic Ministry.

Other communities are quite small, such as the Deaf Community. Bishop Olson celebrates Mass with them about once each year and provides resources for interpretation of diocesan Masses, said Deaf Community Coordinator Connie Martin.

The Ghanaian Catholic Community celebrates a weekly Mass in English and Twi, and Bishop Olson is helping begin a monthly Mass in Igbo for Nigerians. The diocese also has parishes that celebrate Mass in Vietnamese, Korean, and Latin.

For nearly 100 years, Our Mother of Mercy Parish has been a faith home for African Americans in Fort Worth. Parishioners Art and Cynthia Sanford appreciated Bishop Olson designating the historic church as the primary Door of Mercy during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in 2015-2016.

Cynthia said, "Even though we are a small Catholic Church, I loved it because it gave other people the knowledge to come and see who we were and what we were about." More than 5,000 pilgrims visited the parish that year.

Art remembered Bishop Olson "was really concentrating, focusing, praying about Our Mother of Mercy," adding that the bishop visits the parish at least once every year.

CULTURE OF VOCATIONS

To meet future spiritual needs of the growing diocese, Bishop Olson prioritizes building a culture of vocations, according to Director of Vocations Father Brett Metzler.

Since his installation as Fort Worth's bishop, the prelate has ordained 29 men to the priesthood, and 29 more are in formation.

But it's not a simple matter of quantity, explained Fr. Metzler. "His emphasis is 'Is this man really called? Is he good for the Church?' He doesn't want to set somebody up for failure."

Bishop Olson has increased awareness of religious vocations by encouraging pastors and Catholic schools to promote vocations and by increasing the visibility of seminarians through summer assignments at parishes, visits to schools, and diocesan events. Fr. Metzler has noted attendance at discernment events has increased from "two men, who were pretty serious, to anywhere from 20 to 50 people."

Fr. Metzler said Bishop Olson plays "an incredibly active role" from the earliest stages of discernment. He often attends discernment events, and he meets with seminarian candidates and their families.

His involvement persists through formation. The bishop visits the three seminaries that educate diocesan men at least

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Bishop Olson pauses his tour of the new church at St. Mark Parish in Argyle to pose with a construction worker on Oct. 25. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Bishop Michael Olson dedicates the new church for St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound on Feb. 22, 2022. (NTC/Joseph Barringhaus)



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de los primeros diez años del episcopado del Obispo Olson.

CON MIRAS AL FUTURO

Varias diócesis en diferentes partes del país han tenido que cerrar o consolidar parroquias debido a que la población católica ha ido disminuyendo.

Si bien esta situación ocurre en otros lugares, no es así en la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Se están llevando a cabo múltiples proyectos de construcción, cuyo costo total se estima en unos \$105 millones para construir, ampliar o renovar treinta y nueve parroquias y escuelas. En esta cifra no se incluye el costo de las expansiones recientes de St. Andrew Catholic School, Nolan Catholic High School, la Parroquia de St. Francis of Assisi y la Parroquia de Holy Cross.

Desde la instalación del Obispo Olson hace diez años el número estimado de católicos de la Diócesis ha crecido de 700,000 a 1.2 millones de feligreses. Durante este período, el Obispo estableció tres parroquias nuevas. Hoy día, se siguen haciendo estudios para estimar el crecimiento demográfico del área y se continúa la búsqueda de posibles lugares para establecer parroquias en el futuro.

Stephen Becht, el Director de Operaciones y Finanzas de la Diócesis, señala que la decisión del Obispo Olson con respecto a las nuevas ubicaciones de las parroquias, el diseño de las iglesias y las obligaciones financieras miran hacia la estabilidad espiritual y fiscal de la Diócesis en el futuro.

NADIE ES INSIGNIFICANTE

La Diócesis de Fort Worth comprende más de un millón de católicos, veintiocho condados y un territorio de aproximadamente veinticuatro mil millas cuadradas. No obstante, el Obispo afirmó que “nadie es insignificante; y nadie está muy lejos”. Algunas comunidades son muy grandes, como, por ejemplo, los hispanos. “Es maravillosa la forma en que el Obispo Olson no sólo nos brinda lo que necesitamos para el crecimiento de nuestro ministerio, sino que también camina con nosotros y nos acompaña en diferentes eventos”, dijo el Diácono Rigoberto

Leyva, Director Diocesano del Ministerio Hispano.

En cambio, hay otras comunidades que son muy pequeñas, como la comunidad de los sordos. El Obispo celebra Misa con ellos aproximadamente una vez al año y proporciona los recursos que se necesitan para tener intérpretes en las Misas de la Diócesis, comentó Connie Martin, la Coordinadora del Ministerio de Sordos.

La comunidad católica de Ghana celebra una Misa semanal en inglés y twi. El Obispo Olson está ayudando a comenzar además una Misa mensual en igbo para los nigerianos. La Diócesis tiene también parroquias que celebran Misa en vietnamita, coreano y latín.

UNA CULTURA QUE CULTIVA LAS VOCACIONES

“El cultivo de las vocaciones es una gran prioridad del Obispo Olson para llenar las necesidades espirituales futuras de la creciente diócesis”, apuntó el Padre Brett Metzler, el Director de Vocaciones.

Desde su instalación como Obispo de Fort Worth, el prelado ha ordenado veintinueve hombres al sacerdocio y hay actualmente en el seminario veintinueve hombres más en el proceso de formación al sacerdocio.

Es importante señalar que para el Obispo no se trata simplemente de una cuestión de cantidad, explicó el Padre Metzler. “El énfasis de nuestro Obispo es: ‘¿Siente verdaderamente este hombre el llamado al sacerdocio? ¿Es bueno para la Iglesia?’ Él no quiere que nadie se sienta que va dirigido al fracaso”.

Gracias al Obispo Olson se ha acrecentado la conciencia sobre las vocaciones religiosas en la Diócesis, ya que constantemente alienta a los párrocos y a las escuelas católicas a promover las vocaciones.

El Obispo ha dado también más visibilidad a los seminaristas al asignarlos durante el verano a servir en las parroquias, y mediante sus visitas de ellos a las escuelas y eventos diocesanos. El Padre Metzler ha visto que la asistencia a los eventos de discernimiento ha aumentado de manera significativa. Sin duda, hoy día

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MILESTONES

2014

- On Jan. 29, Bishop Olson ordained and installed as Fort Worth's fourth bishop
- St. Jude Parish in Mansfield dedicates new church

2016

- St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth dedicates new church

2018

- Cristo Rey Fort Worth opens
- Fort Worth hosts V National Encuentro

2020

- St. John Paul II Parish in Denton dedicates new church

2021

- Bishop ordains six men to priesthood, largest class in diocesan history

2015

- St. Martin de Porres Parish established in Frisco
- St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth established

2017

- New building for St. Martin de Porres school opens in Flower Mound
- St. Martin de Porres Parish Hall completed in Flower Mound

2019

- Bishop celebrates 25th anniversary of priesthood
- Holy Trinity Mission in Azle becomes parish

2022

- St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Roanoke established
- St. Mark Parish in Argyle breaks ground on new church
- St. Philip the Apostle's new church is dedicated in Flower Mound
- Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche breaks ground on new church

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once each semester, meeting with the seminarians, the priests, and the faculty. "And if he needs to be there, he'll be there within the day, probably," explained Fr. Metzler.

Fr. Metzler remembers the encouragement he received from the bishop when he was a seminarian. He explained, "It was so helpful because you can get so caught up in your tasks in seminary that you lose the big picture. Bishop really helps seminarians keep the big picture of the diocese and the needs of the people in front of their mind, which for me was the energy to fuel me to keep going."

After ordination, the bishop hosts quarterly meetings for priests ordained fewer than 10 years to provide ongoing formation, an opportunity to grow as brothers, and a time to hear any questions or problems.

Under Bishop Olson's leadership, Fr. Metzler said, "All the priests know that we can be authentically Catholic, teach what the Catholic Church teaches, defend what the Catholic Church defends. Bishop Olson is going to back us up 100 percent in case you run into difficulty.

"We feel not only safe but empowered to live our priesthood well and faithfully," Fr. Metzler said.

PERMANENT DEACONS

"One of the early things [Bishop Olson] did when he came was to reinstate the deacon formation program," recalled Deacon Don Warner, diocesan director of deacons. "He feels that deacons are an asset to the diocese."

After reviving formation for permanent deacons, in 2020 Bishop Olson had the privilege of ordaining the first class of permanent deacons in 11 years: 24 men. And in 2022, he ordained 10 more. More men who are currently in the five-year formation program for the permanent diaconate will be ordained in 2024 and 2025.

Permanent deacons play an important role in parish and community life in the diocese.

"Deacons are not here to take the place of the priest, but we're here to assist the work of the bishop," said Dcn. Warner, who explained many deacons assist with outreach to the poor and chaplaincy in prisons and hospitals.

"I always look at the deacon as a bridge, in a sense, between the Church and the community. [Deacons] serve the parishes that we're assigned to, but in a bigger way, we serve the people of

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Eric Flores receives applause after his ordination to the transitional diaconate on March 25, 2023, at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Flower Mound. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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existe una mayor conciencia sobre las vocaciones. “De dos hombres que discernían bastante en serio su vocación hace un tiempo, ahora llegan entre veinte y cincuenta hombres que buscan seriamente discernir su vocación”.

El Padre Metzler dijo que el Obispo Olson desempeña “un papel increíblemente activo” desde las primeras etapas de discernimiento de los candidatos al sacerdocio. A menudo, asiste a los eventos de discernimiento, y se reúne con los candidatos y sus familias.

Este compromiso por parte suya persiste a través de toda la formación de los seminaristas. El Obispo visita, al menos una vez cada semestre, los tres seminarios que educan a los hombres de nuestra Diócesis.

Luego de ser ordenados, el Obispo organiza reuniones trimestrales con los sacerdotes que fueron ordenados en los pasados diez años para brindarles formación continua, la oportunidad de crecer como hermanos y un tiempo para escuchar cualquier pregunta o problema que puedan tener.

Según el Padre Metzler, “Bajo el liderazgo del Obispo Olson, todos los sacerdotes sabemos que podemos ser auténticamente católicos, enseñar lo que la Iglesia católica enseña y defender lo que la Iglesia católica defiende. Nos sentimos confiados de que contamos cien por ciento con el respaldo del Obispo Olson, en caso de que surja alguna dificultad.

“No sólo nos sentimos seguros, sino también capacitados para vivir bien y fielmente nuestro sacerdocio”, añadió el Padre Metzler.

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Bishop Olson welcomes newly ordained Father Linh Nguyen into the Order of Presbyters at the Ordination Mass at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington on May 22, 2021. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

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God, whether they're Catholic or not, in working with prisoners and the poor and the elderly," he said.

