

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



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for **Christ**

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Critical Mass

Give me enough time and space, and I could write 100 things I love about the Catholic Church.

Of course, at the top of the list would be the Holy Eucharist, which goes hand in hand with the celebration of the Mass.

At last month's Mass of Ordination for three new priests, many of the things I love about the Catholic Church were evident: a liturgy that traces its roots to the Last Supper, the beauty of the stained glass at the cathedral, exquisite music that has been sung for hundreds of years, and the Litany of the Saints, where we call on our brothers and sisters who have gone before us in the faith to pray for us.

Reading Joan Kurkowski-Gillen's article on the ordination, which begins on page 34, and viewing the photo galleries and videos at NorthTexasCatholic.org will give you some idea of the symbolism behind the traditions of this beautiful liturgy.

The ordination is filled with ancient rites. One of the most powerful symbols is when the candidates for ordination lie prostrate before the altar. Like our Lord Jesus Christ, they give up their own lives and rise into a new life in service to the people of God.

Their service begins immediately. When the Rite of Ordination concludes, the three new priests consecrate the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Then they distribute Holy Communion to the faithful.

That reminds me of something else I love about the Catholic Church: unity. Receiving Our Lord in the Eucharist unites us to each other, to the saints, and to our God Himself.

Receiving the Eucharist from a new priest filled me with gratitude that these men heard and answered yes to God's call, even in a noisy world filled with distractions and diversions.

As I read Joan's account and viewed the photo galleries and videos, I am reminded to pray for these three new priests, for all priests, and for young people discerning God's will for their lives.

Susan Moses

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Father Jack McKone carries the monstrance. (NTC/Carolina Boelter)

Following Christ

St. John the Apostle Parish holds its first Eucharistic Procession on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS — Despite 100-degree temperatures, several hundred parishioners and guests participated in St. John the Apostle Parish’s June 11 Eucharistic procession.

Both the ongoing year of Eucharistic Revival and next year’s planned Eucharistic Congress, the first in 83 years, inspired the procession, St. John parishioner Paul Epperley explained.

Epperley said, “The procession is to take ourselves outside the church and say, ‘This is the Body of Christ’ and let others see us proclaim it.”

During the Mass preceding the procession, Father Jack McKone, pastor, stressed the Eucharist’s centrality to Catholic faith.

“Jesus said, ‘Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you do not have life,’” Fr. McKone said. “The Eucharist establishes, in the strongest possible way, a real union between believer and Christ.”

Father Sam Maul, parochial vicar, said the Eucharistic procession provided the opportunity for the faithful to follow Christ out into the world and for the world outside to experience and be challenged by Christ’s mystery and invitation to draw closer to Him.

— Matthew Smith

A day at the park

ARLINGTON —The Deaf Community of the Diocese of Fort Worth is often found at Mass or special religious events, but on May 6, they toured Globe Life Field in Arlington, home of the Texas Rangers.

According to Connie Martin, coordinator of Deaf Ministry for the diocese, the tour was scheduled to build community within the group. The Rangers provided a Deaf interpreter, Sid Johnson, who gave the participants a 2½-hour tour of the retractable-roof stadium, which opened in 2020.

Martin listed highlights of the visit: seeing the large collection of Rangers memorabilia in the booth of Chuck Morgan, the club’s public address announcer; visiting an owner’s suite; and learning how the stadium’s architecture includes historical objects such as the foul posts and scoreboard from the original Arlington Stadium. The next day, the Deaf Community gathered at a church home:



Deaf ministry coordinator Connie Martin signs with community members. (NTC/Ben Torres)

St. Rita Parish in Fort Worth, where a special Deaf Community Mass and social is held on the first Sunday of each

month from September through May at 2 p.m. The sacrament of reconciliation is usually offered before the Mass.



Views from the Pews

Traditions and transitions go hand in hand, especially at the end of the school year, when rituals and liturgies acknowledge God's presence, offer thanksgiving, and pray for illumination as students prepare to take the next step.

Eighth grade vocation. More than 300 eighth graders gathered for the annual Eighth Grade Vocation Day at St. Patrick Cathedral, celebrating Mass with Bishop Michael Olson, hearing vocation stories from priests and sisters, and learning the history of the cathedral.

Passing of the light. At All Saints Catholic School in Fort Worth, eighth graders decorate candles and give them to seventh graders to symbolize passing on leadership and the light of Christ. They also honor faculty with a candle.

Baccalaureate Mass. The evening before graduation, Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth celebrated a Baccalaureate Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller to gather before God and give thanks for all the blessings that have been and will be.

THERE'S
MORE



See all the local photo galleries by scanning the QR code or visiting North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com.



NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Kevin Bartram

SSMN general council visits diocese



The International Leadership Team at the Our Lady of Victory convent on May 17. From left, General Superior Sister Immaculée Mukabugabo of Rwanda; General Councilor Sister Maria das Graças Oliveira of Brazil; General Councilor Sister Marie Justine Penge of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; General Councilor Sister Mary Laura Lesniak of the United States; and General Councilor Sister Ana Havenne of Belgium. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FORT WORTH — Five women representing five countries and five cultures visited Fort Worth, but their mission to share the love of God unites

them, as well as their hosts.

The International Leadership Team of the Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur (SSMN) visited the 21 sisters of

Fort Worth's Western Region of SSMNs from May 11-18.

The leaders shared news of the congregation's work in eight countries where

SSMNs serve: Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Rwanda, Tanzania, the United States, Canada, and Belgium, where the order was founded in 1819.

General Councilor Sister Mary Laura Lesniak, who is from Buffalo, New York's Eastern Province, explained the reason for the visit.

"It's a grace to have the opportunity to be with sisters in Fort Worth where they live. To listen to them, to listen to their concerns, to share with them what's happening in the other regions and provinces of the congregation. There's so much that's going on," she said.

In addition, old friendships were rekindled as several Western Province sisters have served as missionaries in Brazil and African nations alongside the international leaders.

The leadership team shared stories of their current work in education and poverty relief with marginalized communities in Africa and Brazil.

'We're in this for the long game'

 National March for Life president speaks in diocese

Jeanne Mancini
(NTC/Annette
Mendoza-Smith)



COLLEYVILLE — What is the single most important thing a person can do to build a culture of life in a post-*Roe v. Wade* world? Pray.

That's the advice Jeanne Mancini gave to supporters who came to Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville May 10 to hear the veteran pro-life advocate share her thoughts about the advances and challenges facing the movement after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned its 1973 precedent legalizing abortion last June.

"Pray every day. Make that a consistent effort," urged the president of the March for Life.

"Take time to meditate and listen to God. If you're not

spending time in prayer every day, it's impossible to hear the Shepherd's voice."

In a society troubled by division, a loss of morality, and an anti-Christian perspective in academia and the entertainment industry, Jesus calls the faithful to be salt and light in the world.

"You were made for such a time as this," she said, addressing parishioners. "There is a temptation to throw our hands up or bury our heads in the sand, but friends, perhaps now more than ever before, our world needs you."

Public policy and legislation are critically important in saving lives, but a more important objective is changing hearts and minds, she insisted, adding, "We're working for the day when abortion is unthinkable."

— Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Land of the rising Son



NTC/Carolina Boelter

DODSON PRAIRIE — Father Jesuraj, SAC, parochial vicar of St. Michael Parish in Bedford, carries a monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament during Rogation Day on May 18 at St. Boniface Church in Dodson Prairie. Rogation Day is a long-standing faith tradition in which Catholics set aside a day (or days) of prayer and penance to ask for God’s protection, for His blessing of tools, seeds, and animals, and for a bountiful harvest.

Annual Mass of reparation



Office of Safe Environment coordinates promise to protect, pledge to heal

FORT WORTH — Bishop Michael Olson celebrated the diocese’s annual Mass of Reparation for Victims of Abuse.

More than 70 laypersons were present at the Mass, plus approximately 60 Safe Environment facilitators.

After Mass, the Safe Environment facilitators, who lead the diocese’s

awareness sessions, stayed for a luncheon and meeting.

The Office of Safe Environment offers healing assistance for victims and implements measures to prevent abuse. The motto of the program is “Promise to protect, pledge to heal.”

From gardeners to lectors and everything in



NTC/Juan Guajardo

between, all volunteers and employees of the diocese are trained to prevent abuse by identifying problematic behaviors and by

keeping their own actions safe and appropriate at all times.

– Kiki Hayden

CLERGY ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

REV. ALEXANDER AMBROSE, HGN

Previously Pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Wichita Falls, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, effective July 1.

REV. JOSE FRANCIS, TOR

Previously Parochial Vicar of Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls, has been appointed **Pastoral Administrator** of St. John Paul II Parish in Denton, effective July 1.

REV. MSGR. E. JAMES HART

Previously Chancellor and Moderator of the Curia, has retired and been appointed **Pastor Emeritus** of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, effective July 1.

REV. AUSTIN HOODENPYLE

Newly ordained, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, effective July 1.

REV. ED HOPKINS

Newly ordained, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Jude Parish in Mansfield, effective July 1.

REV. BRANDON LeCLAIR

Newly ordained, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills, effective July 1.

REV. PEDRO MARTINEZ

Previously Pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, has been assigned to **study** in Rome, effective July 1.

REV. SAMUEL MAUL

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills, has been appointed **Pastoral Administrator** of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, effective Aug. 1.

REV. LINH NGUYEN

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. George Parish in Fort Worth, effective June 1.

VERY REV. JONATHAN WALLIS

Has been appointed **Moderator of the Curia**, without prejudice to his current assignments as Vicar General, Director of Theologian Seminarian Formation, and Chaplain and Director of the Newman Center at Texas Christian University, effective July 1.

REV. KYLE WALTERSCHEID

Previously Pastor of St. John Paul II Parish in Denton, has been appointed **Pastor** of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Wichita Falls, effective July 1.

LAITY

MR. STEPHEN BECHT

Previously Director of Real Estate and Construction, has been appointed **Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer**, effective July 1.

MR. JAMES SUTER, JD

Has been appointed **Chancellor**, without prejudice to his status as General Counsel, effective July 1.



A young woman places a rose at the feet of a statue of Our Lady of Fatima. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

A Rosary for peace and unity

On the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, about 100 young adults with Pastoral Juvenil Hispana prayed the Rosary

FORT WORTH — “I had never prayed the Rosary this way.”

“It was something I had never experienced.”

“We were able to express our faith in the community like never before.”

These were some of the comments made by several young people on May 13 at the Rosary for Peace and Family Unity, organized by the Pastoral Juvenil Hispana of the Diocese of Fort Worth in Trinity Park.

About 100 young people attended this event, some members from different parishes and others who heard about it through social networks. All gathered for the same purpose: to unite in prayer to ask for peace in the community and in the whole world.

— Karla Silva

DIFFERENT WORLDS, SERVING TOGETHER

Perilous escape, second chapter, and conversion mark 25th ordination celebrations

By Matthew Smith

Two priests of divergent backgrounds celebrated the 25th anniversary of their ordinations on May 20 at Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth, remembering along the way a third who has since passed away.

Father Hoa Nguyen presently serves as pastor at Holy Family. Father John Swistovich, though retired from full-time work, continues to assist at the parish.

The late father David Bristow, who retired in 2016 having last served as pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Fort Worth, would attend Mass at Holy Family. He passed away in 2021.

Although all three were ordained together, their backgrounds could hardly be more different.

“Somehow the Lord called us from separate walks of life to come into one community, to serve in the same diocese, and to come together at Holy Family,” Fr. Nguyen said while delivering his homily during the Mass celebrated that day.

The 1998 ordination of the three proved cause for celebration in itself.

“It was the first time in a long time the [Diocese of Fort Worth] had three men ordained,” Fr. Nguyen said.

LOST AT SEA

Fr. Nguyen thanked God for his parents and siblings, most of whom attended the May 20 celebration.

Born in Vietnam, the fortunes of Fr. Nguyen and his family deteriorated dramatically in 1975 following the fall of

Saigon to communist North Vietnamese forces.

“Before that my father was a banker,” said Andy Nguyen, Fr. Nguyen’s brother. “He provided financing for farmers and fishermen. Like many other people, he was arrested and imprisoned, and our family fell into utter starvation.”

Starvation as in literally nothing to eat.

“We would trap geckos in the backyard and butcher them to survive,” Andy Nguyen said. “We ate vegetation until that ran out, chopped wood to sell for food. [We] would go days without anything in our belly.”

Fr. Nguyen worked to support the family, his brother said, adding that one job offered a free lunch, which Fr. Nguyen instead took home to ensure his family had food.

In 1979, at age 16, Fr. Nguyen and his oldest brother managed to escape Vietnam via boat. Unfortunately, the boat’s engine died once they reached international waters, stranding them and fellow crew members afloat for 30 days without food or water.

“We had already gone through four or five years with no food on many days, with Mom and Dad in prison,” Fr. Nguyen answered when asked how he managed to maintain his faith while drifting the ocean. “But, through those earlier ordeals, one

day something would happen, and we’d have food. So we totally relied on God. In the boat that trust was the same because we knew the only hope we had was in God.”

Fr. Nguyen’s call to the priesthood predated the troubles in Vietnam.

“I took the test and was accepted into the seminary in seventh grade, but that’s when the communists came and shut down everything,” Fr. Nguyen said.

Once he made it to America, Fr. Nguyen delayed entering seminary for several years in order to work to support his family.

America brought opportunity and challenge.

“The hardest was leaving family behind, coming here without

Mom and Dad,” Fr. Nguyen said. “No English. Knowing the future of the family depended on me, but struggling in a strange land. Some of the kids in school were cruel and not accepting because I looked different.”

Fr. Nguyen’s father and some of his siblings managed to escape Vietnam in 1981. His mother and a younger brother remained behind for another 13 years.