The bishop meets annually with the deacons and "has always been very supportive" of permanent deacons and their role in parish ministry, said Dcn. Warner.

Deacons also bring a unique perspective to their parishes because most are married and have families. "People relate to the deacon as a husband, a father, a grandfather who experiences the stresses of living in the world and balancing work and family and church," Dcn. Warner continued.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bishop Olson "provides the support within the diocese to help us be successful," said Melissa Kasmeier, chief operating officer for diocesan schools. Whether it's assigning a full-time chaplain to Nolan Catholic High School or fast-tracking new classrooms at the rapidly growing St. Martin de Porres Catholic School, "that only comes from his leadership," said Kasmeier.

His direction was critical in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, when confusion and uncertainty loomed over the decision whether to have in-person classes when the school year started in August 2020.

"He knew the importance of being at school, balanced with the appropriate safety measures; to do what's right for kids, which was not always what everyone else was doing. We maintained learning by being open and present," Kasmeier recalled, adding some parents transferred their children from public to Catholic schools to benefit from in-person learning.

In addition to administrative guidance, Bishop Olson is present and involved in the diocese's 17 Catholic schools, from setting the vision for Catholic education to walking the halls of the schools to celebrate Mass, visit classrooms, and even attend athletic or academic events, according to Kasmeier.

"With everything on his schedule, he makes being visible on campus a priority, which makes a huge difference to all the stakeholders: the pastors, the teachers, the



▲ Bishop Olson speaks with Nolan Catholic High School students about faithful citizenship during Catholic Advocacy Day in Austin on March 28, 2023. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



▶ Cristo Rey graduate Amy Arteaga poses with her diploma before shaking hands with Bishop Olson on June 4, 2022. (NTC/Ben Torres)

parents, and the students in the classroom. He's very supportive of Catholic schools and forming our next generation of Catholics, building up God's kingdom," said Kasmeier, whose work in diocesan schools began in 2012, after 17 years as a teacher and principal in public schools.

To increase access to Catholic education to families with limited economic resources, Bishop Olson picked up the phone. His call to Cristo Rey Network,

a system of high schools that provide a Catholic college preparatory education through work-study internships, was unusual, according to Dani Ray Barton, interim president of the Fort Worth campus.

Typically, the network initiates a feasibility study when it considers a new city, she said, "but he really was the one

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LOS DIÁCONOS PERMANENTES

“Una de las primeras cosas que hizo el Obispo Olson al ser nombrado fue restablecer el programa de formación de diáconos”, recordó el Diácono Don Warner, Director diocesano de los diáconos. “Él cree que los diáconos son un activo muy valioso para la Diócesis”.

La ordenación de la primera clase de diáconos permanentes después de que se reactivara su programa de formación se celebró en el 2020, luego de un lapso de once años.

El Obispo Olson tuvo el privilegio de ordenar a veinticuatro diáconos permanentes. En el 2022 se ordenaron diez diáconos más.

Se espera que entre el 2024 y el 2025 se ordenen varios diáconos permanentes que se encuentran actualmente en el programa de formación de cinco años.

LA ESCUELA PRIMARIA

El Obispo Olson “nos brinda el apoyo que necesitamos en la Diócesis para tener éxito con nuestra labor en las escuelas”, dijo Melissa Kasmeier, la Directora de Operaciones de las Escuelas Diocesanas. Está siempre dispuesto a apoyarnos ante los nuevos retos y necesidades; no importa si se trata de asignar un capellán a tiempo completo en Nolan o de acelerar la construcción de nuevas aulas en St. Martin de Porres Catholic School debido a su rápido crecimiento. “Todo esto se logra gracias al liderazgo del Obispo Olson”, afirmó Kasmeier.

Su dirección y guía como pastor de la Diócesis fue fundamental en los primeros meses de la pandemia de COVID-19, momento en que la confusión y la incertidumbre se cernían sobre la decisión de tener clases presenciales cuando el nuevo año escolar comenzara en agosto del 2020.

“Él sabía lo importante que era

estar presencialmente en la escuela y de hacerlo de manera tal que se siguieran las medidas de seguridad adecuadas. Creía que se debía hacer lo que era correcto por el bienestar de los niños, aunque no fuera siempre lo que todos los demás hacían. Por eso, mantuvimos las escuelas abiertas y la enseñanza en persona”, recordó Kasmeier.

Kasmeier enfatiza que el Obispo Olson no sólo da apoyo a las escuelas desde un punto de vista administrativo, sino que además está presente e involucrado en las diecisiete escuelas católicas de la Diócesis. Su compromiso comprende desde esbozar la visión de la educación católica hasta caminar por los pasillos de nuestras escuelas ya sea para celebrar Misa, visitar las aulas e incluso asistir a algunos eventos deportivos o académicos.

El Obispo Olson tomó una acción inusitada para hacer más accesible

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On March 22, 2020, Bishop Olson celebrated Mass *sine populo* (without a congregation) at St. Patrick Cathedral but made the liturgy available on livestream. Public assembly resumed May 2. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Bishop Olson confirmed 33 teens from Holy Angels Parish in Clifton and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Morgan on Aug. 5, 2023, in Morgan. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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that was instrumental in getting the ball rolling.”

Bishop Olson gave the fledgling school a big boost with his offer of a campus for its first class of freshmen students in 2018. “That really allowed us to focus on the important things like recruiting students, work-study partners, and other supporters in the community,” recalled Barton.

Under the bishop’s direction, the diocese continues to support Cristo Rey with internships in parishes and Catholic schools, plus providing a “part-time chaplain for the faith formation of our students and campus ministry. Our goal is to educate men and women of faith, purpose, and service, and that’s been really key,” she said.

SACRAMENTS FIRST

Active presence is an apt description of Bishop Olson’s leadership, perhaps most

evident when it comes to the sacraments and liturgy.

In an average year, the bishop will travel to dozens of parishes to confirm more than 2,000 teenagers, from large urban parishes with more than 100 confirmands, to rural churches 200 miles away with just a handful of candidates.

Father Thu Nguyen, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth and diocesan director of liturgy, has worked with the bishop in planning major diocesan Masses. “Faithful, meticulous, passionate, and inclusive” is how the priest described the bishop’s preparations to administer the sacraments.

These qualities became apparent during the first weeks of the coronavirus, when Mass was celebrated without a congregation present.

The bishop consulted with priests, health experts, and civic officials to provide access to the sacraments while maintaining

safety protocols, and the diocese returned to the public celebration of Mass at the earliest opportunity.

For the next two years, the bishop continued to monitor the pandemic and update health precautions as new information became available. His decisions balanced public health with the spiritual needs of the faithful.

Making decisions for the welfare of the faithful comes with wearing the mitre.

Our Mother of Mercy parishioner Art Sanford has built a friendship with Bishop Olson since the bishop’s first visit to Our Mother of Mercy in 2014.

Art said he trusts the bishop to make the best decisions with the knowledge available, adding that the bishop has always been very welcoming and open to hearing questions and concerns.

He said, “The only thing we can do is pray for our shepherd, to give him the strength to continue and lead us.” 🇺🇸



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la educación católica a las familias con escasos recursos económicos. Según Dani Ray Barton, Presidente Interino del campus de Fort Worth, el Obispo llamó personalmente a Cristo Rey Network, un sistema de escuelas secundarias que brindan educación católica preparatoria para la universidad a través de pasantías de trabajo y estudio.

Por lo general, la red de Cristo Rey inicia un estudio de viabilidad cuando considera abrir una escuela en una nueva ciudad, explicó Barton. “No obstante, en este caso el Obispo fue el que definitivamente jugó un papel decisivo para poner las cosas en marcha”.

El Obispo Olson dio un gran impulso a la incipiente escuela al ofrecer un campus que permitió que se comenzara en el 2018 con la primera clase de estudiantes de primer año de secundaria. “Eso realmente nos permitió centrarnos en las cosas más importantes como reclutar los estudiantes, encontrar socios para el programa de estudio y trabajo, y buscar otros patrocinadores de la comunidad”, recordó Barton.

Bajo la dirección del Obispo, la Diócesis continúa dando un gran apoyo a esta escuela mediante pasantías en algunas de las parroquias y escuelas católicas. Se ha asignado además un “capellán a tiempo parcial para la formación

en la fe de nuestros estudiantes y del ministerio universitario. Nuestro objetivo es educar a hombres y mujeres en la fe, y que los estudiantes tengan un propósito en la vida y el afán de servir. Todo esto ha sido verdaderamente clave para lograr exitosamente las metas que se quieren”, agregó Barton.

LOS SACRAMENTOS SON PRIMERO

La presencia activa es una manera adecuada de describir el liderazgo del Obispo Olson. Es aún más palpable cuando se trata de la celebración de los Sacramentos y la liturgia.

En un año promedio, el Obispo viaja a docenas de parroquias para confirmar más de dos mil adolescentes. Los confirmandos están distribuidos entre una gran diversidad de parroquias. Pues Se incluyen desde parroquias urbanas muy grandes, que tienen a veces más de cien jóvenes a ser confirmados, hasta parroquias rurales pequeñas, que quedan a doscientas millas de distancia de Fort Worth, y que tienen sólo un puñado de candidatos a la Confirmación.

El Padre Thu Nguyen, el párroco de St. Paul the Apostle de Fort Worth y el Director Diocesano de Liturgia, ha trabajado con el Obispo en la planificación de las principales Misas diocesanas. El sacerdote describió al Obispo Olson con las palabras de “fiel, meticoloso, apasionado e inclusivo” al prepararse para administrar cualquier Sacramento”. ✝



Sister Hoa Phung, LHC, receives a ring from Bishop Olson during Mass at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington on July 31, 2022. Nine religious sisters from the Lovers of the Holy Cross of Vinh professed permanent vows. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



REFLECTING ON OUR shepherd

By Father James Gigliotti, TOR

The Church has always been “tested” and challenged and always will be. We take confidence, upon reflection, that the Lord raises up men and women in every age to guide, shepherd, counsel, and correct souls attempting to traverse this land we’re just passing through. Bishops in particular have the

mandate shepherding the sheep with the same love and care as Christ and the first Apostles zealously displayed.

Reflecting on our shepherd, Bishop Michael Olson, I was blessed to be present at his elevation as the fourth bishop, just nearly ten years ago. For all my 55 years as a Franciscan friar and 43 years (now) as a priest, this was my inaugural witnessing of such a stellar event.

San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller presiding, with other bishops, our own Msgr. Olson became Bishop Olson, witnessed by a vast number of religious and lay folk from all over this large diocese. With the eyes of faith, the Holy Spirit descended, validating the “call” by the Holy Father himself, to hold to the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders.

That day, Bishop Olson was missioned

◀ Bishop Michael Olson speaks during the priestly ordination Mass at Vietnamese Martyrs Catholic Church, May 22, 2021. Priests, deacons, religious, and laity from across, and even outside, the diocese came together to attend the largest-ever ordination of priests for the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

in particular for teaching doctrine, governing Catholics in his jurisdiction, sanctifying the world, and representing the Church. His pastoral role is first and foremost for the Body he now shepherds in the name of Christ.

As a Franciscan vowed Religious, and an ordained priest, the body gesture of total surrender to the will of God was acted out as Bishop-elect Olson prostrated in front of the makeshift altar — a sign of complete surrender to the Triune God — as the faithful invoked the Litany of Saints. This Litany by those joyfully present petitions the intercession of the Apostles to bless this man with fortitude to continue the ministry of the Apostles in our own time.

Just after that time, I was transferred to a small parish in the Diocese of Venice, Florida. After a year and a half there, still settling in, I found myself being transferred back to Texas as pastor of this grand old parish of St. Andrew the Apostle in Fort Worth.

Away, then returning, I found some changes had been made. There was a stronger emphasis on our Catholic spirituality which was a welcomed scenario to my tradition-minded formation. Change is never easy, which sounds better than change is always hard!

I have been blessed to have worked in other dioceses: Erie, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Trenton, Metuchen, St. Petersburg, Venice, and the Archdiocese of Miami. These included stints as a prison chaplain, hospital chaplain, and high school teacher for 17 years. Reflecting on a sort of itinerant coming and going, one gathers a plethora of pastoral styles, programs, and Catholic schools. But the experiences with different bishops were as different as were the pastors' varying personalities and approaches to parochial work.

We are blessed with a big Church, we

Catholics. There is no cookie-cutter style for the most part, though some “clericalism” — the misuse or overextension of clergy’s authority — exists. But, when we attack and condemn clericalism, we must take care not to attack or condemn priests as such. We all need prayer. But the enemy will always attack priests and religious men and women especially. As Christ’s ministering mandate is taken up by such souls, the devil will tempt as he tempted Christ in the desert.

Pray for your ministers in the vineyard. Pray for our bishops. There is no pleasing everyone. This is particularly true in Church leadership. And so, it has always been!

Strange phrase for a mendicant friar to use, but, for my money, I must thank Bishop Olson for his courage in confronting some wounds which have never scarred because of oversight or sheer neglect. Confrontation can be a loaded word. According to the late, great Father Henri Nouwen, “Confrontation is a ministry of caring.”

In the marketplace, confrontation can be about getting in another’s face and establishing who has the power. But in the Kingdom of God, it’s a ministry of speaking the truth in love. Sin and its ilk must be confronted and dealt with, as messy and unpleasant as this always is. I’ve lived in too many places where bishops were less prone to be transparent. Abuses of all kinds had no “come to Jesus” moment. In my past assignments in Philadelphia and Florida, I had spoken out about sexual abuse by clergy and lay people, which was ignored for some time with a code of silence that only bred more disdain, anger, and abandonment of the Church in the passage of time.

Not so here under Bishop Olson. I have been refreshingly fascinated by his courageous ability to name the transgressions and the out-and-out sinful behavior. From the pulpit to the printed word and

airwaves, he has presented the Gospel values.

Someone has to step up and speak the truth, steeped in wisdom and scholarly knowledge to ground teaching and correcting. The role of the local Ordinary is not for the faint of heart. We should appreciate the gusto and forthrightness we’ve been blessed to witness here.

I well remember being drawn to tears at one of the ordinations where Bishop Olson spoke in his usual inclusion of Spanish. But then, hearing him speaking the Vietnamese tongue in service to the Vietnamese community so well represented, feting one of their own about to be ordained a priest, just left me with that seventh Gift of the Holy Spirit, wonder and awe.

This personal touch displays his obvious investment in the multiple groups claiming the Fort Worth Diocese as their home Church. This bishop is the shepherd for us all. I could only imagine the effort (and sweat) in learning his welcome message, which was not brief, by the way. And those with this as their first language were as impressed to the point of tears as were many of us present for yet another glorious event in the life of this large and fast-growing Diocese of Fort Worth.

A blessed 10th anniversary to you, Bishop Olson, and may the Good God give you many more years of shepherding your burgeoning flock of many races and tongues. As the Good Lord has sustained you in the past, in the present moment, we thank Him for further graces for your future, and ours as a Church.

Thank you and God bless you!



Fr. James Gigliotti

Father James Gigliotti, TOR, pastor of St. Andrew Catholic Church in Fort Worth, has also served as pastor at St. Maria Goretti Church in Arlington.



Faith's Advocate

Robert Gieb aims to help his neighbors
for all the right reasons

By Susan Moses

Robert Gieb has tomes about case law that cover an entire wall of a conference room, but that's not unexpected for a lawyer of nearly 50 years.

What might surprise you is his knowledge of construction design that can withstand termites and the rainy season in Uganda.

Gieb's office is just blocks from the Tarrant County Courthouse, but his heart is in Uganda. And with local women considering abortion. And at the annual Red Mass. And especially in the pews of St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth.

OFFERING OPPORTUNITY

Gieb and his wife, Mary, have two children, three grandchildren, and after more than a decade of labor, about 325 bonus children in east Africa.

In January 2022, St. Mary Laetitia High School opened in the rural area of Ddegeya, Uganda, thanks to the planning and fundraising of Gieb and several other benefactors in the Diocese of Fort Worth. Owned and operated by the Diocese of Masaka, the coed boarding school offers a secondary education to Ugandan teenagers, whose

mandatory public education ends at eighth grade.

The idea for the school sparked from a friendship between Gieb, then parish council president at St. Patrick Cathedral, and a priest visiting from Uganda in 2005. With some seed money from St. Patrick parishioners, the Diocese of Masaka began purchasing parcels of land for the school in 2011.

In the subsequent years, as money allowed, the school acquired 20 acres and built dormitories, classrooms, a kitchen, latrines, and a private water well until it was ready to welcome its first students two years ago. A chapel will be its next major project when resources permit.

Gieb's knowledge of the details, from construction to topography, from government bureaucracy to uniforms, reveals the countless hours he has devoted to this school. He's not just concerned with education and career opportunities, however. The moral and spiritual formation of these Ugandan children is his priority.

"The guiding principle is that we're supposed to lead these kids to God, through prayer, the teachings [of the faith], and the sacraments. That's the basic deal. And we're supposed to educate them in the process," Gieb explained, noting that local priests

serve the students' sacramental needs, including Mass.

LOCAL LIFE

A product of local Catholic education, Gieb attended St. George Catholic School and Nolan Catholic High School before graduating from St. Mary's University in San Antonio. He then went on to earn a law degree at the University of Texas at Austin. Afterward, he worked as an assistant district attorney in Tarrant County in both the criminal and civil divisions.

In the civil division, he represented various county agencies, including the Tarrant County Hospital District and Tarrant County Mental Health and Mental Retardation. After leaving the district attorney's office, he opened his private practice in 1984, where he focuses on estate planning and business law.

In November, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Fort Worth Metro Chapter, recognized Gieb with its annual Outstanding Advisor award for his pro-bono legal work, which includes assisting priests in the 28-county Diocese of Fort Worth with wills and other estate planning documents.

He was nominated for the honor by the Advancement Foundation for the



Robert Gieb, a Fort Worth attorney for more than 45 years, at his law office on Nov. 15. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth. Renée Underwood, CFRE, chief development officer of the Advancement Foundation, noted Gieb's humility, professionalism, and "lifetime of philanthropic service."

Gieb has also provided legal counsel to pro-life advocacy groups, as well as spending many hours on the sidewalks of abortion clinics himself, offering prayer, counseling, and resources for women considering abortion.

"There's joy in feeding the poor and educating the poor, but it's one of the greatest joys in the world to save the life of an unborn child," he said.

SEEING RED

In the legal community, Gieb may be best known as the founder of the local Red Mass, an annual liturgy for attorneys, judges, and civil servants.

With the approval of then Bishop

Kevin Vann, Gieb wrote letters to members of the Tarrant County Bar Association, inviting them to the first Red Mass in 2006. In the intervening years, it's grown to attract about 250 members of the legal community to attend the Mass, which is followed by dinner and a related speaker.

"The Creator created an order, and the law is supposed to lead people to God," he said, explaining that civil law helps us follow the natural law. "When you bring people together to pray, the benefits of the liturgy are there. ... They are participating in this wonderful cosmic event, and it has a good effect," Gieb said.

Gieb pointed out that at every Mass, the Holy Trinity and the Communion of Saints are present. "We may be limited [in our perception] because of our senses, but there's no other place on earth that has that," he asserted.

And the summit of Mass, he continued, "is the Eucharist. That's absolute center. If you don't have the Eucharist, you don't have anything.

"The readings, that's the word of God. It's about Jesus' life and His teachings and the history of salvation. But it all leads up to the Eucharist and the gift, the great gift. And so that's what has the most effect on me. It's certainly supposed to be the center of what we do," he said.

Gieb strives to make the Eucharist the center of what he does, beginning each weekday with Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration at St. Patrick Cathedral, praying for priests and vocations among other intentions.

With his significant charitable work, successful legal practice, and commitment to his family, Gieb could warrant more accolades, but he wants to be remembered simply as "somebody who tried to follow the teachings of the Lord Jesus. That's not always an easy thing to do. But we have grace." 🇺🇸



Secure in His Love

By Christina Benavides

Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*On Love in the Family*) writes, “The couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon — not an idol like those of stone or gold prohibited by the Decalogue — capable of revealing God the Creator and Savior.”

Married for 21 years, Fernando and Claudia Gonzalez exude a sense of ease, pride, and confidence in their joint witness of God’s blessings.

They do their best to share that peace and a deep love for Christ with their four children: Kevin, 18; Karen, 15; Jesus, 10; and Emmanuel, 8.

The couple, parishioners of Fort Worth’s Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish and St. Peter the Apostle Parish, discussed with the *NTC* their experiences building a marriage full of joy and respect and cultivating a family secure in their faith.

HOW THEY MET: They’d lived the entirety of their lives just a few streets apart in a small town in Mexico, but it wasn’t until their local parish organized a weekend youth retreat that the two finally met amid prayer and fellowship. There, they learned about their shared interests and passion for their faith. Fernando said, “So it was there that I met her and that we fell in love.” After five years of dating, the two married.

ACTIVE IN THEIR FAITH: Upon their arrival in Fort Worth, the Gonzalez couple quickly searched and found opportunities to become active in the church.