BUSINESS TO RELIGIOUS

New York native Fr. Swistovich entered the seminary later in life, at 46, and was ordained at 52.





Father Hoa Nguyen and Father John Swistovich celebrate Mass on May 20 at Holy Family Church in Fort Worth. Both Fr. Nguyen and Fr. Swistovich celebrated their 25th priestly anniversaries that day. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Before that, he enjoyed successful careers in the world of banking, sales, and marketing, making good money and traveling a lot.

“But there was always something gnawing at me to think back on vocations because I had been brought up in that atmosphere,” Fr. Swistovich said.

Fr. Swistovich said thoughts of the priesthood preceded his entry into the business world.

“I was raised in a parish where we had a number of guys in seminary — more vocations than any parish in the Diocese of Syracuse,” Fr. Swistovich said. “I was an altar server for several years and most of us were encouraged to look at vocations. So that was just part of growing up.”

In many ways, his business career helped prepare him for the priesthood, Fr. Swistovich said.

“It’s a mission, the priesthood, but you also have finance councils and parish operating concerns to deal with,” Fr. Swistovich said. “My business career gave me tools that later helped me with those

things. God put me in the business world to learn those tools to use later when He was calling me to the priesthood.”

Fr. Swistovich describes himself as retired from being a full-time pastor but not from the priesthood. He still celebrates Mass, hears confessions, and performs other duties at Holy Family and, occasionally, other area parishes.

“I learned years ago that St. Thomas the Apostle said, ‘My Lord, My God,’” Fr. Swistovich replied when asked how he keeps Mass fresh. “When I perform the consecration, under my breath, I always say that. It makes me aware of what’s actually going on at that altar. The gravity of [knowing] it’s not about me. It’s about Christ.”

Fr. Nguyen offered similar thoughts.

“Even though it’s the same parish, the community of each Mass tends to be different,” Fr. Nguyen said. “So it’s that connection with the people at each Mass. Every week I celebrate five Masses, for example. I don’t write anything out. I reflect on the readings and rely on the

Holy Spirit. So every homily is very different even though the central idea is the same.”

CONVERSION

Fr. Bristow served for 21 years as an Episcopal minister before converting to Catholicism. In 1998, through a pastoral provision, he was ordained a Catholic priest in the same ordination Mass as Fathers Nguyen and Swistovich.

Deacon David Kinch, during the May 20 celebration, characterized Fr. Bristow as a gentle, kind, spiritual man who drew joy through serving others.

Dcn. Kinch and other speakers praised the positive impacts each of the three priests made at the various parishes they served.

Fathers Nguyen and Swistovich spoke of their deep friendship through the years.

“Didn’t know each other, came from completely different backgrounds,” Fr. Swistovich said of himself, Fr. Nguyen, and Fr. Bristow. “Yet we all became brothers.” ✝

“Husbands of the Church”

Two deacons ordained Maronite priests at
Our Lady of Lebanon Parish

By Kiki Hayden

On May 7, at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Parish in Lewisville, Bishop Elias Zaidan ordained two deacons to the priesthood — Father Peter Raad and Father George Elandary. The two new priests were vested, given the Eucharist, and processed around the church with the Eucharist in chalices on their heads, serenaded by applause and *zalghouta* (a celebratory trill traditional to Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries). Afterward, each priest stood beside his wife and blessed the congregation filing out of the church.

If this sounds different than a Roman Catholic ordination, that’s because it is! Our Lady of Lebanon Parish isn’t Roman Catholic — but it is certainly a Catholic parish, in communion with the Pope in Rome and the other 23 Catholic Churches. Each Catholic Church has its own liturgies, cultural and linguistic traditions, canon law, spiritualities, and leadership. Catholic Churches other than the Roman Catholic Church are often called “Eastern Catholic Churches.” Although it falls within the Diocese of Fort Worth’s geographical boundaries, Our Lady of Lebanon is actually a part of the Maronite Catholic Church — more specifically, the Eparchy (read: Diocese) of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles.

In the Maronite tradition, married deacons can become priests. In all Catholic Churches, once ordained a deacon or a priest, a man can no longer marry (or remarry if he is widowed). “The Lord finds you married, He takes you married. He finds you unmarried,



Deacons Peter Raad (left) and George Elandary recite the creed during the rite of ordination. (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)

He takes you unmarried. And you remain as you are when the Lord finds you,” Fr. Raad told the *North Texas Catholic*. He emphasized that both celibate and the married priesthood are beautiful and each have “their own call.”

The morning of the ordination, Our Lady of Lebanon Parish was packed — more than 500 people filled the pews and lined the back of the church. Celebrant Bishop Zaidan was joined by Father Assaad ElBasha (pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon) and five other priests.

Like the Roman Catholic Mass, the Maronite Divine Liturgy starts with the Service of the Word and culminates in the Service of *Qurbono* (Eucharist). The

Divine Liturgy was celebrated in English, with some prayers chanted in Syriac (a dialect of Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus).

During his homily, Bishop Zaidan emphasized that the vocation of marriage informs the vocation of the priesthood. “The husband will do anything for his wife,” he said. “Now you have to do everything as a husband of the Church to care for the Church and to be a father for all the members of the Church as well.”

The Divine Liturgy continued with the rite of peace, when the altar servers passed the sign of peace to each pew — and each pew passed the sign of peace from the center, just like candlelight is



Newly ordained Fathers Peter Raad and George Elandary hold chalices with the Body and Blood of Christ as they prepare to process around Our Lady of Lebanon Church during the Mass May 7. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

passed through the church during Easter Vigil. Then came the Eucharistic prayers and the preparation of the Holy Mysteries (read: Eucharist).

Once Bishop Zaidan and the concelebrating priests had taken Communion, everything stopped. It was time for the ordination.

Elandary and Raad knelt before Bishop Zaidan, who made the sign of the cross.

After they had professed the creed, their pastor, Fr. ElBasha, presented the candidates to Bishop Zaidan.

Bishop Zaidan covered the candidates with his cope. With one hand, Bishop Zaidan touched the Eucharist, and with the other he touched the candidates' heads and prayed for them. The candidates' hands were then anointed with chrism oil.

Next came the vestments. Fr. Elandary and Fr. Raad removed their outer diaconal albs and stoles, now dressed in clerics. The wife and children of each candidate brought the priestly vestments to the bishop to bless. Fr.

ElBasha and Father Abbot Peter Verhalen (of Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey in Irving) assisted Fr. Elandary and Fr. Raad as they put on their vestments. Fr. Raad's vestment featured an image of the Eucharist, and Fr. Elandary's featured the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The air filled with the sharp, sweet smell of incense as the newly vested priests were blessed.

Bishop Zaidan placed a chalice with the Eucharist on each priest's head for the procession around the church. The congregation made many joyful noises — singing, applauding, trilling *zalghouta*, and ringing bells.

The two new priests took communion and then administered the Eucharist to the congregation — starting with their own families.

Married priests continue to live out their vocations as husbands and fathers. "Married priesthood is a package deal," said Fr. Raad. That's part of the reason why Fr. Raad plans to continue working as a professor at Southern Methodist University until he retires.

And Fr. Elandary, who is married with children as well, continues to work as a chiropractor and nutritionist. Fr. Elandary spoke about his own call to the priesthood. As he studied in the medical field, he felt drawn to study theology too. He also has a strong devotion to St. Charbel. "The call is a knock," Fr. Elandary told the *NTC*. "The more you answer that call or that knock, He will give you a little more and a little more — that's how it happened with me."

After the Liturgy, Fr. Raad and his wife Jocelyne Raad, as well as Fr. Elandary and his wife, Cosette Elandary, stood in the back of the church. The congregation lined up to give them congratulations and thanks for their service to the church.

Fr. Raad beamed as he made the sign of the cross on parishioners' foreheads. Fr. Elandary smiled serenely as he embraced and blessed his well-wishers. Jocelyne Raad and Cosette Elandary smiled beside their husbands — who are now also husbands of the Church. 🇺🇸



The Sacramental Life

Monsignor E. James Hart transitions from diocesan administration to increasing his sacramental administration

By Susan Moses

It's not a retirement, as most people think of it — it's more a restructuring of a priest's life.

On June 30, Monsignor E. James Hart will relinquish the responsibilities of chancellor and moderator of the curia for the Diocese of Fort Worth, allowing him to spend more time serving in priestly ministry.

Msgr. Hart has served two periods as chancellor and moderator of the curia: from 2005 – 2010 under Bishop Kevin

Vann, and again beginning in 2016 for Bishop Michael Olson. The position's responsibilities include overseeing and coordinating diocesan administration under the authority of the bishop.

"I've been able to assist my bishop in this particular position and time, in a way that's important for the life of the diocese," said Msgr. Hart. "I've enjoyed building a team that will take us into the future."

The decision to step away from the duties of the chancery was Monsignor's, and it came after careful consideration

and prayer, which are hallmarks of his *modus operandi*.

Canon law stipulates that, normally, a priest can no longer be a pastor once he reaches his 75th year. He reached that age in February, "and that being the case, probably it's a good time to make the transition," he explained.

Father Jonathan Wallis will take on the role of moderator of the curia, in addition to his position as vicar general. James Suter, JD, general counselor for the diocese, will assume the responsibilities of chancellor, and Steve

◀ Msgr. E. James Hart celebrates the Liturgy of the Eucharist during Mass on the Feast of St. Boniface June 5 at the Catholic Center chapel. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Becht will undertake those of finance and operations.

STRONG AND BRIGHT

In his administrative role, Msgr. Hart served on several leadership committees, including the presbyteral council, diocesan finance council, diocesan pastoral finance council, college of consultors, and Advancement Foundation, where he served as chairman of the board.

Bishop Olson has asked him to remain on the diocesan finance council and the board of the Advancement Foundation.

His work with other leaders has convinced him of a strong outlook for the diocese, as evidenced by the establishment of new parishes and schools and the growth of the Advancement Foundation.

Another promising indicator, according to Msgr. Hart, is the presbyterate.

He said, “I’m very encouraged by all the seminarians. I’m equally encouraged by the new priests of the past few years. That, honestly, is the fruit of Bishop Olson’s central commitment to the priesthood and to building a presbyterate.

“These are all good, good men, and I think we have some very fine priests coming along, who can carry on with integrity the priestly work of the Local Church. It speaks well for the bishop’s administration, his priorities, and I think it augurs well for the future of the diocese, a bright future,” he continued.

SACRAMENTAL LIFE

Even with full-time administrative responsibilities, Msgr. Hart centers his life around the sacramental life of the priesthood. He believes “it’s important to remain connected sacramentally to a parish,” and he has continued to hear

confessions and celebrate the 7 a.m. Sunday Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, where, as of July 1, he will be pastor emeritus.

He also regularly celebrates Mass at Catholic Charities Fort Worth and at the Catholic Center, and this too will continue.

With weekday availability increasing, he anticipates helping the pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton by celebrating additional Masses as well as assisting with hospital visits and other responsibilities.

“As long as I’m *compos mentis*, I want to continue to exercise my priesthood, to teach and to preach,” he said with a smile.

He will also have more time to dedicate to spiritual study and prayer, a longstanding habit that begins at 4 each morning.

FOLLOW HIM

Reading and prayer led Msgr. Hart to the Catholic priesthood after a long spiritual journey.

Baptized as an infant into the Catholic faith, he was raised in an Assembly of God church. As a young adult, his prolific reading of Christian authors led him to enter the Episcopal Church, where the then-business executive confirmed the whispers of a call to ordained ministry that had been with him many years.

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

But God still beckoned him onward. His continued spiritual studies led him to writings of the early Church Fathers, especially regarding the Eucharist. In 1995, he renounced his orders in the

Episcopal Church USA with plans to enter the Catholic Church.

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

As a former Episcopal minister, Msgr. Hart requested ordination as a Catholic priest under the Pastoral Provision established by St. John Paul II. After a year and a half of waiting, Msgr. Hart’s Vatican indult was granted, followed by written and oral examinations, then ordination to the transitional diaconate and priesthood.

Since his presbyteral ordination in September of 1996, Msgr. Hart has served at St. Thomas More as pastor, St. Michael Parish as parochial vicar, St. Peter the Apostle Parish as pastoral administrator, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton as pastor.

As he prepares to devote more time to parish ministry again, Msgr. Hart said, “I want to serve my Lord in my priestly vocation, and this will be a new chapter.

“All of us, by our baptism, are called to be disciples. That takes on different dimensions depending on the vocation to which we’re called,” continued the priest.

Discipleship is impossible, Msgr. Hart said, “unless we have a deep union with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, sacramentally and personally. So, follow Him, and the means to do that is the sacramental life of the Church, which includes the Word of God and the sacraments.” 🇺🇸



When Randy Grasso speaks to passersby, he is aware "I might be the only Christian they meet." (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

taking it to the STREETS

Saint Paul Street Evangelists take
the Gospel to public spaces

By Susan Moses

The church bells of St. Patrick Cathedral are close enough to be heard, but they might as well be a world away for some visitors to the Fort Worth Water Gardens.

For those individuals who would not consider entering a church but are spiritually

curious, the Saint Paul Street Evangelists meet them where they are, be it the Fort Worth Water Gardens, Sundance Square, the Keller Farmers Market, and the courthouse squares of Denton or Granbury.

Randy Grasso, David Rollins, and Phil Streib are team leaders of the local Saint Paul Street Evangelists, an international Catholic organization that “teaches average Catholics



how to take the Gospel to a world starved for the Good News.”

The evangelists visit high-traffic locations and offer to pray, to answer questions, to listen, and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with anyone interested.

On frequent Saturdays, Streib, a St. Bartholomew parishioner, stands between the Fort Worth Convention Center and the Water Gardens next to a small sign headlined “Catholic Truth,” with an image of the Blessed Mother holding baby Jesus.