Even as their eldest son learned to walk, they joined a parish group at Our Lady of Guadalupe called *Movimiento Familiar Cristiano Católico* (Catholic Christian Family Movement) that promoted mutual support among families. Fernando said, “We were in that group

for about three years. The reunions were made up entirely of families, the kids would be working on one thing, and we would be holding discussions on family.”

They then joined the *Grupo Carismático* (Charismatic Group) ministry, where they have actively participated for the past 12 years. The group, Fernando said, “challenged us. They began to incorporate the catechesis to speak on topics about faith and how to share it. And to not just live our faith but share it with others.”

The Gonzalez family is also active in the catechesis program at St. Peter the Apostle Parish, volunteering in the program for the past six years.

PRO-LIFE PARTNERS: After having her third child, Claudia was ready to undergo a procedure to prevent future pregnancies.

However, Fernando, having studied the topic in the parish group, gently asked her to consider natural family planning.

◀ Fernando and Claudia Gonzalez pose at St. Peter the Apostle Church in Fort Worth with three of their four children on Dec. 3. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Claudia recalled, “My husband told me that he was pro-life and that he respected my body. He helped me see, as a woman, that he was going to support me and that if we both were going to learn our faith, we could also learn our bodies. Thanks to that, we have ten years of caring for ourselves like this. ... I admire this of him because due to his support in this, we can give our ‘yes’ to God.”

Claudia admitted that, at first, she’d fought with him over the idea. But because he’d initiated the difficult topic, and they’d had the chance to talk and pray about it together, they are now a loving family of six.

EMBODY YOUR FAITH:

She said, “Thanks to God and to my husband, I was able to understand that we must take care of our bodies, because we reflect what we are.

“If we give our children happiness, our children will have happiness. If we share our faith with our children, regardless of if we feel like ours is at 100 percent, our children will have faith. And if we don’t give them that foundation now, with how the world is, then our children are even less likely to keep it.”

BE PROUD: Enrolled in public school, the two younger Gonzalez children face many challenges regarding their faith.

The constant activities and distractions the secular world regularly provides can obscure God’s presence from their children,

according to Fernando.

The couple does their best to push values including order and respect at home as much as possible. If not, Fernando believes, then so quickly, you’ll lose your kids. “They’ll leave their faith behind for their technology; they’ll lose the importance of praying at home; and they’ll feel that if someone were to speak to them of God, they’ll become embarrassed.

“I tell them, you must never feel ashamed to speak of Jesus and to speak of God; every time someone asks you if you’re Catholic, you must proudly respond, ‘Of course I’m Catholic,’” he said.

FRUIT OF ONE’S EFFORT:

Kevin, who graduated from Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep last year, was recognized for the depth of his faith. “In that moment, I felt bigger than life,” Claudia shared. “If my son has God in his life, he will lack nothing. He will make mistakes and fall prey to temptations, but he will lack nothing [as God is with him].”

Their daughter, Karen, is a freshman at Cristo Rey.

ADVICE FOR OTHER COUPLES:

Pray for each other. “It is the greatest thing you can do for your partner,” Fernando counseled.

ADVICE FOR PARENTS:

Always provide an example of a lived faith. He advised, “Catechesis will help fill in the gaps, but it won’t evangelize your children. Kids are evangelized at home.” 🇺🇸

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Hope and Joy

NTC/Juan Guajardo

I've been on faculty at St. Joseph Seminary in Louisiana for several months now, and it has been inspiring to see so many young men in love with Jesus Christ and His One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

One might think that with all the negative, ugly headlines about the Church, seminaries would be a hopeless and joyless place to be. On the contrary, what I see here are men who have encountered the Risen Lord and are filled with supernatural hope and joy.

One reason these seminarians are full of hope and joy is because of their daily encounter with the Risen Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

Jesus Christ says, "I will be with you always, even until the end of the world" (*Matthew 28:20*). Nowhere is this truer than in the Holy Eucharist, the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, Our Savior. The seminarians get to eat His Body and drink His Blood at Holy Mass every day. They encounter the Risen Lord in daily Eucharistic Adoration, as well as in Eucharistic processions and vigils.

Another reason the seminarians are full of hope and joy is because they are receiving clear, authentic Catholic Church teaching, doctrines handed down from the Apostles.

St. Paul says, "Therefore, brethren,

stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (*2 Thessalonians 2:15*). The seminarians are doing just that as they learn the Church's teaching, inspiring growth in their faith in Christ, allowing the word of Christ to dwell abundantly in them.



Fr. Maurice Moon

We often hear the seminarians say, "Wow! I never knew that about the Faith! Why don't more people know this!?" Learning the Church's teachings inspires them to want to share what they

have learned with their families, friends, and the people back in their diocese, whom they will one day serve.

Also, the seminarians are hopeful and joyful here because they are encountering the Lord in the poor. "And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me'" (*Matthew 25:40*). Each one of them has a pastoral assignment where he serves the poor, the aged, and those in need in the local area.

Seminarians also like to volunteer their time with various charitable organizations. For example, we took a group to St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church in New Orleans and made over 40,000 meals with Cross International. This was a powerful way to encounter the Lord through service to the poor, and the seminarians enjoyed

this experience tremendously!

And the seminarians are hopeful and joyful because they are encountering the Lord in their brothers. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there" (*Matthew 18:20*).

There is a strong brotherhood here because of their shared mission of serving Jesus Christ and growing in virtue, in charity. These bonds, these relationships, help them experience the friendship of Jesus Christ, encouraging them in times of difficulty. So, the world may paint the Church in a depressing light — but the reality is just the opposite, especially in the seminary. "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (*John 1:5*).

As the seminarians follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, they are filled with a supernatural joy, for joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Our Fort Worth seminarians are grateful for all your support! They are praying for you every day. Continue to pray for them. And pray that more young men from the Diocese of Fort Worth may come to the seminary and experience the hope and joy God wants for them. 🇺🇸

Father Maurice Moon serves as Director of Collegian Seminarian Formation and is on the formation faculty at St. Joseph Seminary College.

Commit to Know Him

NTC/Juan Guajardo

HE IS: Friar Luis Gerardo Arraiza, OFM Cap, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Fort Worth.

ORDAINED: Nov. 1, 1988 at Our Lady of Lourdes in Dallas.

A CRADLE CATHOLIC: Born and raised in Northern Spain, Basque Country, “I was born in a Catholic family, in a Catholic culture.” While his parents always dutifully took him and his two siblings to Mass and sacramental preparation, theirs “was a compulsory faith; I mean, to what extent did we really know Jesus?”

“What changed my life was that even though I have been Catholic all my life, at the age of 17, I found in my hands a copy of the New Testament. Up until then, although I was ‘Catholic to the bone,’ I had never read the Gospel.”

DANGER AND BEAUTY: “I was enormously surprised with the person Jesus was. The reason why I became Christian, a Catholic, is because of Jesus Christ. He has a message that is tremendously vivid, bold, and dangerous. That’s why being a Christian, if one takes it seriously, is very, very dangerous but very, very beautiful.”

CALLED TO AN ORDER: As he studied at university, he began growing noticeably distressed because of an “intense desire

for something more than just going to Mass on Sunday.” Fortunately, a friend witnessed his restlessness and put him in contact with a Capuchin friar. “I discovered the Franciscan Capuchin lifestyle. It caught my attention primarily because it was a very simple and very fraternal style of living.”

PATH TO PRIESTHOOD: Once he joined the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, he completed his studies and was then sent to Dallas and Fort Worth to assist in friar formation. “There was a great need for priests, especially Spanish speakers. ... That was the principal reason that I was then motivated to be ordained to serve the Hispanic community, which was lacking Spanish-speaking priests.”

ON LIVING YOUR FAITH: Fr. Arraiza’s parents were very good people who cared for their children. Still, they were comfortable with a “culturally established faith rather than a living experience of Jesus Christ in the Church. [They also] didn’t search for a parish group that would help rekindle my faith. That didn’t exist then.”

Texas and this diocese, the friar stressed, offer “enormous potential” for families and individuals to find parish groups and ministries to participate in, far more opportunities than he’d seen in Spain. “The opportunity here is limitless.

Just say the word, and it will happen.”

You must push yourself to live their faith actively, the friar said.

PARISH DEVELOPMENTS: Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish invests in adult faith formation. “Just as or more important than the training of children and young people is that of the adults ... When it comes to training themselves in the Catholic Christian faith and knowing the beauty of being a Catholic Christian, most people do not understand that.

“It is necessary for people to draw closer to Jesus in the Word. What I tell people is, start with the *Gospel of Luke*. Many people tell me, ‘It’s not that I don’t read the Bible, but I don’t understand anything.’ Welcome to the club. We all get lost sometimes. But it’s necessary to put in an effort to retain the knowledge.”

FAVORITE SACRAMENT: “I’ve been a priest for 35 years and from the first moment, this sacrament called to me and continues calling me. People, just because I’m a priest, trust in me ... it blows my mind. How [remarkable] is it that because I’m a priest, people can open their hearts and trust in me, tell me their problems, and search for some type of salvation? That’s why the sacrament that I most like and most enjoy is the sacrament of reconciliation.” 🇺🇸



Serving to the fullest

In his past columns, Father Thu Nguyen, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth and diocesan director of liturgy and worship, has given us a deeper understanding of the role of the assembly, the importance of music, and the meaning of gestures in the celebration of the Mass.

In this issue, he looks at some special roles the laity may have in the liturgy.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES FOR THE CURRENT TEACHING ON THE ROLES OF THE LAITY?

Fr. Nguyen: In 1903, Pope St. Pius X wrote that it was the liturgy where the laity acquires the Christian spirit “from its foremost and indispensable font, which is the active participation in the most holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church.” In short, Pope St. Pius X thought active participation was the assimilation of the divine mysteries, particularly the Blessed Sacrament itself, so that the faithful could be more and more configured to Jesus Christ from the celebration of the Eucharist and apply it to their lives outside of Mass.



Fr. Thu Nguyen

Before the Second Vatican Council, many liturgical ministries, such as lector and acolyte, were known as minor orders and reserved for men on the path to ordination.

Pope Pius’ ideas were expanded upon and developed during the Second Vatican Council. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the council’s constitution on the sacred liturgy, “emphasized that participation should increase the vigor of the Christian life and was more than just either external or internal participation.”

Inspired by the Second Vatican reforms to increase participation of the laity in Church ministry, Pope Paul VI issued a *motu proprio* in 1972 in which he instituted specific ministries for laity, such as altar server, reader, and usher. Sacristan has a long tradition of being designated to the faithful.

WHAT ROLES CAN THE LAITY SERVE IN THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY MASS?

Fr. Nguyen: We commonly see seven special functions performed by laity: reader, altar server, sacristan, cantors and musicians, extraordinary

◀ Rosario Avila reads the first reading at the new ambo during Mass on March 19, 2023 at St. Paul the Apostle Church in River Oaks. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ministers of Holy Communion, hospitality ministers, and ornamenters of the Church.