Streib has been surprised that it’s often young adults who approach him. He said, “A 19- or 20-year-old guy, tattooed from head to toe, wants to talk about faith. He’s looking for answers. It’s shocking how many young people are curious.

“Young people are thinking, ‘This can’t be all there is.’ They are looking for substance,” he continued, adding that millennials and Gen-Zers are less likely to have been raised attending church and may have little knowledge of Christianity.

The evangelists commonly field questions from those who were raised Catholic and no longer practice the faith, sometimes due to misunderstandings of the teachings of the Church. “We allow the conversation to happen,” said Rollins, who leads the team in Denton and Keller.

With a listening ear, they dispel inaccuracies, offer brochures with links to more resources, and suggest the questioner return to Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, or confession. “We hope they hear or see something that tilts them toward thinking differently about the Church,” Rollins said.

Often, passersby have hearts burdened with worry and will request prayer. “They can be affected deeply, and it’s memorable to know a person has been touched when you pray together for someone or something they are concerned about,” said Rollins, adding that he’s seen tears from men and women.

If no one approaches them, the team will offer prayer or free rosaries and Miraculous Medals along with guides to prayer as an icebreaker.

EARLY BUTTERFLIES

Rollins, a St. Benedict parishioner, remembers being nervous when he began.

He recalled, “It can be scary if you haven’t done it before. You are afraid of



David Rollins explains the Miraculous Medal to visitors in Granbury. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

being rude. You don’t know what to say. Those are the same fears I had at the beginning.

“Once I got over the initial butterflies in my stomach, it was a wonderful experience. I thought people might be angry, abusive, or insulting. But if they aren’t interested, they just say ‘no thanks’ and walk on by. There’s no altercations or arguments,” he continued.

Streib agreed, adding that his experiences praying outside abortion clinics were more hostile and intimidating.

Grasso, a St. Frances Cabrini parishioner, emphasized, “We are never rude. We are not here to win a debate.”

Another obstacle for prospective evangelists is a fear of not knowing enough. “I’m not a theologian or even an apologist,” said Rollins, but Saint Paul Street Evangelization offers online training and resources including books, pamphlets, and audio talks.

Team members say they have learned much about the Catholic faith as they evangelize, and the same questions recur.

Grasso said, “Saint Paul Street Evangelization gives you a good foundation to talk with anyone about anything. Their materials are wonderful.” He compared their training to learning a set of chords, and the subsequent conversations on the street are jazz songs that riff off the chords.

SOWING SEEDS

Grasso introduced the Saint Paul Street Evangelization ministry to the Diocese of Fort Worth when he moved to

Granbury from Dallas, where he was part of a team stationed near Klyde Warren Park and the Dallas Museum of Art.

Now, he evangelizes at the Granbury town square on many Saturdays and often spends his lunch break in Sundance Square in Fort Worth. He hopes to grow the size and number of teams in the diocese.

Why?

His immediate answer: “It’s the most fun you can have as a Christian.”

A more thoughtful response quickly followed. “To give people a greater awareness of the most important thing in life — to save your soul. The Catholic Church exists for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.”

Whether he’s talking with an atheist or a practicing Catholic, he “finds out where they are, and encourages them to take the next step,” often recommending a book or a podcast. “Our conversation is like a stone in their shoe, something they are aware of and think about.”

As his devotion to Mary has grown, so has his desire to evangelize.

He explained that no one loves Jesus more than Mary does, and he prayerfully requests that Mary will open doors and bring in her children.

The evangelists don’t expect to see instant conversions.

Rollins said he hopes people he speaks with “walk away with a more favorable impression of what the Catholic Church is or what it has to offer. There’s no way to know. One sows. Another reaps. I see myself as a sower.” 🌱

taking the lead

A seamless transition in leadership at Catholic Charities Fort Worth is 'a God-given gift'

By Sandra Engelland

Catholic Charities Fort Worth is thriving and growing during a time of transition in leadership while continuing to pursue its mission to help clients break the cycle of poverty.

Father Anthony Chandler is wrapping up a year of service as interim president and CEO of the organization while Michael Iglio, the chief operating officer for CCFW, takes over at the helm.

On loan from the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, Fr. Chandler began serving on June 27, 2022, and will complete his service on June 30.

"Fr. Chandler has been a breath of fresh air, with his passion for helping others and helping organizations," said Deb McNamara, former board chair for CCFW and current executive board committee member. "He's brought a sense of calmness and focus on our mission of helping clients out of poverty."

McNamara said Fr. Chandler encouraged others to share his passion for "serving the needs of the most vulnerable."

He quickly became a leader

who could share the CCFW mission and vision with the broader Catholic and North Texas communities.

She also appreciated his service to staff with offering Mass and the sacrament of reconciliation.

"He helped calm and steady our organization during a time of change, and we're grateful for his leadership and his friendship," McNamara said.

Johanna Brewington, director of executive fundraising, said Fr. Chandler "has been an incredible blessing" to the staff at CCFW.

"He prioritizes everything in order of God, family, and work, and he's making sure we're taking care of ourselves so we can take care of clients," Brewington said.

Fr. Chandler has taken the time to get to know and care for everyone on staff.

"He truly has been a gift," she said.

Incoming President and CEO Iglio called Fr. Chandler "a phenomenal leader."

"I can't say enough great things about him, his leadership style, and how great he is to work with and great to learn from," Iglio said.

'SEAMLESS' TRANSITION

When Fr. Chandler leaves his interim role at CCFW, he will return to his home diocese in Kentucky. On July 8, he will begin to serve as rector of the Cathedral of the Assumption in Louisville, rector of priest personnel, and vicar for clergy.

"I'm going from one big job to three big jobs, but I enjoy challenges," he said.

He sees challenges as opportunities to "make ourselves better."

Fr. Chandler said he has enjoyed his time in Fort Worth and was impressed by the organization's mission and service to over 13,000 people across 28 counties in the last year.

"We're not just giving someone a handout, it's a holistic approach to moving people out of poverty," he said. "I don't know of any other program like it in the country."

Highlights of his year in Texas include meeting clients and donors and working with the dedicated staff.

He also said he appreciated the support of Bishop Michael Olson, both to CCFW and to him personally as the interim leader.

Fr. Chandler said the organization is doing great and poised for even more growth.

“I think it’s gone very well, and I feel like it’s in a great spot right now,” he said.

Part of the reason the organization is in a great spot right now is because of Iglío, the incoming president and CEO.

Fr. Chandler said, “He brings a servant’s heart.”

The executive board looked at more than 40 candidates, with many good, qualified people, but Iglío stood out.

McNamara said, “In our search for what was best for our agency, we came back to a leader in our own backyard.”

Iglío showed “a strong sense of strategy and vision,” McNamara said. As COO, he also had strong relationships with the community, other nonprofits, Bishop Olson, and parishes in the diocese.

After much consideration and prayer, the board chose Iglío for his demonstrated strengths and for the consistency he would bring to the role as someone well-versed in the work of CCFW.

Fr. Chandler and Iglío are working together during the transition period.

McNamara said, “It’s been seamless, a God-given gift.”

TRUST AND TRANSFORMATION

Iglío came to CCFW in April 2020, the early days of the pandemic and a time of great upheaval as the organization had to pivot how it operated and the ways it assisted clients.

Why did he decide to make the switch from the corporate world to working with a nonprofit?

“I prayed about it a lot,” Iglío said. “It was an opportunity to live out my faith and what I learned about organizations.”

After receiving a chemical engineering degree from Texas A&M University, he spent 17 years with Frito-Lay in positions of increasing responsibility, as well as leading operations for two other businesses before coming to CCFW.

Iglío brings his engineering and operations backgrounds, using data analytics and return on investment approaches to find solutions to help



▲ Michael Iglío, the chief operating officer of CCFW, assumes the role of president and chief executive officer on July 1. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

◀ Father Anthony Chandler, on loan from the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, wraps up his year leading CCFW on June 30. (NTC/Thao Nguyen)

clients break the poverty cycle.

A key element is building trust with clients, the community, and staff, he said.

When clients trust the staff, they can be more vulnerable, get to the root causes of their problems, and receive guidance that improves their lives going forward.

“That foundation of trust is in everything we do,” Iglío said.

Iglío wants to continue to uplift the CCFW culture.

“If you’re not healthy and strong internally, you can’t be strong externally,” he said. “I want us to keep pouring into staff so we can serve our clients and community in the strongest, healthiest way.

“We want to truly eradicate poverty and transform lives,” he said. 🇺🇸



Memories of HOPE

When a loved one suffers with Alzheimer's disease, caregivers rely on faith, patience, and love

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Bill Hall had an uncanny sense of direction. Relying on his inner GPS, the director of accounting at Lockheed Martin always knew where he was going and never got lost.

That suddenly changed while on vacation in South Carolina with his wife, Rose. The couple got separated during a bike ride and Bill was late returning to their hotel.

"A half hour later he pulled up and told me he couldn't figure out where he was," recalled Rose, longtime development director at St. Andrew Catholic School in Fort Worth. "I didn't think much about it at the time."

Concern grew after a second incident at work. The accounting professional was in the middle of a presentation when he had to stop.

"He couldn't express himself," his wife explained, recounting the episode. "He couldn't remember the names of co-workers he'd known for 20, 30 years."

Originally attributed to stress, the lapses in short-term memory were later diagnosed as early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Bill Hall was only 56 years old.

A type of dementia usually affecting people older than 65, Alzheimer's is a progressive disease that eventually limits a person's ability to carry on a conversation and respond to their environment. Most people live four to eight years after diagnosis, but

some patients survive as long as 20 years depending on health and lifestyle factors.

An estimated 6.7 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's in 2023.

In the years that followed her husband's diagnosis, Rose Hall relied on an Alzheimer's Association support group, family, and her faith to meet the demands of caregiving. Like thousands of others coping with devastating memory loss in a loved one, her first thought was, "How am I going to do this?"

Members of a support group shared their knowledge about the disease with her.

"Other women told me what helped and what didn't," said the mother of three grown sons. "One piece of advice was don't fight with your husband about things he doesn't remember. There's no sense in arguing with someone whose memory is compromised."

Her Catholic faith was also a consolation.

"Every day I prayed for more patience," confessed the St. Andrew parishioner.

"When you're dealing with someone with Alzheimer's, you can imagine how much patience you have to have. I tried to see the disease from his side. Could I be more understanding? Could I be more kind?"

FINDING HOLINESS

It's not uncommon for a parishioner to share news of their own or a family member's diagnosis with dementia or Alzheimer's with Father John Robert



Cheryl Harding, president and CEO, and Dr. Janice Knebl (right), medical director, pose in front of the James L. West Center for Dementia Care on May 18. The statue is of philanthropist James L. West, to whom the center was dedicated. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Skeldon. Dealing with progressive illness is never easy but the rector at St. Patrick Cathedral encourages people to be magnanimous when faced with life's hardships.

"When someone is going through a long-term mental decline like Alzheimer's, there's going to be moments when family members want to throw up their hands to the sky and say 'why me' and that is certainly valid," he said. "But it also calls for magnanimity — largeness of soul. This is the walk you're on to try and find the holiness in the situation."

On days when a caregiver may feel frustrated or impatient, "There are lessons to be learned," Fr. Skeldon advised.

One of the core aspects of the Catholic faith is the Church as community. In a transient society where family members often move away from older

relatives, a faith community can serve as a source of strength, comfort, and support during illness.

"The communal element of religion is important, particularly when someone is literally losing their mind, not only for the caregiver but the person with Alzheimer's," the priest continued. "Those old practices, if someone was raised in the tradition of faith, may speak to the person beyond what we can see. When they hear the Lord's Prayer or Hail Mary, it may be calming because it touches someplace deep inside that's familiar."

When people share their struggles of chronic or life-threatening disease with him, Fr. Skeldon offers consolation by reminding them "what happened on the cross is a real thing." Jesus experienced the

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Rose Hall-Welborn, development director for St. Andrew Catholic School, stands in the school's new chapel on March 9. For years, she supported her first husband, Bill Hall, as he suffered with Alzheimer's. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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breakdown of the body and flesh. He felt anguish, forlornness, and forsakenness.

Watching someone you love lose their mental faculties is heartbreaking but it is a shared grief.

"We don't have a God that is distant or unknowing of what it is to be a human being," he explained. "He took on every form of human existence — even death on the cross."

WE FOCUS ON JOY

For the past four decades, Dr. Janice Knebl, DO, has helped older Americans navigate aging and memory loss. She's worked as medical director at the James L. West Center for Dementia Care since the nonprofit opened in 1993.

Partnering with the First Presbyterian

Church of Fort Worth, Eunice West founded the memory care facility to honor her late husband and philanthropist James L. West who died from Alzheimer's. Guided by a faith-inspired philosophy of life-enhancing comfort rather than cure, the center offers residential and respite care, a day program, and education classes geared toward helping families understand and cope with the disease.

The need for memory care resources is expected to soar as more baby boomers — Americans born between 1946 and 1964 — become senior citizens.

"Cases are going up because one of the greatest risk factors is aging," Dr. Knebl pointed out.

Identified by German physician Dr. Alois Alzheimer in 1906, profound memory loss was once described with words

like senile or disregarded as simply getting older.

"A lot of times, older adults thought they were going crazy — losing their mind. They thought they had a mental illness," the geriatric researcher suggested. "But it's not a mental illness. It's a disease."

Early diagnosis is key to maintaining a quality life for as long as possible. Along with legal and advanced care decisions, it allows a patient to make lifestyle changes that may benefit cognitive function.

"Having a diagnosis enables us to treat patients and give them options for different therapies," Dr. Knebl added. "They can make choices, take control, and share the journey with family and close friends."

Dr. Knebl's dedication to geriatric medicine is rooted in childhood. Born



Angel Camarillo, a Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep student, helps a woman bowl during a recreation session for patients at the James L. West Center for Dementia Care on May 18. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

into a Catholic Polish/German immigrant family, she grew up across the street from her grandparents, godparents, “and a lot of older adults.”

The value of medical intervention also came early in life. A blood deficiency as a young girl meant weekly doctor appointments for blood draws and injections.

“I decided I wanted to be on the other side of the needle,” said the Philadelphia native, explaining what made her consider a career in medicine.

After graduating from medical school, the osteopath trained at a Jewish home for the aged — a decision that reinforced a desire to care for senior citizens. Many residents were survivors of the Holocaust.

“The center specialized in caring for people with dementia so that just appealed to me,” Dr. Knebl continued.

“People with dementia are so vulnerable and there’s so much misunderstanding about them.”

Alzheimer’s has no cure but the seasoned doctor maintains a positive attitude for her patients. Treatment is a team effort involving social workers, nurses, and psychologists.

Meeting someone’s spiritual needs is also essential.

“Faith is part of us so it’s important to know about that person’s faith community and how can they [can] stay connected,” Dr. Knebl observed. “Maybe they can’t go there [to attend services] but we can bring that faith community to them.”

Clergy often visit patients, and a Christian service is held each Sunday in the chapel.

Research indicates personal prayer, connection to a church, and faith can

offer peace, hope, and reassurance to people with early-stage Alzheimer’s. Cognitive decline is slower for those with a higher level of spirituality and religious practices.

The St. Andrew parishioner considers caring for Alzheimer patients a privilege.

“We try to help people have some hope — not hope for being normal but hope for having a quality life,” the geriatrician said. “What I love about being at the West Center is we focus on joy. We control what we can and give the rest of it up to God.”

GOD HAS A PLAN

The family of Kathy Cribari Hamer Beck relied heavily on their faith when she was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in

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Kathy Hamer Beck holds the hands of her three daughters the day before she passed away. (Courtesy of Julie Hamer Stahl)

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2019. An award-winning journalist and photographer, the mother of five wrote articles for the *North Texas Catholic* that were both creative and informative. Her ability to find holiness in the ordinary and then share it in a family life column was recognized by the Catholic Press Association for excellence numerous times.

Her daughter Julie Stahl first noticed a change in her mother's witty, vivacious personality after a broken leg required surgery in 2015.

"She made it back from that, but we felt it knocked something loose in a way," Stahl said. "It progressively got harder and harder to see the old Mom."

The lapses in memory were caused by a form of Alzheimer's made worse by vascular dementia — a combination that

killed both Kathy's mother and sister. Cognitive decline in the once-skilled communicator was rapid.

"It caused tiny strokes in the brain, so we noticed the changes quicker," Stahl added. "We knew something was different and she eventually shared the diagnosis with us."

Social distancing, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded her mother's confusion.

"We didn't want to make her sick so we really couldn't come over. We'd bring meals and said a quick hello and goodbye," remembered Stahl, a Nolan Catholic and TCU gradute. "She didn't understand that very well."

During visits, the family shared memories without using the words "remember when" to avoid frustrating her.

"If you did it the right way, she'd clap and laugh and say that was such a good

time!" the caregiver explained.

If things didn't go well, the siblings consoled each other and discussed what they could do better the next time.

When it became necessary to place Kathy in a residential facility, the long-time St. Andrew parishioner watched Mass on television. Stahl brought Communion until her mother was too sick to receive the host. Kathy, once a yearbook coordinator at TCU, died at the age of 74 after two and a half years of illness.

Stahl copes with the loss of her mother by believing God has a plan.

"My sister Meredith and I just look at each other and know Mom is whole now. She's young and vibrant like everybody remembers her," the grieving daughter said with assurance. "We think about the happiest times in her life and picture her hugging Jesus." 🇺🇸



All Saints students bow and make the sign of the cross before the altar at All Saints Church during a school Mass on May 17. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

The State of Catholic Schools

How schools around the diocese are strengthening students in faith, knowledge, and life

By Sandra Engelland

Catholic schools around the nation and in the Diocese of Fort Worth are focusing on continuing to grow in enrollment, building and strengthening the faith and character of the children they serve, and refining their approach to help students thrive academically.

Leaders at the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) presented a panel discussion on “The State of Catholic Education” on April 11 at the NCEA 2023 Conference in Irving. The *North Texas Catholic* followed up with Brinton Smith, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Fort Worth, to

get both the national and local perspectives on the current state and trends in our schools.

At both the national and local levels, enrollment is rebounding post-pandemic.

Lincoln Snyder, president/CEO of NCEA, said enrollment nationwide is almost back to pre-pandemic levels.

Smith said enrollment around the diocese also has grown in recent years, even going up during COVID when public schools remained closed.

Both nationally and locally, much of the growth is focused on the early years, with pre-K, kindergarten, and early elementary seeing the biggest gains.

“We always get more growth in

kindergarten, since we have both preschool and kindergarten programs,” Smith said.

Diocesan schools also reflect a national trend of drawing a greater number of diverse students, non-Catholic students, and special needs students.

Smith said that the diocese has been focusing on helping students with different learning needs.

“We’re trying to increase the number of services we can offer,” he said.

Diocesan schools have a year-round job posting to increase staffing of learning specialists, dyslexia teachers, and mental health counselors.

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Piano teacher Dr. Dzmityr Ulasiuk teaches seventh graders during music class on May 12 at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Classical School in Fort Worth. (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)



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FOCUSING ON FAITH AND VIRTUE

A long-standing national trend throughout American society that NCEA leaders discussed was disaffiliation with a church.

Snyder said that 65 million Americans “have ceased participating in organized religion over the last 20 years.”

John Galvan, vice president of assessments for NCEA, said the problem is complex. “There’s no single reason that children are walking away from faith.”

Galvan said the median age for stopping church attendance is 13, making the school years critical for helping children get a firm foundation in faith. He also said that a Pew Research study showed that between 1972 and 2020, the percentage of Americans self-identifying as Christians had fallen from 90 percent to 64 percent.

Galvan said it was critical to “check the health and vitality of our Catholic school and parish communities.”

Smith said that schools in the Fort Worth diocese are working actively to encourage students to grow in their faith.

One key is providing a strong religious curriculum and the main emphasis here, Smith said, is using the Catechesis of the

Good Shepherd (CGS).

A key component of CGS is the atrium, a place of quiet reflection and learning where children can learn the reasons behind the sacraments and learn key parables and teachings from the Bible through hands-on activities. The primary goal is to help children draw closer to God.

Smith said that they’re also encouraging pastors and chaplains to increase sacramental life. Some schools offer multiple Masses, confessions, and Eucharistic Adoration.

The diocese also is asking pastors to get involved in discipline and providing guidance for discipline.

“We’re asking them to be present in the schools as much as possible,” Smith said. “The religious sisters help with that.”

They’re also prioritizing a positive environment; speaking of God as the source of truth, beauty, and goodness; and learning the truth about God, humans, and the created order, with a focus on developing virtue.

These concepts are at the heart of Classical Catholic education, the framework schools in the diocese have adopted in recent years under the leadership of Bishop Michael Olson.

The diocese looks at everything with

the goal of “strengthening Catholic culture and bringing Christ to students,” Smith said.

The schools are also working to increase opportunities to serve others.

One recent example is encouraging students from Nolan and Cassata Catholic high schools to go back to their parochial schools to help younger children. Other schools are serving in ministries in their parish, and the diocese is also connecting schools with Catholic Charities Fort Worth.

A number of diocesan schools have developed “House Systems,” where students are divided into teams where they can serve together and earn points.

The goal is to increase “the feeling of family” in the schools, Smith said.

STRENGTHENING ACADEMICS

At the NCEA conference, leaders discussed the importance of strong academics.

Julie Vogel, NCEA chief content officer, said that Catholic schools are doing well in comparison to their public school counterparts, but scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Catholic schools are mirroring a national trend in public schools of flat or slightly declining scores in reading and math.

In an age when screens on phones and

computers are taking time away from reading books, she said, Catholic schools are working at teaching focus and using phonics to give children a firm foundation in reading.

In Fort Worth diocesan schools, students are taught phonics for reading, spelling, and grammar, Smith said. “Children learn how to read and spell at the same time, and it’s very beneficial from an early age to have those literacy techniques.”

Diocesan schools use Singapore math to help students learn “to think mathematically.” They don’t just learn the rules of math concepts but the reasons behind the rules.

School leaders are also incorporating assessments to track student progress.

After Smith became superintendent in early 2022, he said that “one of my first priorities was working on assessments.”

Diocesan schools are encouraged to use the Assessment of Religious Knowledge test and the Classic Learning Test.

“As we have more and more schools taking them, we can see how they’re doing,” he said.

A key component throughout diocesan schools is helping students develop a lifelong love of learning.

Smith said that teachers play a big role here because enthusiasm is contagious. “If teachers express a love of their subject, that comes across to students,” he said.

Teachers are encouraged to show their care to students because loving support also helps foster a love of learning.

Smith said parents and parishioners also have roles in supporting Catholic education. When they enroll their children or give to a school, they’re supporting religious vocations and future Catholic families. “That’s where vocations come from and where Catholic families come from,” he said. 🇺🇸



Teresa Recker leads a science lesson on May 15 at St. Martin de Porres Catholic School in Prosper. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Future Plans

Diocesan schools educate today’s students while planning for the next generation

By Susan Moses

Like agriculture, education involves planting seeds that are carefully tended, with the hope that the seeds will set root, sprout, and eventually yield a bountiful harvest in the future. Agriculture and education are both forward-thinking enterprises.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, several schools are undertaking work for the next generation — future Catholics who have yet to be born — with construction projects that increase or renovate classrooms and facilities.

Laura Behee, principal of St. Andrew Catholic School, explained the investment in the schools, saying, “Children in Catholic education are the future of the Church.”

Last fall, the Fort Worth school completed an extensive addition and renovation totaling more than 41,000 square feet. The TCU-area school added an early childhood development center, a new cafeteria, a new middle school wing, an oratory, and outdoor learning spaces.

“We were at capacity before the expansion. It needed to happen,” explained Behee.

With the facilities already in use, the benefits are apparent, according to the principal.

A new laboratory for middle school has given middle school science classes the space, facilities, and material to conduct a broad range of hands-on experiments.

In early education, the school has added

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Montessori classes for pre-K3 through kindergarten, in addition to traditional preschool classes offered.

Increased enrollment in pre-K and kindergarten classes has generated a waiting list, but the extra classrooms in the early childhood building “have given us enormous space for growth,” said Behee.

The entire student body benefits from outdoor learning spaces, which are frequently used for science and religion classes.

In the center of the school stands the lofty wood and glass oratory, in which students, faculty, and staff have monthly Eucharistic Adoration. Behee said its central location makes it easy for students to drop in for quick prayer during lunch.

A project of this size, which totaled \$13.5 million, came together with the generous assistance of the parish and other benefactors with a campaign that began in 2020, according to capital campaign co-chair, Kevin Nicoletti.

The expansion was the single largest improvement to the school, which opened in 1954. Nicoletti credits the power of the Holy Spirit and overwhelming community support for the campaign’s success, which “exceeded our own ambition,” he said.

With the physical expansion complete, Behee said time is ripe to update the school’s five-year strategic plan, which will include upgrades to the athletic facilities across the street, improvements to the fine arts program, and even vegetable gardens and a chicken coop.

“There’s more to do. Even though this space looks to be complete, there’s always things to consider,” said Behee.

RAPID RESPONSE

After 18 years as a Catholic school principal in Texas, Susan Flanagan is accustomed to problem-solving.

But the St. Martin de Porres Catholic School principal said she’s had to be “creative” with finding spaces for the students, faculty, and staff of the growing Prosper school, such as using the parish hall for music class and making do with a copy room for a teacher’s office.

She’s seen the enrollment increase



Principal Laura Behee greets guests, including Bishop Michael Olson, at an open house and blessing for the new addition to St. Andrew Catholic School on January 29. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



A preschooler works on artwork depicting the Ascension of Jesus on May 15 at St. Martin de Porres Catholic School. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Graduates of Sacred Heart Catholic High School celebrate in this 2022 photo. (NTC/Ben Torres)

from 159 to 365 in her five years of leadership at the school, which moved to its current location in 2017 after opening in The Colony in 2012.

When the school year begins in August, portable classrooms will allow the school to add a third kindergarten class and split the fifth grade into two sections.

Demand for a Catholic education is strong in eastern Denton County. The school has waiting lists for pre-K3, pre-K4, kindergarten, first, sixth, and seventh grades.

Area families understand “Catholic school is a way to share the faith beyond weekly Mass. It develops future saints,” said Flanagan, emphasizing that lessons center around faith and virtues.

A \$6.5 million project is underway which will add eight classrooms and a gymnasium with bleachers and a stage.

According to Flanagan, Bishop Michael Olson’s support has been “invaluable” as the school faces the challenges of rapid growth. “He feels strongly about the importance of Catholic education,” she said.

The school’s surge in enrollment reflects the population boom in Prosper and the nearby communities of Little Elm

and Frisco. St. Martin de Porres Parish has grown from 900 families to 2,000 families in Flanagan’s five years at the school.

Although there’s no end in sight to community development, Flanagan said she and Pastor Stephen Hauck believe this will be the final addition to the school.

“Our school is like a family,” explained the principal. “We want it to be small enough to know all the kids.”

She anticipates expanding to two sections per grade for kindergarten through eighth, and three sections per grade for the youngest students. Enrollment will be “absolutely full” with 450 students, a level she foresees reaching within ten years.

ENDURING LEGACY

In 1890, the first German Catholic settlers of Muenster agreed to build a Catholic school even before they built the town’s church or rectory.