Two other designated roles are uncommon. We might see the master of ceremonies at a complex celebration at which the bishop presides. The commentator, rare in the U.S. but common in Vietnam and other countries, serves by introducing each reading and some Mass parts with a summary.

HOW DO I DISCERN IF I'M CALLED TO BE A LAY MINISTER?

Fr. Nguyen: St. Paul addressed this in his letter to the Romans: “Brothers and sisters: We, though many, are one Body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Romans 12:5-8)

The USCCB also gives guidance in the document, “Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord,” which states: “Among the baptized, all of whom are called to serve the mission of the Church, some experience a further specific call to lay ecclesial ministry. The call may come in a dramatic moment. More often, it comes over time, as the person grows — within the community of faith — in love for God and a desire to do His will. One begins to consider that the graces received could now be put in service to the Church. A period of discernment begins.”

Discernment of a call to liturgical ministry is a process which requires prayer and contemplation. It is both personal and communal and must involve dialogue and evaluation with the parish leadership.

HOW DOES ONE BECOME A LITURGICAL MINISTER?

Fr. Nguyen: Liturgical formation is required so that all follow the ministerial functions of its ministry and learn the specific requirements of the role and the reasons for the process.

Conduct and attitude are also elements to maintain the sacredness of the celebration.

According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, paragraph 91, “All, therefore, whether ordained ministers or lay Christian faithful, in fulfilling their function or their duty, should carry out solely but totally that which pertains to them.” Paragraph 97 in *GIRM* also stresses the gladness and willingness from the faithful as it states, “The faithful, moreover, should not refuse to serve the people of God in gladness whenever they are asked to perform some particular service or function in the celebration.”

AFTER TRAINING, IS A LITURGICAL MINISTER PREPARED TO SERVE?

Fr. Nguyen: The pastor needs to bless these liturgical ministers, with a blessing found in the *Book of Blessings*, chapters 61-63. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are commissioned by the pastor only for that parish after their names are submitted to the diocese indicating they have received theological and practical formation of the Eucharist.

Next issue, Fr. Nguyen will explain some specifics about the various roles of ecclesial lay ministers. You can read all his columns at NorthTexasCatholic.org/understanding-the-mystery. 🇺🇸

Father Thu Nguyen serves as Pastor at St. Paul the Apostle Parish and Director of Liturgy and Worship for the Diocese of Fort Worth.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

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- ▶ 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.

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Guiados por el Rosario

Las Guadalupanas: Un ministerio de fe, servicio y comunidad

Por Karla Silva

“Señor, quítame todo, menos la fe”, ésta es la oración que reza Brissa Gómez de la Parroquia de St. Stephen de Weatherford en tiempos difíciles. La fe en Jesús y en la Virgen de Guadalupe es, sin lugar a duda, lo más importante en su vida.

Claudia Azúa de la Parroquia de St. Matthew de Arlington y Marina Ortiz González de la Parroquia de Our Lady of Lourdes de Mineral Wells se sienten de la misma manera.

Estas tres mujeres no sólo comparten una profunda fe en Jesús y una gran devoción a la Virgen de Guadalupe, sino también que están a cargo del ministerio de Guadalupanas en sus respectivas parroquias. En este artículo, ellas nos cuentan cómo este ministerio es una rica fuente de fe, servicio y de crear comunidad.

LA FUNDACIÓN Y MISIÓN DEL MINISTERIO DE GUADALUPANAS

El propósito del ministerio de Guadalupanas es dar a conocer a la Virgen María por medio del Rosario.

Ortiz González, coordinadora de las Guadalupanas en la Parroquia de St. Matthew, afirma que: “El Rosario es el arma más poderosa que tenemos, ya que María, por medio del Rosario, nos lleva a su Hijo”.

¿Cómo comenzó este ministerio?

“Todo empezó con un grupo de seis mujeres que querían servir a los demás

y fundaron el grupo de La Sociedad de Guadalupe de Nuestra Señora de Lourdes, mejor conocido como las Guadalupanas. La primera Misa se celebró el 12 de diciembre de 1960 y hubo una gran acogida de parte de la comunidad”, comparte Azúa, que es la presidenta de este ministerio en la Parroquia de Our Lady of Lourdes.

Por su parte, Gómez apunta que fue una hermana carmelita la que comenzó este ministerio en su parroquia: “Antes de partir hacia otro lugar, me pidió personalmente que no dejara de rezar el Rosario y que no abandonara este ministerio. A pesar de que le dije que no sabía cómo hacerlo, ella insistió, y pues, aquí seguimos”.

Si bien, estos lugares se encuentran muy lejos uno del otro y se trata de épocas diferentes, tanto el grupo de seis mujeres como la insistencia de la hermana carmelita dieron comienzo a un hermoso ministerio de entrega, servicio a los demás y enseñanza del Santo Rosario a sus comunidades.

MÁS ALLÁ DE LA CELEBRACIÓN DEL 12 DE DICIEMBRE

Se suele pensar que el ministerio de Guadalupanas se reúne únicamente para planificar la celebración de la Virgen de Guadalupe del 12 de diciembre. Sin embargo, este ministerio se ocupa también de otras actividades para atender otras necesidades en la parroquia.

Ortiz González nos explica que “Se hacen diferentes actividades durante todo el año. Cada primer sábado del mes

rezamos el Rosario para encomendar las necesidades de nuestra parroquia y las necesidades de los sacerdotes, los obispos y el Papa. Además, rezamos todos los viernes el Rosario para pedir especialmente por las necesidades de nuestro ministerio. Durante el mes de mayo rezamos el Rosario e invitamos a los niños a que traigan flores a la Virgen. Ayudamos también a decorar la parroquia para las diferentes celebraciones que tiene y estamos siempre dispuestas a servir en lo que se necesite”.

Azúa añade que “aparte de rezar el Rosario todos los meses, ayudamos a las familias necesitadas, tenemos un fondo de becas para ayudar a los estudiantes y nuestro mayor aporte es que rezamos y preparamos comida cuando hay entierros”.

En Weatherford, se lleva rezando el Rosario todos los meses por los últimos treinta años. Se invita a toda la comunidad, especialmente a los jóvenes y niños, para que se unan al rezo del rosario y se les enseña la importancia de esta oración.

UN MINISTERIO QUE TRANSFORMA VIDAS

Este ministerio no sólo beneficia a las comunidades parroquiales, sino también de manera especial ayuda personalmente a sus miembros. Azúa, Gómez y Ortiz González destacan cómo este ministerio les ha ayudado a profundizar más en su fe, les ha enseñado a cómo rezar el Rosario y, por ende, ha fortalecido su vida de oración. Les ha ayudado también a crecer en su entrega al prójimo y a formar una gran



El grupo de oración Guadalupanas, después de realizar un rezo del Rosario fuera de la Parroquia de San Mateo de Arlington el 2 de diciembre. (NTC/Ben Torres)

comunidad dentro del ministerio.

Azúa cuenta que, a través de los años, desde que comenzó con ese primer grupo de mujeres que fundaron el ministerio de su parroquia, más mujeres se han ido uniendo al grupo porque lo ven como una oportunidad para mostrar su agradecimiento a la Iglesia, crecer en su vida de oración y formar una comunidad de apoyo mutuo. Una gran muestra de este sentido de comunidad que se vive es que el ministerio sigue creciendo y hoy día hijas, nietas, y sobrinas del primer grupo de mujeres son también parte de este ministerio.

“Somos una gran familia”, afirmó Azúa. “Nos apoyamos las unas a las otras y, aunque haya tiempos difíciles, sabemos que estamos aquí por y para el Señor y, cuando se tiene eso claro, no hay dificultad que no se pueda superar”.

Según se acerca la celebración de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe del 12 de diciembre, este ministerio trabaja arduamente para que este día sea uno muy especial.

A través de las peregrinaciones, la “Misa de Gallo”, el canto de las mañanitas, las danzas de matachines, las novenas y la representación de las apariciones, las coordinadoras del ministerio de Guadalupanas de las diferentes parroquias



La imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en el jardín de la Parroquia de San Mateo de Arlington, donde se hace el rezo del Rosario. (NTC/Ben Torres)

invitan a todos a celebrar este día con mucha fe, devoción y alegría. Consideran que es una oportunidad para agradecer a la Virgen todas las bendiciones que el Señor nos otorga a través de su intercesión.

Las Guadalupanas extienden también una invitación a todas las personas que deseen unirse a este ministerio para servir y aprender más sobre la Virgen y el Rosario.

Gómez afirma que “Yo no sabía cómo rezar el Rosario y cuando aprendí, sentí una profunda paz que no puedo describir”. Ortiz González agrega que “Dios nos

regala mucho y tenemos que ser generosos con Él”.

“Todos tenemos la oportunidad de aprender y de ponernos al servicio de los demás. Hay que aprovechar dicha oportunidad”, concluye Azúa.

El ministerio de Guadalupanas, cuyos pilares son la fe, el servicio y crear un sentido de comunidad es un elemento importante de la vida de la Iglesia y de la comunidad parroquial que promueve la devoción a la Virgen de Guadalupe y el rezo del Rosario. 🇺🇸

ALEGRÍA Y AGRADECIMIENTO A DIOS

La celebración de la Quinceañera ayuda a las familias a compartir su agradecimiento por el don de la vida

Por Violeta Rocha

Camila Flores siente una gran ilusión de celebrar su Quinceañera y verse caminando hacia el Altar en su Parroquia Our Lady of Guadalupe de Fort Worth en su vestido largo de corte princesa del brazo de sus padres y acompañada de sus damas y chambelanes. ¡Es “un sueño” que pronto se hará realidad!

La Bendición de las Quinceañeras se celebra con una Misa de Acción de Gracias, explica el Padre José Feliciano Torres Castro, párroco de Our Lady of Guadalupe.

“Es una Eucaristía en que la quinceañera se consagra a la Virgen, renueva sus promesas bautismales y, por supuesto, promete vivir según los ideales cristianos”.

“Estoy muy agradecida de mis papás porque están haciendo realidad un sueño que siempre he tenido”, asegura Camila, que con gran anhelo espera que “llegue el día” junto a sus familiares y amigos para

agradecer a Dios “permitirme llegar a mis quince años de edad”, expresó con emoción.

“El quinceañero es una celebración verdaderamente hermosa, una tradición hispana en la que se destaca la importancia de la familia unida, para celebrar el don de la vida”, apunta el Diácono Rigoberto Leyva, Director del Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis y diácono de la Parroquia St. Peter the Apostle de White Settlement.