The legacy of Catholic education continues more than 130 years later. Sacred Heart Catholic School Principal Nisa Lagle explained that a \$4 million capital campaign will provide a new heating and cooling system and restrooms in the grade

school, new bleachers and field house for the football stadium, and miscellaneous other improvements and renovations.

The current elementary facility was completed in 1925, and the high school in 1938. Maintaining the historic buildings while remaining mindful of their integrity and character can be a challenge, the principal admitted. The sturdy buildings weren’t built with Wi-Fi in mind, she laughed, but upgrading the facility to provide a modern, excellent education is essential.

The faculty and administration are determined that the graduates “have everything they need to be competitive wherever they go [to college], but still maintain the sweetness of a small community,” she said.

As the students leave for college, Lagle said, their Catholic education has prepared them by teaching them to think independently, by developing the whole person — academically, physically, and spiritually — and by providing an extended family in the close-knit parish and school.

A family extending for generations into the past; a family preparing for students in the future. 🇺🇸

from Strength to Strength

Diocesan CFO Don Wagner retires,
and Stephen Becht returns to diocese for CFO/COO role

By Lance Murray

When Don Wagner retires on June 30 as the chief financial officer of the Diocese of Fort Worth, it doesn't mean he is going to stop his life of service or just ride off into the beautiful North Texas sunset.

"I want to serve others in a variety of volunteer capacities, whether it be working with youth, adults, or organizations that focus on helping those most in need, such as veterans," Wagner said. "I look forward to more time in nature, sports, hobbies such as photography, and travel."

Wagner has been the diocese's CFO since 2017. On July 1, Stephen Becht will take those duties in addition to assuming the role of chief operating officer. Becht had been director of real estate and construction for the diocese and a consultant to the diocese.

Wagner said his role as CFO was gratifying and he has many people to thank for their help.

"I've really enjoyed the variety of work and the unique challenges that I've experienced day in and day out; it has kept the position exciting and anything but routine. Being able to serve Bishop Michael Olson, to implement his vision, and to help our pastors in strategic financial matters has been exciting and fulfilling to me," he said.

The end of the diocesan fiscal year in June makes a natural transition time, Wagner said.

"From a work perspective, we are in a sound financial position as a diocese, and internally, my staff is incredible and

well-positioned to continue to move us forward," Wagner said.

Wagner said that while the diocese is in good shape, it still faces plenty of challenges for leadership to address.

"The continued explosive population growth in the diocese has created the need for new parishes and schools. The challenge is how to accomplish that in a fiscally responsible manner," Wagner said.

He said the other major challenge is familiar to all.

"The other challenge is what everyone else is facing; that it just costs more now, and will continue to cost more in the future, to run the business operations in the Catholic Center and our parishes and schools," Wagner said. "No one is immune from the current economic environment. We will need to look internally at how we can best provide the support that is needed while our parishes and schools will need to look at how they can best provide for parish and school life within their means."

Wagner said his accomplishments during his tenure will benefit the diocese.

"We are financially stronger as a diocese than we have ever been and have not leveraged ourselves in order to accomplish this. We have funded over \$50 million in construction projects utilizing our diocesan parish and school savings pool, with an additional \$25 million scheduled in the coming year," he said.

Wagner said the Central Office controllership and financial reporting is at the highest level of excellence it has ever been and represents the priority that the diocese places "on financial ethics, integrity, and

principles in our work."

He said the diocese's strategic planning paid off during the pandemic because no staff was laid off or given pay cuts as other dioceses were forced to do.

Before he became CFO, Wagner worked in leadership at the parish level as business manager at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller and before that, he was business manager at St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington.

Working at the parish level was gratifying to Wagner because he could immediately see the results of efforts at the grassroots level.

"Parish life is an incredible experience; it's the heartbeat of the diocese and where the action is," Wagner said. "Each parish has its own identity, and you become immersed in it with a sense of purpose to serve families to bring them closer together as an organization and to God. In a parish the results are tangible; you see the immediate impact of your decisions and actions."

And like the diocese itself, parishes must deal with the current economic times to serve their parishioners.

"I encourage parishes to continue to focus on re-establishing family life activities that dropped off in the pandemic and set realistic budgets," Wagner said.

Prior to his work with the church, Wagner worked for a company called Rollins that he said helped set a foundation for his professional life.

"With Rollins I was able to transition from a military environment and grow into corporate business operations that included new business startups, sales, service, and



Don Wagner retires after six years as chief financial officer for the diocese and 20 years as a parish business manager. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

management,” Wagner said. “As my career has advanced, the experience that I learned from sales management helped me successfully plan and run capital campaigns in both parishes.”

He said his business relationships from CEOs to small business owners helped him while he was in the parishes and as diocesan CFO.

Becht was director of real estate, construction, property management, and security for the diocese from June 2017 through June 2021. Since then, he continued to advise the diocese on major real estate and construction projects.

He returns to the diocese full time after two years as vice president of capital investments and project management for the industrial conglomerate Marmon Holdings, Inc., a Berkshire Hathaway company.

Becht has worked as a senior corporate strategist, management advisor, corporate executive, entrepreneur, and attorney. He has

extensive in-house experience in corporate C-suites, operations, and leadership roles at three Fortune 500 companies: Marmon Holdings, RCA/Thomson Consumer Electronics, and The Mead Corporation.

He also founded and owned the corporate real estate, business location, facilities, and construction advisory firm Becht Companies, Inc. for 20 years. Becht Companies provided management and legal services to corporate and operation teams.

A graduate of the University of Dayton with a BSCE in civil / structural engineering, he received his juris doctor from the University of Dayton School of Law. Becht also attended the graduate schools of business administration at Texas A&M University and the University of Dayton.

He is a registered professional engineer, an SIOR real estate broker, an attorney, and a certified commercial investment member. 🇺🇸

Stephen Becht returns to the diocese to take on the role of CFO/COO. (NTC 2017 file photo/Juan Guajardo)



A Woman with an Iron Resolve

Saint Clare was devoted to the love of Jesus

By Sean M. Wright

Clare was born in 1194 in Assisi, a small city in the Umbrian region of Italy, the eldest daughter of Favorino Scifi, Count of Sasso-Rosso, a forceful but honest Catholic gentleman. Her lovely mother Ortolana was conspicuous for her piety and care for the poor.

Clare was an attractive, intelligent, well-educated young woman. She exhibited a great talent for writing and embroidery.

Beyond that Clare was a handful. She was as stubborn and single-minded as any man or woman focused on God. From her youth, she desired spiritual union with Jesus above all else — despite pressures to the contrary from family, society, authority, and even the hierarchy of the Church.

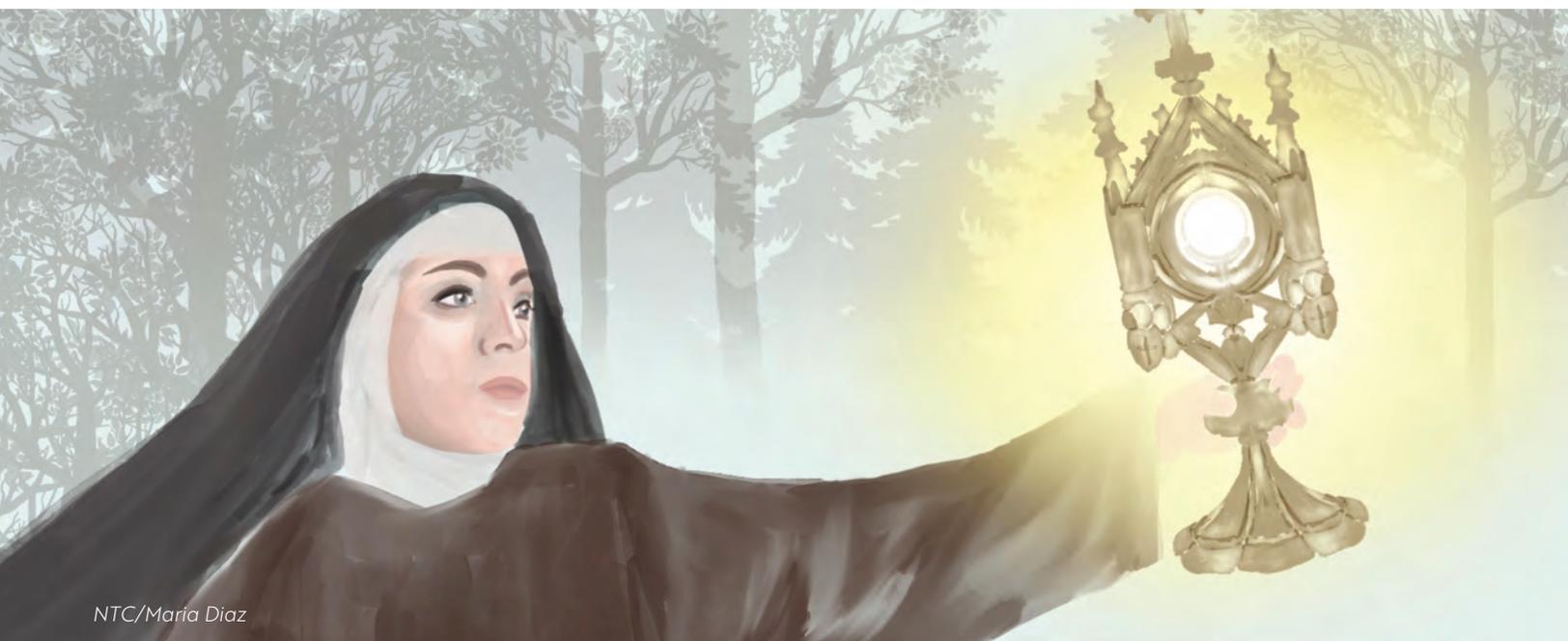
Such dedication is disturbing to those who think that docility, meekness, modesty, and humility really mean being fainthearted, submissive, spineless, and cowardly. Courageously resolute saints like Clare have a tendency to disturb people who aren't.

At the age of 18 she heard the words of a man considered a traitor to his well-born merchant class, and her life turned a somersault.

Francis, son of a wealthy cloth merchant, was poking about the tumbledown ruins of a church called San Damiano on the outskirts of Assisi when he heard the voice of God: “Behold my Church has fallen into ruin. Rebuild my Church!”

Francis left behind the soft arms of his ladies, the gambling tables of his friends, and all his fine clothing. He donned a coarse woolen tunic, and around it he tied a knotted rope.

Thus attired, Francis took literally the command he heard, begging for stones from friends and neighbors who were at first sure he'd gone mad. Yet Francis restored the walls of San Damiano and two other churches aided by men touched by his love of poverty. In time Francis grasped that God meant him to use human hearts, transformed into living stones and galvanized with love, to rebuild the Church as the reality



NTC/Maria Diaz

of “the Body of Christ” on earth.

Pope Innocent III, impressed by Francis’ humility, allowed him to form the “Order of Little Brothers” as beggars and street preachers. Regarding the priesthood as a vocation far above him, Francis followed the pope’s command that he be ordained a deacon so he could sing the Gospel and preach at Mass.

Francis preached a Lenten sermon in Assisi’s cathedral in 1212. Hearing him, Clare wanted to live with women consecrated to Francis’ vision, sisters prayerfully united with his mendicant brothers, devoted to the love of Jesus.

That Palm Sunday evening, she arrived at St. Mary of the Angels, one of the churches Francis restored. She donned a nun’s woolen homespun habit and quickly fled to a nearby Benedictine convent, a few steps ahead of her father.

The mighty Count Scifi and her uncles banged on the doors of the convent demanding she leave and return home to marry a husband from another highborn family.

Her father was adamant. Clare was uncompromising.

Unable to overcome his daughter’s unyielding resolve, the Count at last gave way and left in peace. Clare wanted no one other than Jesus.

The holy Clare attracted other holy women. Indeed, two weeks after Clare’s flight from home, her father was again infuriated when his daughter Agnes,

now also a canonized saint, joined Clare. Their little sister Beatrix followed. Eventually, the girls’ Aunt Bianca sought admittance. After her husband’s death, Clare’s widowed mother came also to join her daughters in Franciscan poverty. She is now honored as Blessed Ortolana Scifi.

Having renounced comfort and wealth, Clare and her religious family lived in crude shelters adjoining San Damiano. “Love Him totally, who gave Himself totally for your love,” she told her sisters. Originally calling themselves the Poor Ladies, after her election as abbess, they became known as Poor Clares.

Clare and Francis planned for the order to be devoted to prayer, and beg their bread from whomever would share it. The two friends joyfully discovered Jesus in serving the poor, the heartbroken, the desperately diseased — everyone whom Jesus called “the least of my brothers.”

In 1219, with Francis away preaching to the Saracens in Palestine, Cardinal Ugolino di Conti drew up a rule for Clare’s order, effectually canceling the Franciscan principal of absolute poverty which the cardinal regarded as impractical for an order of women.

The cardinal insisted. Clare resisted. She and her sisters continued to pray and work as they had. “Love that cannot suffer is not worthy of that name,” she said. The cardinal gave way.

In 1228, Ugolino, now Pope Gregory

IX, came to Assisi to canonize Francis and visit Clare, again hoping to convince her to be more prudent and accept the rule he’d drawn up.

Calmly but firmly, Clare explained her position, finally convincing His Holiness that she and the members of her order really could live in Christ-like poverty.

Having stood up to a pope, Clare was ready to take on Emperor Frederick II as well. In September 1240, during his on-again, off-again struggle with whomever was pope, a contingent of Frederick’s Saracen mercenaries thought to invade the walled cloister of San Damiano at night to establish a foothold from which to attack Assisi.

With soldiers scaling their walls, the sisters fearfully sought out the abbess. She was ill but rose from her sickbed. Always devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, Clare brought from the chapel a silver and ivory basket-shaped pyx containing the Sacred Host which she raised on high as she entered the courtyard.

At the sight of her carrying the pyx, the Saracens were suddenly overcome with fear and took flight. This is why Clare is often represented in art holding high a ciborium or monstrance.

The Church celebrates Clare’s life of devoted love on the day she died in 1253, August 11. Like her beloved Francis, it took only two years for Pope Alexander IV to recognize her sanctity, canonizing her in 1255. 📍



a great



L-R: Father Brandon LeClair, Father Austin Hoodenpyle, and Father Ed Hopkins after their ordination at St. Patrick Cathedral. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

gift



Father
Austin Hoodenpyle,
Father Brandon LeClair,
and Father Ed Hopkins
are ordained as priests
for the Diocese of
Fort Worth

Stories by
Joan Kurkowski-Gillen



El Obispo Olson ordena Padre Austin Hoodenpyle, Padre Ed Hopkins, y Padre Brandon LeClair al sacerdocio

Tres seminaristas de la Diócesis de Fort Worth fueron consagrados el 20 de mayo en la Catedral de St. Patrick como ministros de Jesucristo al ser ordenados al santo sacerdocio.

El Obispo Michael Olson confirió el Sacramento del Orden Sagrado a Brandon Edward LeClair, Austin Travis Hoodenpyle y Randolph Edward Hopkins, Jr. durante la Misa de Ordenación que incluyó sagradas tradiciones muy antiguas que se originaron hace siglos.

La imposición de manos por parte del Obispo es un ritual que se remonta a los Apóstoles y simboliza la invocación del Espíritu Santo. Junto con la Oración de Consagración, la imposición de manos es el rito esencial del Orden Sagrado que consagra a un sacerdote para ejercer su ministerio.

UN REGALO ESPECIAL

El Obispo Michael Olson se dirigió en su homilía a los familiares y amigos de los diáconos de transición que asistieron a la Misa de Ordenación Sacerdotal y explicó que “la imposición de manos, tanto por parte de los apóstoles como del presbiterio, es el gesto a través del cual Dios concede un gran don a los ordenandos: el don del carácter y ministerio sacerdotal”.

En su mensaje el Obispo citó al teólogo Joseph Ratzinger, quien luego se convirtiera en el Papa Benedicto XVI, y explicó que “La imposición de

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Bishop Michael Olson, with the priests of the diocese, prays the prayer of ordination. (NTC/Juan Cuajardo)





Becoming an instrument of Jesus Christ in today's world by the imposition of hands, three men in the Diocese of Fort Worth joined the ranks of the priesthood May 20 in St. Patrick Cathedral.

Bishop Michael F. Olson conferred the sacrament of holy orders on Brandon Edward LeClair, Austin Travis Hoodenpyle, and Randolph Edward Hopkins, Jr. during an Ordination Mass that included centuries of sacred tradition.

One ritual, the laying on or

imposition of hands by the bishop, dates back to the early apostles and symbolizes the invocation of the Holy Spirit. Along with the Prayer of Consecration, it is the essential rite of Holy Orders that sets a priest apart for designated ministry.

A GREAT GIFT

“The laying on of hands, both by the apostles and the presbyterate, signifies the conferral by God of a great gift — the gift of priestly character and ministry,” Bishop Olson explained in his homily to the family and friends of the transitional deacons

who filled the cathedral to witness the ordination ceremony.

Quoting the theologian Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI, the bishop told the candidates the imposition of hands “is as though the Lord says: you are mine now. Your ways are to be my ways ... Through this gesture the Lord accepts the offer of your life, and you no longer belong to yourself. You can no longer say, ‘I will do with my life whatever I want.’”

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Collaboration and obedience between bishop and priest is needed to care for the Lord's flock, he continued. True obedience is about unity of will between two collaborators in Christ.

"We are collaborators, and we need each other for the sake of the salvation of the Lord's flock," the bishop said. "I rely on you, and I hope that you rely on me."

As they begin a new chapter in ministry, the men can also rely on Jesus Christ to guide them. Using the words of Joseph Ratzinger again, Bishop Olson reminded the ordinands the imposition of hands is not just a gesture of possession, but also one of kindness, tenderness, and protection.

"The Lord says not only, 'you are mine,' but also 'I want to be yours and to accompany you on all your paths. Wherever you walk, you go in the shadow of my hands.'"

OFFERING WELCOME

At the start of the Ordination Mass, Bishop Olson welcomed the parents of the candidates for ordination: Brent and Kelly Hoodenpyle, Ed and Tonya LeClair, and Randy Hopkins. Susan Hopkins, the mother of Deacon Ed Hopkins, passed away last December and "we remember her in prayer this day," Bishop Olson added.



manos es como si el Señor dijera: 'ahora eres mío. Tus caminos han de ser mis caminos'. Por este gesto el Señor acepta el ofrecimiento de tu vida y ya no te pertenesces a ti mismo. Ya no puedes decir: 'Haré con mi vida lo que quiera'".

El Obispo Olson comenzó la Misa dando la bienvenida a los padres de los candidatos a ser ordenados: Brent y Kelly

Hoodenpyle, Ed y Tonya LeClair, y Randy Hopkins. Susan Hopkins, la madre del diácono Ed Hopkins, falleció en diciembre del año pasado y fue recordada con una oración especial por Monseñor Olson.

El Obispo agradeció además la gran generosidad de las familias por haber cultivado y animado con amor a sus hijos a la vocación sacerdotal.

"Fue en su hogar y en su familia donde nuestros candidatos escucharon por primera vez el Evangelio y aprendieron a

seguir los mandamientos como Cristo nos enseñó para amar a Dios y al prójimo", dijo el Obispo con mucho entusiasmo.

Brandon LeClair estudió ocho años para el sacerdocio, un proceso y discernimiento que pareció pasar rápidamente, según su madre Tonya. La familia pertenece a la Parroquia de St. Jude, donde el nuevo sacerdote ayudó en el programa de educación religiosa dando clases a los niños de quinto grado.

"Fue maravilloso verlo en cada paso



The congregation sings the Litany of the Saints as the ordinands lie prostrate. (Special contributor/Jose Trevino)

PHOTO GALLERY



Check out dozens more photos from the ordination and the newly ordained priests' first Masses at:

NORTH-TEXAS-CATHOLIC.SMUGMUG.COM

The bishop thanked the families for their generosity of spirit shown by encouraging their sons' vocations.

"It was in your home and among your family where our candidates first heard the Gospel and learned to follow His commandments as Christ taught us by loving God and our neighbor," he enthused.

Brandon LeClair studied for the priesthood eight years — a process and discernment that seemed to go by quickly, according to his mother, Tonya LeClair. The family belongs to St. Jude Parish in Mansfield where the new priest once taught fifth grade religious education.

"To see him go through each step in his formation was wonderful," the proud mom

said. "Brandon thought about other careers, but it always came back to the priesthood."

She described her son as a caring, patient person who is ready to serve in a parish. The number of relatives and friends who showed support for the seminarian over the years and attended his ordination was overwhelming.

"They followed his progress the whole time, and for them to be here is a blessing," LeClair said.

Tracy Key, Brandon LeClair's confirmation sponsor, purchased a set of vestments for the new priest.

"We wanted to give him something he could keep forever," explained the close

Continued on Page 40

de su jornada de formación", comentó la orgullosa mamá. "Brandon pensó en otras carreras, pero siempre volvía al sacerdocio, que era lo que realmente deseaba".

Ella describió a su hijo como una persona cariñosa y paciente que está listo para servir en una parroquia. El seminarista contó a lo largo de los años de formación con el gran apoyo de muchos familiares y amigos, que asistieron a su ordenación para celebrar con él este gozoso día.

"Siguieron su progreso todo el tiempo y para ellos estar aquí es una gran bendición", dijo LeClair.

Tracy Key, padrino de Confirmación de Brandon LeClair, compró las vestimentas para el nuevo sacerdote.

"Queríamos darle algo que pudiera conservar para siempre", explicó el amigo muy allegado a la familia. "A Brandon le encanta atender y servir a las personas y creo que eso lo convertirá en un buen pastor de sus ovejas".

INVOCACIÓN DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO

Luego de prometer respeto y obediencia al Obispo y sus sucesores durante el Rito de Ordenación, la congregación rezó las Letanías de los Santos mientras los candidatos se postraban ante el altar en un acto de sumisión a la voluntad de Dios y como muestra de su deseo de servir a la Iglesia.

Tras orar postrados en el suelo, cada

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The laying on of hands is an ancient sign of ordination. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



uno de los candidatos se arrodilló ante el Obispo, que oró en silencio para invocar los dones del Espíritu Santo mientras hacía la imposición de manos sobre la cabeza del ordenando.

En una muestra de fraternidad compartida, todos los sacerdotes presentes en la Misa también impusieron las manos sobre los candidatos.

Al terminar la Oración de Ordenación los nuevos sacerdotes recibieron los signos externos de su nuevo ministerio, la estola y la casulla, de parte de sus hermanos sacerdotes.

Carmine Esposito, que pertenece a la Parroquia de St. Frances Cabrini, vio crecer a Austin Hoodenpyle y madurar en

la fe desde que cursaba la escuela secundaria. No le sorprendió que la formación del joven culminara en el sacerdocio.

“Incluso al acercarse a recibir la Eucaristía, Austin mostraba profunda reverencia”, explicó Esposito. “Uno veía que había algo muy especial en él”.

María Carrera conoció a Hoodenpyle cuando enseñaba RICA en la Parroquia de St. Philip the Apostle como parte de su formación como seminarista.

“Tiene un gran conocimiento de la fe y puede comunicarla con mucha amabilidad y dulzura”, afirmó. “Se puede palpar el amor de Dios en él”.

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family friend. “Brandon loves taking care of people and I think that will make him a good shepherd.”

INVOKING THE HOLY SPIRIT

After the ordinands promised respect and obedience to the bishop and his successors during the Ordination Rite, the congregation prayed the Litany of the Saints as the candidates prostrated themselves before the altar in an act of submission to the will of God and desire to serve the Church.

Rising from prayer, each man then knelt before the bishop who silently prayed for the gifts of the Holy Spirit as he placed his hands on the ordinand’s head. In a display of shared brotherhood, all the priests present at the Mass also imposed hands on the candidates.



Bishop Olson presents Fr. Austin Hoodenpyle a chalice and paten. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

After the Prayer of Ordination, the new priests received the outward signs of their new ministry — the stole and chasuble — from fellow priests.

St. Frances Cabrini parishioner Carmine Esposito watched Austin Hoodenpyle grow in faith and maturity since high school. He was not surprised the young man's formation culminated in priesthood.

"Even watching him go up to receive the Eucharist — there was such a reverence," said Esposito. "You knew there was something very special about him."

Maria Carrera met Hoodenpyle when he taught RCIA at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound as part of his seminarian training.

"He was so knowledgeable about the faith and can communicate it with such kindness and gentleness," she said. "You could see the love of God in him."

IMITATE WHAT YOU CELEBRATE

Once the hands of the newly ordained were anointed with Holy Chrism, signifying their purpose in blessing and consecrating the Eucharist, the gifts of bread and wine were brought to the altar by Garrett Adam and Emma Bouillion.

Bishop Olson then presented each priest with a chalice and paten with the words, "Receive the oblation of the Holy People to be offered to God. Understand what you will do. Imitate what you will

celebrate and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's promise."

Ed Hopkins' father, Randy Hopkins, remembered his late wife, Susan, as he waited for the Ordination Mass to begin.

"She's in our hearts and minds today and I know she was very happy for him," he said, referring to Ed Hopkins' decision to convert and pursue the Catholic priesthood.

Calling his son a sensitive person with a caring heart, Hopkins believes the former special education teacher will make a good priest.

"The experience with his mom will

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help him be more sensitive and compassionate to the people who need help.”

Parishioners in Cisco, Eastland, Ranger, and Strawn experienced some of that caring personality when Ed Hopkins, then a seminarian, helped organize VBS and other projects.

“Deacon Ed was a close friend of my late husband, and we attended his ordination to the diaconate last year,” said Denise Snodgrass, who attends Mass at St. Rita Church in Ranger. “He’s just a wonderful person. Very kind and loving.”

CELEBRATING THE MOMENT

The enthusiasm shown by the congregation during the Ordination Mass impressed first-year seminary student

Xavier Polisetty.

“My favorite part was seeing the faith of everyone — not just the deacons who are now priests — but the amazing choir and people singing their hearts out,” said the Texas A&M computer science graduate. “It was nice witnessing the whole Catholic universal Church coming together to celebrate this amazing moment. I want that to be me someday.”

Anytime the diocese celebrates an ordination is a great day, the bishop said.

“Not simply because we have three more priests, but we have these three new priests who’ve been formed and shaped and grown in their faith,” he told the *NTC*. “They have a great desire to serve God and His people gathered here in North Texas.” 🇹🇽



IMITA LO QUE SE CELEBRA

Una vez que las manos de los recién ordenados fueran ungidas con el Santo Crisma, lo que simboliza su propósito de bendecir y consagrar la Eucaristía, el Obispo Olson presentó a cada sacerdote el cáliz y la patena, mientras decía: “Recibe la oblación del Pueblo Santo para ofrecerla a Dios. Comprende lo que harás. Imita lo que vas a celebrar y conforma tu vida al misterio de la promesa del Señor”.

El padre de Ed Hopkins, Randy Hopkins, recordó a su difunta esposa, Susan, mientras esperaba que comenzara la Misa de la ordenación.

“Ella está en nuestros corazones y pensamientos de manera especial hoy, y sé que ella estaba muy feliz por él”, dijo refiriéndose a la decisión de Ed Hopkins de seguir y ejercer el santo sacerdocio.

Hopkins describe a su hijo como un ser humano muy sensible con un corazón lleno de amor. Piensa que el ex maestro de educación especial será un

Meet the new priests. Stories start on page 44!