El valor de su familia es tan importante para Camila que estuvo dispuesta a aplazar su celebración de quinceañera para diciembre, aunque su cumpleaños es en septiembre, para que sus abuelos paternos y maternos que viven en Zacatecas y San Luis Potosí, pudieran estar presentes. “Todos en mi familia estamos muy emocionados por este día tan especial para mí”, afirmó Camila.

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Camila Flores, de 14 años, en su vestido de Quinceañera el 20 de octubre en la Parroquia de Our Lady of Guadalupe en Fort Worth. (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)

Los padres de Camila, Lorenzo e Hilda Flores, de 37 y 39 años respectivamente, afirman que es una “gran bendición poder llevar a la mayor de sus tres hijas frente a Dios y la Virgen María”.

“Es una de las alegrías más bonitas que los padres puedan tener”, asegura Hilda, pues imagina con “ilusión y felicidad” el momento “que entremos a la iglesia desfilando con ella, con mi Padre Dios, dándole gracias porque nos da esta dicha y para que ella sepa que Dios y la Virgen la van a ayudar siempre a salir adelante”, agregó Hilda, que pertenece al Grupo de Oración de su Parroquia Our Lady of Guadalupe.

“Significa mucho para nosotros como padres celebrarle esta nueva etapa en la que nuestra hija pasa de la infancia a ser adolescente y nos da gusto inculcarle y cultivar nuestra fe católica”, dijo Lorenzo, originario de San Luis Potosí. Enfatiza además que la felicidad que sienten al celebrar esta tradición es “como hispanos, pero más que nada, como católicos”.

“Me da mucho orgullo y satisfacción ver que ella se esfuerza en la escuela, es obediente, y eso nos motiva a seguirla apoyando”, afirmó Flores. Añade que la fiesta entre los familiares y amigos, la cual es también un símbolo de integración a la sociedad como joven responsable, se ha planeado sencilla de acuerdo con sus posibilidades, pero lo más importante, asegura, es que Camila “reciba la bendición de Dios”.

El Diácono Leyva destaca que se trata de “una celebración comunitaria”, ya que Camila será acompañada de sus padres, sus padrinos de bautizo, sus familiares y amigos más cercanos. Ésta es una ocasión en que el pueblo cristiano unido se compromete a darle “un buen ejemplo de cómo vivir sanamente al celebrar esta costumbre de gran significado en la que recordamos nuestro pasado y descubrimos nuestras raíces”, apuntó el Diácono Leyva.

En las culturas Maya y Tolteca se celebraban rituales muy elaborados de transición para los hombres y mujeres jóvenes. Sin embargo, cabe señalar

que este paso de infancia a joven adulto tiene también raíces españolas, según lo explica en su página web la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos. En el 2007 se hizo una revisión de esta tradición y se permitió las celebraciones Eucarísticas de la Quinceañera como una Misa de Acción de Gracias y dentro del contexto de una especial Bendición de la Quinceañera. Al mismo tiempo, la Misa de Quinceañeras recibió el reconocimiento de la Congregación para el Culto Divino y Disciplina de los Sacramentos del Vaticano.

El Padre Thu Nguyen, Director de la Oficina de Liturgia y Culto Divino de la Diócesis, realiza la contribución del Padre Ken Robinson y el Padre Héctor Medina, que hace varios años “revisaron esta tradición y desarrollaron una guía en la página web de la Liturgia y Culto Divino”, para la Bendición de las Quinceañeras. Es importante resaltar la labor de la Hermana Angela Erevía, que escribió el libro “Religious Celebration for the Quinceañera” (La celebración religiosa para la Quinceañera) para ilustrar la importancia religiosa de esta celebración. Fue publicado en el 1977 por el Centro Cultural de Estudios México Americanos de la Universidad de Texas.

El Padre Thu apunta que “tenemos que distinguir” entre una Misa de Acción de Gracias por los quince años como símbolo de madurez con respecto a la edad y el Sacramento de la Confirmación que es un Sacramento de Iniciación, que marca la transición a la madurez en la fe.

El Padre Thu, que es además el párroco de St. Paul Apostle de River Oaks, desarrolló un Modelo de Catequesis de Cuatro Sesiones para ayudar a las familias que no están inscritas en el programa de formación de la fe, que se exige para recibir la Bendición de Quinceañeras.

El fin es que “se acerquen a la Iglesia”, encaminen a la joven a su madurez en la fe y que posteriormente busquen y reciban el Sacramento de la Confirmación.

Bajo este modelo catequético la joven y sus padres profundizan en el bautismo

y la identidad católica, así como la influencia que la cultura y la familia tienen en su propia identidad de fe como joven discípulo. Este modelo sirve también para conocer los detalles de la planificación de la celebración litúrgica, las lecturas y la música.

“La meta es explicar las costumbres católicas entre los hispanos y su simbolismo; y saber la razón por la cual piden que la medalla de la Virgen y otros artículos religiosos sean bendecidos”, explicó el Padre Thu.

Se enfatiza el aspecto cultural y religioso, ya que “en ocasiones tenemos que batallar con la idea de que todo se trata de la gran fiesta”, dijo el sacerdote. La idea es integrar esta catequesis en la página web de la Oficina de Liturgia y Culto Divino para que llegue a toda la Diócesis.

El Padre Thu, originario de Vietnam y que vivió un tiempo en México, explica que, aunque la celebración de los Quince Años no es exclusiva para las mujeres, la tradición apunta al papel de la mujer en la familia como promotora de la fe.

“Es la madre quien enseña la fe a la hija. Es la abuela quien enseña la fe a la nieta”, declaró. Los quince años, además, marcan el inicio de una nueva etapa en la que todavía no se desliga de la guía de los padres, pero conlleva decisiones individuales responsables, recalcó el Padre Thu. Hace también hincapié en el

Salmo 144,12, que nos dice, “Que nuestros hijos sean como plantas, florecientes en plena juventud; que nuestras hijas se asemejen a columnas, esculpidas como las de un palacio”.

EL BUEN ÁRBOL SE CONOCERÁ POR SUS FRUTOS

El Padre Feliciano menciona tres dimensiones que la Iglesia destaca para la Bendición de Quinceañeras: Formación, Eucaristía y Acción.

En su homilía él procura hablarle tanto a la Quinceañera, como a las damas y los chambelanes, sobre las cuatro respuestas de un cristiano presentadas en la Parábola del Sembrador.

La primera semilla cayó en el camino y se la comieron los pájaros: Las estadísticas en los Estados Unidos



Camila Flores en su vestido de Quinceañera el 20 de octubre al frente de la gruta de la Virgen María en el jardín de la Parroquia de Our Lady of Guadalupe en Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

y México muestran numerosos embarazos a temprana edad, cuando los jóvenes aún no tienen la madurez para ser papás. “No dejemos que nos coma este ambiente”, reflexionó.

La segunda semilla cayó en terreno pedregoso: Las familias que batallan con el alcoholismo, las drogas y la falta de comunicación. “Todo eso seca a los hijos. Hay que evitarlo a toda costa”, señaló.

La tercera semilla cayó entre la maleza o hierba mala: Las malas amistades, “¡Cuidado! Te invitan a hacer actividades o cosas que no van en provecho de una formación ética, cívica y religiosa. Es hierba mala”, advirtió.

La cuarta semilla, cayó en tierra fértil y produjo, el cien, doscientos y trescientos por ciento.

“¡Entonces, esto es lo que queremos! Pero eso implica saber quiénes somos, qué queremos, y qué podemos”, explicó.

“La esperanza que todos tenemos

es que den el fruto de la madurez, del amor, de ser justas, de ser exitosas, de ser mujeres que traigan paz, amor, igualdad, y que den a conocer el rostro de Dios a nivel femenino”, aseveró el Padre Feliciano.

Según se aproxima recibir la Bendición de la Quinceañera, Camila asegura que se siente “feliz, emocionada y orgullosa de ser hispana y católica”.

Ella quiere ser un buen ejemplo para sus hermanas de once y nueve años de edad, “No todo siempre va a salir como lo esperamos, pero si rezamos, tenemos fe y somos agradecidas a nuestros papás, todo va a estar bien,” dijo Camila y agregó que “la Virgen María me da el ejemplo de portarme bien y de poner toda mi fe en Dios”.

Camila se prepara también para recibir el Sacramento de la Confirmación en mayo del año que viene. 🇺🇸

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



ESCUCHANDO LOS designios de Dios

Seis diáconos asisten a taller sobre la
Doctrina Social Católica en Washington, D.C.

Por Christina Benavides

Unidos en fraternidad y oración seis diáconos de la Diócesis siguieron el llamado de Dios para conocer las complejidades de la Doctrina Social Católica a finales de octubre.

Al saber del programa anual de enseñanza sobre la Doctrina Social Católica, que la Catholic University of America iba a auspiciar del 22 al 27 de octubre, el Diácono Don Wagner, el Director de los Diáconos de la Diócesis, decidió enviar varios diáconos de la Diócesis a tomar el taller. Los diáconos que asistieron al taller fueron el Diácono Rigoberto Leyva de la Parroquia St. Peter the Apostle de Fort Worth, el Diácono Scott France de la Parroquia Holy Redeemer de Aledo, el Diácono Mark Gannaway de la Parroquia Holy Family de Fort Worth, el Diácono Gustavo García de la Parroquia St. Matthew de Arlington, el Diácono Mauricio Hernández de las Parroquias de St. John the Baptizer de Bridgeport, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary de Decatur y St. Mary de Jacksboro y el Diácono Paul Mahoney de la Parroquia de St. Francis of Assisi de Grapevine.

Los diáconos no fueron a estos cursos con una idea preconcebida acerca de la experiencia, sino con “el deseo genuino

de aprender”, señaló el Diácono France. Ellos creían que unas doscientas personas asistirían al taller, pero en cambio se sorprendieron cuando vieron que era un grupo muy pequeño que iba a participar de esta oportunidad educativa.

“De las quince personas que estaban presentes, seis éramos diáconos que representábamos la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Estaban además otros dos diáconos de la Diócesis y el Diácono Joel Rodríguez, que es también de la Diócesis, pero que asistió como representante de Christus Catholic Hospital Group, empresa para la cual trabaja. En resumidas cuentas, de las quince personas que asistieron, nueve eran de la Diócesis de Fort Worth”, apuntó el Diácono Gannaway. Según se le informó, el programa a nivel graduado se lleva a cabo una vez al año para un grupo de sólo quince a veinte personas para facilitar un mejor diálogo entre los asistentes.

Según el Diácono Gannaway, el amplio programa de cursos fue diseñado basado en lo que indicara el Papa San Juan Pablo II, que deseaba un programa que enseñara la verdad y la auténtica doctrina social de la Iglesia. Por eso, estos cursos son una combinación de varias encíclicas, que comienzan con la Carta Encíclica del Papa León XIII

promulgada en el 1891 y titulada Rerum Novarum on Capital and Labor (Encíclica Rerum Novaum sobre la Situación de los Obreros”.