◀ The newly ordained priests assist with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

WATCH IT!



Watch videos of ordination and interviews with the three new priests at: NorthTexasCatholic.org/videos

buen sacerdote.

“La experiencia vivida con su mamá lo ayudará a ser más sensible y compasivo con las personas que necesitan ayuda”.

Los feligreses de las ciudades de Cisco, Eastland, Ranger y Strawn experimentaron esa personalidad solidaria cuando Ed Hopkins, en ese entonces seminarista, ayudó a organizar la Escuela Bíblica de Vacaciones y trabajó en otros proyectos de su comunidad.

“El Diácono Ed fue un buen amigo de mi difunto esposo y asistimos a su ordenación diaconal el año pasado”, dijo Denise Snodgrass, que va a Misa a la Parroquia de St. Rita de Ranger. “Ed es simplemente una persona maravillosa. Muy amable y amoroso”.

CELEBRACIÓN JUBILOSA

El entusiasmo mostrado por la congregación durante la Misa de Ordenación impresionó al seminarista de primer año Xavier Polissety.

“Mi parte favorita fue ver la fe de todos, no

sólo en los diáconos que ahora son sacerdotes, sino también el increíble coro y que los fieles cantaron con todo su corazón”, dijo el graduado en Ciencias Informáticas de la Universidad Texas A&M. “Fue muy lindo ver a toda la Iglesia Católica universal reunida para celebrar este momento increíble. Espero que así sea para mí algún día”.

Cada vez que la Diócesis celebra una ordenación es un gran día, afirmó el Obispo Olson.

“No se trata simplemente de tener tres sacerdotes más, sino que tenemos estos tres nuevos sacerdotes que se han formado, profundizado y crecido en su fe”, dijo al *North Texas Catholic*. “Tienen un gran deseo de servir a Dios y a su pueblo reunido aquí en el norte de Texas”.

El Padre Austin Hoodenpyle está asignado a la Parroquia de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. El Padre Brandon LeClair servirá en la Parroquia de St. John the Apostle y el Padre Ed Hopkins comenzará su ministerio sacerdotal en la Parroquia de St. Jude de Mansfield. 🇹🇽

The priests give their first blessings in the courtyard of St. Patrick Parish Hall after the ordination Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Fr. Austin Hoodenpyle says
the prayer of consecration.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Meet FATHER Austin Hoodenpyle

Offering family and friends a “first blessing” after his ordination to the priesthood May 20, Father Austin Hoodenpyle remembered a pivotal moment in his faith journey. Raising his newly anointed hands, the 28-year-old asked for the intercession of Our Lady of La Salette as he prayed over people.

It was in a Twin Lakes, Wisconsin, shrine, named in honor of the 1846 apparition of the Blessed Mother in France, where the convert first experienced a Catholic Mass. He made the visit with his maternal grandmother Cynthia Schuerr.

“We were looking for things to do and I suggested seeing the Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette because it’s so peaceful to walk around and pray,” she said, remembering when her grandson spent part of his summer vacation with her before starting high school. “It was

his first Mass, and I didn’t realize it made such an impression on him.”

Hoodenpyle began studying the faith and became involved in St. Frances Cabrini Parish before entering the seminary in 2013.

He returned to the Granbury church on Ascension Sunday, May 21, to celebrate his first Mass in front of family members and other parishioners. Father Ray McDaniel, pastor of St. Philip the Apostle where Fr. Hoodenpyle spent his pastoral year as a seminarian, preached the homily.

“It’s a great day of joy to celebrate one of the major solemnities in the life of our Church, the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ, along with the first Mass of your own parishioner, Fr. Austin Hoodenpyle,” said Fr. McDaniel, thanking parishioners for the years of supporting the new priest.

The priesthood is the Church’s

most valuable possession, he said.

“Just as Jesus Christ empowered those first apostles with the gift of the Holy Spirit, he does the same thing for our new priest through the sacrament of holy orders,” he continued. “He is sharing in the mission to make disciples and teach the commandments by both word and example.”

Saying yes to God’s call was not just a career choice for Fr. Hoodenpyle.

“But something so much deeper,” Fr. McDaniel explained. “It is a yes to embracing a call we all share — a call to holiness. It is a yes to taking up the cross daily and emptying himself just as Jesus Christ did.”

He asked the members of Fr. Hoodenpyle’s home parish to keep encouraging the new priest with prayerful support and friendship, “as he is called to renew his yes each and every day of his life.”



Meet FATHER Ed Hopkins

In one way or another, Father Randolph Edward (Ed) Hopkins, Jr., spent a quarter of his life preparing for ordination to the priesthood.

“It’s been 11 years since I was confirmed and began living in the church world,” explained the 44-year-old who grew up Baptist. “Words fail to describe what I’m feeling now. I can’t believe it’s finally happening.”

Fr. Hopkins celebrated his first Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller on May 21.

A convert to the Catholic faith later in life, the TCU graduate admits becoming a priest was never on his radar but helping vulnerable people was always part of his life plan. An early career move was teaching special education students in Katy, Texas.

“I always felt a call to service. I just never knew it would manifest itself in the Catholic priesthood,” he said.

His introduction to the faith came from reading works of Church Fathers and respected Catholic authors.

“Something outside of me just drew me to the faith. I’ve never been able to explain it,” Fr. Hopkins continued. “That’s what God had in store for me and little by little I figured it out.”

When he told his parents, Randy and Susan Hopkins, he was considering a religious vocation, they were both supportive and relieved. His late mother was raised Catholic.

“Being an older vocation, I think my mom and dad were probably wondering when I was going to sort out what I wanted to do in life,” he admitted. “It’s overwhelming the amount of

prayer and support I got from them and other family and friends. I know I’m lucky. There are guys who don’t have that.”

Fr. Hopkins’ year as a transitional deacon had both high and low points. Last summer, he preached and baptized parishioners at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller and joined fellow deacons on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

The Church of the Nativity — the site where Mary gave birth to Jesus — offered an especially poignant moment of quiet reflection.

“That story of a mother and her son as my mother was passing, and soon after passed, was especially powerful for me,” said Fr. Hopkins, who begins his assignment at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield in July.



Fr. Ed Hopkins celebrates his first Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



Meet FATHER Brandon LeClair

During his years discerning a call to the priesthood, Father Brandon LeClair encountered many profound moments of faith.

But perhaps no other experience affected his formation journey more intensely than a trip to the Holy Land where he visited the site where Jesus performed miracles and made Peter and Andrew “fishers of men” — the Sea of Galilee.

“We sailed out to the middle of it, and I sat in silence remembering the times Jesus preached from a boat or the shore,” Fr. LeClair said. “The opportunity to walk where Jesus walked, and experience what he experienced, was very impactful for me.”

The former St. Jude parishioner’s preparation for the priesthood included earning a bachelor’s degree in philosophical and theological studies from St. Joseph Seminary College in Louisiana and a master’s degree in divinity from Assumption Seminary.

A cradle Catholic, the 29-year-old considered careers in teaching, criminal justice, and the culinary arts before childhood thoughts of becoming a priest finally took hold. An early memory is playing the part of a priest during a second-grade first Communion skit.

“I said the words (Body of Christ) and a light bulb came on, along with a peaceful feeling,” Fr. LeClair said. “I remember thinking this might be something I need to do.”

But serious discernment didn’t begin until college courses and cooking school left him unfulfilled.

“I talked to my parish priest but

what really impacted me was a Camp Fort Worth retreat I went on,” he added. “One of the kids there observed all the career choices on my list pointed to the priesthood — teaching the faith, guarding the flock, and bringing everyone to the table of the Lord.”

His parents, Tonya and Edward LeClair, supported his decision to enter the seminary in 2015 and hosted family and friends at their son’s ordination celebration.

Fr. LeClair celebrated his first Mass at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield

on May 21. At the end of Mass, he presented his father with the stole he was wearing when he heard his first confession, in gratitude for being his initial teacher of justice and mercy, which meet in the confessional.

He gave his mother the manutergium, the linen cloth used to cleanse his hands after they were anointed during ordination. Traditionally, a priest’s mother is buried holding the cloth. After her death, she can present the cloth to Jesus and say, “My son too shared in your priesthood.” ✚



Fr. Brandon LeClair prays at his first Mass, celebrated at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



The vineyard grows

Beginning this fall, the diocese of Fort Worth will have 29 seminarians. Nine of these men will be coming into formation for the first time this year.

Over the past eight years our diocese has seen a consistent inflow of young men stepping up to the call to follow our Lord in discernment for the priesthood. This offers us three reasons for gratitude. First, it demonstrates the health and growth of our diocese. Second, it shows that the thousands of prayers in each parish for more vocations to the priesthood have been answered. Third, it is a sign of faith and hope for our diocese.

A sign of a healthy and growing diocese is people's willingness to live out the Gospel sacrificially. Many men have stepped up to discern the call to priesthood and the diaconate in the last eight years, which shows that the Holy Spirit has been acting, and people have been responding. This is a testament to our pastors, to Bishop Michael Olson, and to the faithfulness of the people.

It is a sign of health when young men find pursuing priesthood not only a sacrificial endeavor, but one that is worthy of the sacrifice. This often means that the priests these young men see and interact with are men whom they believe they can imitate and work with. It is a testament

to all of the hard work and faith in the priests in the Diocese of Fort Worth. It is an honor to work among their ranks. It is also a testament to our bishop's continual emphasis on the importance of vocations, along with his care and support for our seminarians.



Fr. Brett Metzler

A second point of gratitude is to all of the faithful in our diocese who have been praying nonstop for vocations. The impact of these prayers on vocations should not be undervalued.

Jesus told us first and foremost that this is precisely what one should do for vocations: pray. "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (*Mt 9:37-38*). Even when a diocese is following the Gospel imperatives faithfully, it is crucial to remember that it does not come through our efforts, but most especially through our petitions to the Lord of the Harvest for Him to send us faithful and loving laborers. Even the smallest prayers offered by those whom we may never know in this life have profound impact in the kingdom of God.

Both above realities should bring a sense of confidence to the people in the Diocese of Fort Worth. While many are often plagued with a sense of doom or dejection considering countless problems

in the wider world, it is important to pay attention to one's local reality to see how the Holy Spirit has been, and still is, working.

Growth in vocations not only helps our faith to grow but is a sign of the faith we already possess. It demonstrates healthy parishes, faithful parishioners, and that the people of God in our diocese do really believe in Jesus Christ and His Church. Even those who may think they only have little faith can be encouraged through the parable of the mustard seed. Even the smallest faith can bear fruit hundred-fold through the power of the Gospel.

Ultimately these realities offer us hope. Faith in Jesus Christ in our diocese is growing. The Holy Spirit is working, and we are responding. While our attention may fall at times on particular results that seem poor, it is important to realize that we often do not see the whole picture. God is in fact good; He loves us; and He is sending us more laborers for His vineyard.

It is our role to keep tilling this vineyard. May this soil be docile to the continual work of the Holy Spirit moving in the hearts of the youth in our diocese today. ✝

Ordained to the priesthood in 2021, Father Brett Metzler serves as Director of Vocations for the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth and on July 1 will take an additional assignment as Chaplain of Nolan Catholic High School.



Singing for God

St. Francis of Assisi parishioner Carmen Rosa sings for God's glory

By Matthew Smith

Legitimate opportunities of fame and fortune came Carmen Rosa's way at a young age courtesy of her beautiful voice, obvious talent, and engaging personality.

Instead, she chose a path of glorifying God and Christian outreach.

"She's got a gift, which she uses to serve the Lord," Rosa's husband, Allan Forastieri, said. "She won an audition years ago in Puerto Rico. They wanted to put her with a record company and turn her into a pop star. But she said, 'No. I only sing for the Lord.'"

◀ Catholic singer/songwriter Carmen Rosa plays on her guitar at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Grapevine on May 24. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Rosa went on to record four CDs of original Catholic music and to sing at more than 600 parishes and Church events on five continents.

The couple, who now call Grapevine home and attend St. Francis of Assisi Church, both grew up in Puerto Rico.

Music, Rosa said, provided a passion and calling early on.

“My father is a singer and has a ministry,” Rosa said. “He used to sing at funerals and church events, so I learned to sing at church too. I started taking guitar lessons when I was seven or eight and my father would take me with him to his presentations.”

A radio program Rosa's parents hosted brought her and Forastieri together.

“A Saturday program where they prayed the Rosary for people who were sick or in need,” Forastieri said. “A deacon at my parish invited me to volunteer for the program and so I did.”

Forastieri joked that his interest in Rosa predated the couple's first actual meeting.

“One Saturday, during a commercial break on the radio program, her mother showed me a picture of Carmen and I just blurted out, ‘Oh my Lord. How beautiful!’ And I was so embarrassed right away that I'd said that.”

Several Saturdays later, Rosa's parents left Forastieri in charge of answering prayer requests on the phone so they could attend a prison ministry event. Rosa called asking for her parents but got Forastieri instead.

“I asked if she was the girl from the picture and told her I'd always wanted to meet her,” Forastieri said.

Not long after, the couple finally met during a prayer group for a man suffering with cancer.

“We went and knelt before God and asked if this attraction was coming from Him,” Forastieri said. “Because if it wasn't, we didn't want it. But He let us know.”

OFFERING GIFTS TO GOD

By 2008, Rosa felt called to sing and record music for God despite having no real idea how to make that happen.

“[I] prayed that, if you want me to record, give me inspiration, music, and lyrics,” Rosa said. “I'm just your humble instrument.”

A Catholic radio station in Florida subsequently asked Rosa to contribute a song for a CD featuring Catholic musicians from various countries. That provided funding for Rosa to record her own CD.

Unfortunately, downsizing cost Forastieri his job about that time and, with no money coming in, he soon fell behind on his truck payments.