A lo largo de la semana del taller tuvo lugar se le brindó la oportunidad a los diáconos de escuchar y aprender de un magnífico grupo de oradores dinámicos y pudieron además involucrarse y participar de las discusiones originadas por las charlas presentadas por el Presidente de Catholic University of America, Dr. Peter Kilpatrick, la Decano Asociada de Asuntos Académicos de George Mason University, Hellen Alvare, y el destacado abogado y Director del Programa de Derechos Humanos de Catholic University of America, William L. Saunders. Los participantes se beneficiaron de una amplia gama de temas derivados de la Doctrina Social Católica.

Al cabo de una semana vertiginosa de muchos seminarios los diáconos que asistieron al taller obtuvieron una certificación, un gran reto y una fe renovada, según el Diácono France.

“Recibimos nuestra certificación. No obstante, creo que, para mí, lo que me han dado es una especie de desafío. Te llenan de información y luego te envían de regreso... Pasé más de 60 horas



Los diáconos de la Diócesis que asistieron al taller en la capilla de St. Michael de Catholic University of America en Washington, D.C.: Gustavo García, Scott France, Paul Mahoney, Mauricio Hernández, Mark Gannaway, Rigoberto Leyva y Joel Rodríguez. (Foto de cortesía/Diácono Rigoberto Leyva)

allí, y cuando salí, estaba inundado de conocimiento”, comentó el Diácono France. “Todo el entorno se prestó a esto. Comenzábamos el día con la oración de la mañana. Hacíamos la oración vespertina y luego Misa... Salí muy alegre y sumamente esperanzado de este taller. Me alegro de haber pasado por esta experiencia con los otros diáconos porque ahora tengo otros que entienden y con los que puedo conversar sobre: ‘¿Cómo estás haciendo esto?’ y ‘¿Cómo estás presentando esto?’”

La mayoría de la gente no comprende bien la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia, señaló el Diácono Warner. “A veces, todo se reduce a la política. No se trata de una postura política; se trata de ser fieles a lo que estamos llamados a hacer como cristianos y seguidores de Cristo. Creo que la gente piensa a menudo que se trata más de una cuestión política, en vez de afirmarse en que “Esto es lo que estamos llamados a hacer como cristianos”.

“No se trata de un asunto demócrata o republicano. No es una cuestión liberal o conservadora. Esto es lo que estamos llamados a hacer como

discípulos de Cristo”, dijo firmemente. “A lo largo de la historia, la Iglesia ha tenido una enseñanza constante sobre lo que eso significa para la comunidad como seguidores de Cristo: atender a los inmigrantes; atender a los menos afortunados; y atender a los que están marginados.

“Es como una especie de abrir los ojos y mirar el panorama más amplio ante nosotros. Esto no es sólo un problema político. Se trata de ¿Cómo podemos vivir mejor nuestra fe a través de nuestras acciones en la forma en que enfrentamos y resolvemos los problemas sociales?”

Para resaltar el énfasis de darle prioridad al intercambio de la formación para que esté alineada con las intenciones y valores de Dios como la esencia de las estructuras sociales, el sitio web de la Doctrina Social Católica del Vaticano en Acción, por siglas en inglés, CAPP-USA.org, desglosa la Doctrina Social utilizando tres principios: la dignidad humana, la solidaridad y la subsidiariedad.

El Diácono Leyva lo resume así y define que la dignidad humana es en esencia la práctica de “no tratar

a las personas como objetos”. “La solidaridad”, continuó diciendo, es “cómo la Iglesia debe acompañar a las personas, caminar con ellas y estar con ellas. La subsidiariedad es cómo la Iglesia le da al rebaño y a los necesitados las herramientas para tener éxito en la vida”.

El Diácono Gannaway, que es un católico converso, cree que estos principios y la cantidad de recursos y aprendizaje que adquirió al obtener esta certificación podrán ser fundamentales para evangelizar y educar a los católicos, otros cristianos e incluso los ateos.

“La Doctrina Social Católica que tenemos es un don tan único y hermoso que, si estás buscando una manera de discipular a otras personas, acoge e internaliza esta doctrina. Puedes tomarla del sitio web CAPP-USA.org. Y cuando una persona se te acerca o ves que uno de estos temas candentes, tales como el aborto, transgénero, racismo, cambio climático, etc., ocurre en sus vidas, lo que aprenderás, lo que nosotros aprendimos, es perfecto para que lo utilices en ese proceso porque lo aborda todo: incluye todos los acontecimientos de la vida”. 🇺🇸

DEDICADOS A LOS hijos de Dios

Voluntarios se afanan por crear conciencia y
construir comunidad

Por Christina Benavides

El Departamento de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis de Fort Worth cuenta con ciento setenta y cinco voluntarios que se sienten llamados a compartir sus talentos y tiempo para proteger a los niños y los adultos vulnerables. Estos voluntarios tienen un gran caudal de experiencia y pasión que los lleva a ofrecerse como facilitadores de las sesiones de capacitación.

Las clases se llevan a cabo en persona y tienen un carácter participativo. Los facilitadores conducen las sesiones de capacitación inicial y de renovación, cuyo propósito es crear una mayor conciencia entre los feligreses para proteger a los niños y los adultos vulnerables en las parroquias de toda la Diócesis.

“No se trata de que el facilitador o facilitadora se pare frente a un grupo y dé una conferencia sobre el ambiente seguro o el abuso sexual infantil, sino que se quiere motivar a los asistentes a que compartan y discutan los temas que se presentan”, explicó la Directora de Ambiente Seguro, Sandra Schrader-Farry. “Nuestro sistema brinda la oportunidad para que personas con vasta experiencia de vida, experiencia práctica y profesional puedan interactuar y compartir esa sabiduría con otras personas en su parroquia y a través de toda la Diócesis”.

A continuación, se presentan dos de los facilitadores voluntarios que nos hablan de las razones que les motivan a servir en este ministerio.

DIOS NOS GUÍA Y CAPACITA

“Al rezar todos los días le digo al Señor, ‘Hazme hoy una mejor católica, una mejor esposa, una mejor madre y detective’”, nos relata María Orand, que es miembro del Departamento de la Policía de Fort Worth desde hace dieciocho años. “Todos los días hago la misma oración y sé que Él no me dará más de lo que puedo sobrellevar”.

Además de ser una amorosa esposa, una madre abnegada y una oficial dedicada y comprometida a proteger y servir a la comunidad de Fort Worth, Orand ha servido en la Diócesis durante los últimos veinte años como facilitadora de las sesiones de capacitación de Ambiente Seguro.

“Disfruto dar estas clases, pero desearía que no hubiera necesidad de darlas”, dijo la detective de la trata humana. “Me gustaría que pudiéramos abolir por completo el abuso sexual infantil y que mi unidad cerrara... Ojalá que eso suceda algún día. Pero hasta que eso suceda, los facilitadores tenemos que ser portavoces y salir a difundir esta información”.

María, que pertenece a la Parroquia de Holy Family de Fort Worth, cree que las capacitaciones “están estrechamente

relacionadas con el cuidado de los vulnerables y los temas que se discuten en la clase de Ambiente Seguro porque el noventa y nueve por ciento de nuestras víctimas de trata humana fueron abusadas sexualmente a temprana edad en su hogar, por un amigo cercano o un pariente”, explicó Orand. “Yo simplemente no quiero llegar a ese punto. Por eso, cualquier señal de advertencia es una señal que se debe ver; y que nos llama a actuar. Puede que nunca presenciemos cuando un abuso sexual ocurre, pero sí podemos ver las señales de advertencia”.

Ella enfatiza en sus clases que “cualquiera de nosotros en cualquier momento puede ser o pudo haber sido vulnerable, y encontrarse en una posición en que la gente pudo haberse aprovechado de nosotros o habernos manipulado de alguna manera... Piensen en diferentes casos, como, por ejemplo, si estás pasando por un divorcio, si has perdido a tu cónyuge o a un hijo, a tu padre o madre... los abusadores saben lo que están buscando, por lo que saben cómo captar las situaciones y aprovechar las oportunidades que se les presentan”.

Ella reconoce que es posible que algunos fieles de la Diócesis asistan inicialmente a la capacitación de Ambiente Seguro simplemente para cumplir con un requisito, pero ella reza para que todos salgan de las sesiones más informados, un poco más empoderados y dispuestos a hablar sobre ello.



María Ramos, Coordinadora de Ambiente Seguro de la Parroquia de St. Stephen de Weatherford y Armando Medellín de la Parroquia de St. Rita de Fort Worth, junto a otros coordinadores y facilitadores de Ambiente Seguro de toda la Diócesis, reciben capacitación de Ambiente Seguro el 25 de octubre en la Parroquia de St. Mark de Argyle. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

“Cuanto más hablemos de este tema, más gente se dará cuenta y sabrá que al hablar del abuso sexual de niños no se trata necesariamente de un extraño que secuestra a la gente en la calle”, agregó. “La mayoría de nuestros perpetradores son personas de la familia o personas que el niño o el joven ya conoce, tales como maestros, entrenadores, parientes... Quiero que la gente esté consciente”.

Sin embargo, María cree también que Dios ha dotado a Sus hijos con la capacidad de defenderse.

“Creo firmemente que Dios insta un presentimiento en nosotros para que actuemos, y que está ahí para protegernos o para que protejamos a los demás”, afirmó Orand. “Si algo no parece estar bien, es que no lo está. Si algo te hace sentir incómodo, hay una razón para ello”.

ESCUCHA Y HABLA

Aracelis Rivarola, una trabajadora social que cuenta con casi cuarenta años de experiencia y es Coordinadora de

Ambiente Seguro de las parroquias de St. Matthew y St. Joseph de Arlington, ha visto que en el área metropolitana del norte de Texas el abuso afecta a todo tipo de familias y tanto a niños como adultos.

“Me siento, como quien dice, que caí en un rompecabezas como la pieza que faltaba para la Iglesia en esa área”, Rivarola compartió. “Me encanta participar porque me da mucha alegría y mucho orgullo de que los voluntarios están regresando a la Iglesia. Mi meta es ayudar a que volvamos a involucrarnos y a participar como voluntarios”.

“La sesión inicial de la capacitación de Ambiente Seguro es una oportunidad increíble para que la gente aprenda más sobre un tema delicado, pero extremadamente importante”, ella agregó.

“El conocimiento lleva a la prevención. Tiene más valor pensar sobre ello y tiene más valor platicar sobre este tema porque no es una cosa que se debe mantener tapada”, dijo Rivarola. “En la educación hay fuerza, y si nos educamos y nos mantenemos alerta sobre todo lo

que está pasando alrededor, podremos hablar. El silencio es algo deprimente. Si hay maldad, no podemos quedarnos en silencio”.

“Todo el mundo debe estar informado”, ella continuó. “Me refiero no sólo a la formación que se recibe en la clase, sino también tener el entendimiento de lo que está pasando en nuestro alrededor porque las cosas cambian muy rápido y la gente no se da cuenta”.

Rivarola insta a que más personas se unan a la Iglesia, se involucren en su parroquia y hagan sus donaciones. Y, sobre todo, que no tengan miedo.

Araceli prosigue diciendo, “Es cierto que la verificación de antecedentes puede desanimar a algunos a involucrarse en la Iglesia porque en la solicitud de voluntariado de la Diócesis se pide mucha información, pero quisiera darle confianza a la gente que lo que hacemos es necesario y que la Iglesia lo está haciendo bien. La información que se pide no sale de aquí. Una vez que todo ha sido verificado, pueden servir como voluntarios.” 🇺🇸

Dedicado al Señor

SU NOMBRE: Fray Luis Gerardo Arraiza, OFM Cap, el párroco de Our Lady of Guadalupe de Fort Worth

FECHA DE ORDENACIÓN: 1 de noviembre de 1988 en la Parroquia de Our Lady of Lourdes de Dallas, Texas

SANTO PATRÓN: San Francisco de Asís

VERSOS BÍBLICOS FAVORITOS:
Evangelio de Mateo, Capítulo 25

CATÓLICO DE CUNA: Fray Arraiza se crió en el norte de España en el País Vasco. Creció en una sociedad tradicionalmente católica. “Yo nací en una familia católica, en una cultura católica y lo único que yo podía ser en ese tiempo en España era católico.

“Lo que me cambió la vida a mí fue que, a pesar de que yo había sido católico toda mi vida, un día y no sé ni por qué pasó, cuando tenía sólo diecisiete años, un Nuevo Testamento cayó en mis manos. Hasta entonces, insisto, yo era católico de

hueso colorado, pero nunca había leído los evangelios”.

LA IMPORTANCIA DE UNA FE VIVA: Sus padres, el fraile explicó, eran buenas personas que le tenían mucho cariño a sus hijos. Ellos tenían también “una fe muy, muy asentada culturalmente, más que en una experiencia viva de Jesucristo, en la Iglesia Católica, que los llevó a buscar en la parroquia y otros lugares a cómo avivar esa fe. Eso no existía”.

En Texas y en nuestra diócesis, el fraile enfatizó, hay “una potencialidad enorme” para las familias y los individuos de encontrar grupos y ministerios para involucrarse, mucho más de que lo que había en España. “La oportunidad aquí es ilimitada, ésa es la palabra en todo.

No obstante, uno tiene que esforzarse para tener una vida de fe vibrante”.

LA BELLEZA Y PELIGRO: “De repente, empecé a leer los evangelios, y me sorprendió enormemente la persona de Jesús. O sea, no entendía nada. Me

parecía que estaba loco. Me parecía que era una persona muy surgente e inspiradora. Lo que realmente me impulsó, o sea, la razón por la cual soy cristiano y católico es Jesucristo, porque me parece que su mensaje es tremendamente vivo, tremendamente audaz y tremendamente peligroso. Así que ser cristiano es, si uno se lo toma en serio, es muy, muy peligroso, pero también muy, muy bello”.

LLAMADO AL ORDEN: “Yo soy un fraile capuchino y, de hecho, mi vocación primaria es ser un Hermano Menor Capuchino. Llevo ya cuarenta y un años en la Orden Capuchina y fundamentalmente todo surgió cuando yo estaba estudiando en la universidad y sentía el deseo de hacer algo mejor que simplemente ir a Misa el domingo, que era lo que la mayoría de la gente hacía. Empecé a buscar grupos laicos donde pudiera vivir mi cristianismo o, al menos, de una manera más intensa. Sin embargo, no encontré ninguno que me satisfizo. Un amigo mío, que estudiaba también en

la misma universidad, me comentó que él estaba viendo cómo yo tenía inquietud y que él estaba hablando, a manera de consejero espiritual, con un fraile capuchino y que podía ponerme en contacto con él. De esa manera, empecé a hablar con este fraile y al paso de tiempo, descubrí el estilo de vida de los franciscanos capuchinos que me llamó la atención fundamentalmente porque era un estilo de vida muy sencillo y fraterno”.

ENTRADA AL SACERDOCIO: Luego de haber transcurrido varios años, el fraile entró al Orden de los Hermanos Menores Capuchinos, donde terminó sus estudios, y “luego, en el 1988, mi superior decidió enviarme aquí a Texas... a colaborar con la formación inicial de los frailes jóvenes. Cuando llegué aquí yo era fraile perpetuo, había hecho mis votos y no era sacerdote. Claro, esto fue hace muchísimos años. En el 1988 llegué a Dallas y vi que había una gran necesidad de sacerdotes, sobre todo, que hablaran español. Y como yo, pues hablaba ya español, ésa fue la principal razón que me motivó a ordenarme para servir a la comunidad hispana, que entonces estaba bastante escasa de sacerdotes que hablaran español”.

PRIMERO UN HERMANO: “La diferencia entre ser fraile y ser padre se basa en “la diferencia entre la vida religiosa y el sacerdocio diocesano... El culmen de nuestra vocación no es la ordenación sacerdotal ni la vivencia como sacerdotes. El culmen de nuestra vocación es la profesión de votos. Hacemos en público los votos de pobreza, castidad y obediencia; y, al mismo tiempo, nos comprometemos con nuestro superior a vivir a la manera de la vida capuchina. Fundamentalmente, el estilo de vida franciscano tiene que ver no con lo que uno haga, sino cómo uno lo haga”.

“Yo intento hacer un esfuerzo para que la gente sepa que somos hermanos. De hecho, yo jamás uso el título Padre Luis Gerardo. Siempre, si tengo que dar un título digo, ‘Soy el Hermano Luis Gerardo o Fraile Luis Gerardo’, pues quiero hacer hincapié en que la gente sepa sobre la vocación franciscana. Francisko de Asís no fue sacerdote. El fundador de nuestra orden no fue un clérigo.”

SANTOS FRANCISCANOS: “Muchísimos de los santos capuchinos no eran sacerdotes. Muchísimos de los santos capuchinos fueron frailes limosneros que jamás se ordenaron al sacerdocio. Lo que hacían era, y esto hace muchos años, buscar donaciones para el convento y para los pobres. Por esa forma de vida muy sencilla, que tenían la mayoría de ellos, fueron muy bien

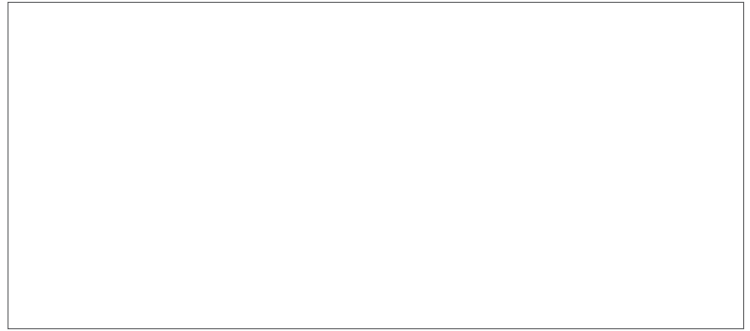
acogidos en las sociedades y en los lugares donde ellos vivían. El fundador de nuestra orden no fue sacerdote y muchos de los ejemplos más distinguidos de la vida capuchina son hermanos que no fueron sacerdotes. Si bien, un gran ejemplo muy conocido es el Padre Pío”.

PROYECTO DE LA PARROQUIA: La comunidad de Our Lady of Guadalupe ha empezado a invertir en la formación de fe de los adultos. “Tan o más importante que la formación católica de los niños y los jóvenes es la de los adultos. ... La mayoría de los padres envían a los hijos a la catequesis para que ellos reciban un sacramento. Si bien a la hora de formarse ellos en la fe cristiana católica y conocer la belleza de la fe cristiana católica, a la mayoría de la gente no les interesa eso. Para mí, es siempre un interrogante de ¿cómo es posible que no quieran aprender más de nuestra fe católica?”

“El estudio de la Biblia en la parroquia se centra en la Eucaristía por el año del avivamiento eucarístico. Creo que es necesario que la gente se acerque a Jesús en la palabra y que lea los evangelios y la introducción de los evangelios. Creo, además, que es necesario que la gente lea las notas al calce de las páginas porque el mundo de los evangelios es un mundo que poco tiene que ver con el nuestro. Se trata de un mundo de hace dos mil años que tenían culturas que son radicalmente distintas a las de nosotros y en un idioma, que es radicalmente distinto al nuestro.

“Entonces, lo que veo y, le digo a la gente, es que empiecen leyendo el evangelio y que empiecen con el Evangelio de Lucas. Y que, cuando se les haga difícil, acudan a alguien que tenga más conocimiento que ellos y hagan preguntas. Y, por supuesto, que usen una Biblia que tenga anotaciones e introducciones porque si no, se van a perder y se van a confundir, que es lo que también muchísima gente me dice, ‘no es que no leo la Biblia, sino que no entiendo nada’. Bienvenido al club. Todos nos perdemos. Por eso, es necesario hacer un esfuerzo para no perderse”.

SACRAMENTO SAGRADO: “Llevo treinta y cinco años de sacerdote y creo que, desde el primer momento, sentí el llamado y me sigue llamando al cabo de tantos años. Es que la gente, solamente por el hecho de ser sacerdote, confía en ti... ¿Cómo es posible que solamente por el hecho de ser sacerdote, la gente ya te abra el corazón y confíe en ti, te cuente sus problemas y busque algún tipo de sanación? Entonces, creo que, por eso, el que más me gusta, el que más disfruto, es el Sacramento de la Reconciliación”. 🙏



SÍGUENOS EN ESPAÑOL

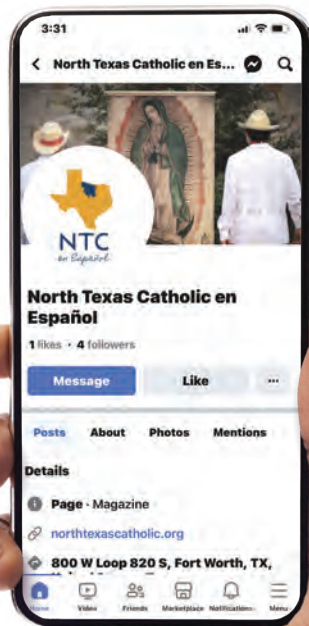
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