“I lived out in farmland,” Forastieri said. “No public transportation, so without my truck, how can I get another job? We had to decide, do we use this money to pay for my pickup, or for what the Lord wanted Carmen to do — to sing for Him?”

Forastieri turned his truck over to the bank. Shortly after, a priest invited Rosa to sing at his parish followed by another priest at another parish. Offers soon poured in from around the world.

“If I would've used that money for the truck, none of this would've happened,” Forastieri said. “Instead the Lord took us around the world.”

World travel, while wonderful, is hardly the point, both said, nor is self-glory.

“I want to sing for the Lord forever,” Rosa said. “I prefer to see people cry, feel something, or meditate rather than clapping for me. I want them touched by the Lord, understanding and living the message of the songs.”

Rosa marvels at the universality of music. Although she recently recorded a song in English and plans to do more, the majority are sung in Spanish. Non-Spanish speaking attendees from around the world seem to get the message all the same, in part because of Rosa's faithful conviction as well as her clear, inviting, comforting, and melodic voice.

Miracles abound, both said, referring to Rosa's devotion to the Virgin Mary. Hampering an invitation to sing at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City were a lack of funds, passport complications, and a bout of asthma that temporarily robbed Rosa of her singing voice. A series of airline flights booked on faith and kind acts from strangers created an improbable mix of miracles but landed Rosa in Mexico where she shined, performing in the spotlight before international star singer Lucero.

“It was a glorious adventure,” Rosa said.

While there, homeless, abandoned, and overlooked children — many living in garbage dumps — caught the couple's hearts. They subsequently adopted one as their daughter and established a charity, Fundación Sueños de Barrio, to feed, clothe, and educate children in similar situations in Mexico and other countries.

Now, in the planning is an EWTN radio show, “Generation Guadalupe,” which will address Eucharistic revival, stressing Christ's true presence in the Eucharist. It will also lead up to 2031's 500th anniversary of the Virgin Mary's 1531 appearance in Guadalupe, Mexico.

Rosa and Forastieri will serve as co-hosts with “Hoy es tu Gran Dia” radio host Carlos Canseco.

“They bring joy and a beautiful testimony,” Canseco said of Rosa and Forastieri. “She has tremendous talent but carries herself with grace and humility to serve God instead of her own interests. Her music and their works are transmitting God's love and mission.”

One child in particular, assisted by the charity they started, dreams of becoming a priest, Forastieri said.

“If it's God's will that this formerly invisible, homeless child who was living in a garbage dump were to become a priest, how awesome would that be?” Forastieri said. “One who can bring us through his own hands, Jesus Himself in the Eucharist.” ✝



Growing in virtue

Salvador “Eben” Fernandez and Ioely Pereda Fernandez were in their early 20s when they married 11 years ago.

Eben said he was too young to understand love, but through the sacrament of marriage, “God has taught me what love is, and how to love.”

The St. Patrick parishioners, who have four children, say that growing in intimacy with God helps them love each other.

Pope Francis expressed similar thoughts in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia (On Love in the Family)*.

The pope writes, “Christ the Lord ‘makes Himself present to the Christian spouses in the sacrament of marriage’ and remains with them.... By his Spirit, he gives spouses the capacity to live that love, permeating every part of their lives of faith,

hope, and charity” (*Amoris Laetitia*, 67).

The couple shared with the *North Texas Catholic* some experiences and lessons learned as they raise their children in the Catholic faith.

EARLY DAYS: Although Eben wasn’t Catholic when he met Ioely, her Catholic faith was evident. They were just friends when she invited him to attend a young adult meeting at her parish (the topic was marriage!), and they discussed favorite Bible verses on their first breakfast date.

“When we first met, one of the biggest things that attracted me to her was her conviction in her faith,” said Eben.

After their wedding, Eben would drive Ioely to Mass and sit with her, especially after their first child, Jonas, was born and an extra set of hands to

hold the baby was helpful.

RCIA ALUM: In 2015, he attended RCIA, but Eben admits he was not open to the instruction. Then a job loss left him feeling humbled. He was given a video about Our Lady of Guadalupe, which helped him overcome a bias against Mary. He completed a second round of RCIA and joined the Church in 2016.

VIBRANT VOWS: Ioely remembers the early days of marriage as being difficult, due to “a lot of immaturity. There’s been a lot of maturing throughout the years. I’ve understood why marriage is a sacrament and how it makes us holy. Marriage helps me to be more sacrificial and to grow in virtue. Sometimes I need a lot of patience.”

◀ The Fernandez family, Salvador “Eben” Fernandez, holding his son Mateo, 2; his wife Ioely, holding their daughter Caeli; and their two sons Emiliano, 7, and Jonas, 10, shown outside of St. Patrick Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth, on June 4. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Eben said, “Once I understood what love is, and applying it through my marriage, I’ve learned to love her better. I’ve learned that love is sacrifice, putting her needs before my own.”

FAMILY FIRST: The duties of fatherhood changed Eben’s mindset. “I remember when we had our first one, realizing I can’t play around with my job. This is how I feed my family. Being more responsible, not just financially but also spiritually. It got me thinking, ‘What am I going to teach my kids?’”

Eben became a field agent for the Knights of Columbus a year ago and appreciates being able “to help families while I provide for my family.”

COUPLE TIME: With four children, their days are busy, but they stay connected by having lengthy conversations after the kids’ early bedtime.

DIFFICULT DAYS: Ioely advised, “When things are difficult, see that as a blessing. We struggle with accepting difficulties and embracing them, but those difficulties help us to be holier — Little by little.”

AMAZING GRACE: “Another thing that really helps us is going to confession, very, very often. He tends to go every week; I go every couple of weeks. That helps a lot,” said Ioely, who recently stepped down as youth coordinator at St. Bartholomew Parish to stay at home with her children.

PASS IT ON: Ioely and Eben tap into the liturgical calendar for family fun. They put up a Jesse tree during Advent, eat Divine Mercy sundaes, dress up for an All Saints party with the cousins, and celebrate holy days and feast days.

They say a family Rosary regularly. Their older sons have rosaries in their favorite colors and have chosen a decade that is most meaningful to them. “They will jump to pray that decade,” said Eben.

Teaching the children Catholic traditions “has helped me grow a lot in faith,” said Ioely. “The more I teach them, the more that I learn.”

GOAL SEEKING: Eben wants his children to “put God first. We try to teach them to always have the end goal in mind.”

Ioely added, “We often talk about how our goal is heaven, so we need to live with that purpose in mind. Eben is helping me to reach my goal, which is to be with God.”

FINDING TRUTH: Ioely appreciates the Church because, “This is the one true Church that Jesus Christ Himself established. We grow to know God in the Church. Sacraments help us to grow in holiness by giving us grace. We receive Jesus Christ Himself in the Eucharist. That’s the most beautiful thing.”

Eben, who slips away for Adoration frequently, cherishes “the Eucharist. The fact that the almighty, all-powerful Creator of the Universe wants to be a part of me, wants to be with me. That’s just the most amazing thing. Being able to take part in that — I can’t explain how blessed I feel.” ✨

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To Report Misconduct:

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

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

To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

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

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

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





Center of Attention

Attention spans have never been good, but research shows it's getting even worse. In a quick internet search I discovered that in the year 2000 the average attention span was 12 seconds — not minutes — seconds. As of 2015, it's down to 8.25 seconds. Obviously, we are easily distracted.

We can all attest to the difficulty of staying focused. I often reach for my phone, even in the middle of watching something on television. I also find myself skipping social media posts that are too wordy or that don't catch my attention fast enough.

All of this comes into play in our life of faith too. If trying to last more than a couple of minutes in quiet prayer often feels daunting, attempting to pay attention for a whole Mass is practically impossible.

But this is not the full picture. Other research shows when we are involved in a task, especially one we enjoy, it is easier to keep our attention focused.

A particular verse from *Acts* jumped out at me recently from the daily readings: "Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened, and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying." (*Acts 16:14*).

What jumped out is that the Lord *opened her heart to pay attention*. I thought, I

wish He would do that to me at Mass! My next thought was: Maybe I should begin to pray for that to happen.

Now, every time I kneel before Mass, I have added this simple prayer to my routine: "Jesus, help me pay attention today, and Lydia, pray for me."

The simple truth is we are not powerless before the diminishing attention span, nor are we incapable of mastering our desires and other whims of the flesh. On one level we are physical creatures who have impulses that can seem to rule our lives, but we are also children of God enlivened by the power of the

Holy Spirit and the grace of Jesus Christ.

Simple prayers, like the one above can go a long way to assist in taking back the reins of control of our impulses. But even more powerful are the graces that come from the sacraments, like the ones we encounter at every Mass.

Here are a few ideas on how to stay focused at Mass.

1. Pray that God will help you pay attention and that He will speak to you today.
2. Come early and read the readings ahead of time.
3. Open the song book and sing along.
4. Come prepared with your list of venial sins and be ready to confess them as you say, "Lord have

mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy."

5. Bring a notebook and take notes during the homily.
6. Read along with the Creed so you don't daydream through it.
7. During the Eucharistic Prayer, pay close attention when the priest prays the words of institution ("This is my body, etc.") and praise God for the miracle you are watching.
8. When you return from receiving Communion, speak to Jesus who is inside you at that moment and tell Him your most important intentions.
9. Think of one thing you want to take with you from this Mass. Maybe it was a line from Scripture or a song, or a thought from the homily. When the priest says, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord with your life," take that insight with you into the week ahead.

Paying attention at Mass takes work on our part and grace from God, but when these two come together, amazing things can happen. ✦



Jeff Hedglen

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

Laboring for the Lord



NTC/Juan Guajardo

HE IS: Father Matthew Sanka, SAC, pastor of St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville, St. Mary Parish in Dublin, Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in DeLeon since 2015. He came to the Diocese of Fort Worth in 2013, and he lived in Weatherford and assisted the late Father Philip McNamara, SAC, with those parishes.

HUMBLE START: In a village in Tanzania, his parents had 12 children and farmed a small plot of land. He was an altar server at the local church, which had a Pallottine priest.

BUSY HANDS: His primary school was a four-mile walk, and when he returned home in the afternoon, he helped till, weed, and water crops or care for animals.

His secondary school was a boarding school, and the students grew their own food to reduce expenses. The school was run by Pallottine priests, and he began to feel a call to the priesthood.

SEMINARY STUDIES: He studied philosophy in Tanzania and completed his theology studies and pastoral year in Kenya. He was ordained June 1, 2002.

Since ordination, he has served in his native Tanzania for one year. He studied spiritual theology in Rome for two years,

and he served in mission promotion at the provincial headquarters in Ireland for six years.

AS BIG AS TEXAS: When he approached Stephenville for the first time, he could see the tower of a large building from a few blocks away. He assumed the edifice was St. Brendan Church, because in his experience, the church was the main building in the town's center.

He was surprised to learn the commanding structure was the courthouse, and the much smaller church was a half-mile away.

PARISH LIFE: "I remind parishioners priests come and go. We want to build structures that can outlast anybody. That's the way the Catholic Church has always been, to have foundations of our faith that are not built on [an individual priest]."

BEST PART OF PRIESTHOOD: "A life of service. Being able to help someone and be there for them, their spiritual well-being."

AND CHALLENGES: "Other experiences are not so easy for a priest. They can weigh on you in ways that can be tough. You meet people, all the time, in their most vulnerable state of mind," and even participants in joyful sacramental celebrations like baptisms and matrimony

are still emotionally vulnerable.

SACRAMENTAL LIFE: "All the sacraments of the Church are important aspects of our life. That's where we nourish ourselves, we enter into the Passion, death of Jesus," he said, adding the anointing of the sick and reconciliation are special opportunities "to be able to console them in an hour of need ... to have someone who is overburdened and encourage them to embrace God's mercy."

EARLY BIRD: Fr. Sanka usually hits the gym at 5:30 and by 6:30 he's in Adoration, doing spiritual reading, and preparing for 8 a.m. Mass.

FURTHER STUDIES: While in Ireland, Fr. Sanka did graduate work in psychotherapy and youth studies. He uses those tools in pastoral counseling.

GOOD NEIGHBOR: St. Brendan is across the street from Tarleton State University. "The young people are being trained intellectually, but there's a moral, spiritual aspect that we provide here."

PRIORITY ONE: "First and foremost, to know and to serve God, as the *Catechism* says, is the primary call. It's the vocation for all of us. God wants us to engage [with Him], to make a difference in our lives." 🇺🇸



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Common acts of the assembly during the celebration of Mass

In previous installments of “Understanding the Mystery,” Father Thu Nguyen explained why we sit, stand, and kneel during Mass, as well as the meaning of the Sign of the Cross. Here, the diocesan director of liturgy continues to explain the deeper meanings behind common acts of the assembly during the celebration of Mass.

LET’S START BY ASKING WHY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH INCORPORATES OUR BODIES INTO OUR WORSHIP OF GOD.

Fr. Nguyen: You and I, as humans, communicate with each other through external gestures. I look at you; I move my hands; we express ourselves through movements.

We are creatures of body as well as spirit. When we communicate with God, we worship by raising our hearts and mind, so our whole person is praying

with body and mind. It helps us pray with greater attentiveness. That’s why all the gestures prescribed in the ritual have profound meaning.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST IS THE SOURCE AND SUMMIT OF OUR FAITH. DO THE FAITHFUL UNDERSTAND HOW TO RECEIVE THE EUCHARIST?

Fr. Nguyen: The communicant may choose whether to receive the body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue according to the directive of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and especially adapted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops — both methods with a spirit of reverence and a profession of belief for the real presence of Our Lord Jesus.

Some people are surprised that

receiving in the hand goes back to the earliest days of the Church, beginning with Jesus and the Apostles at the Last Supper.

When receiving in the hand, the communicant needs to be guided by the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. Writing in the fourth century, he said to put your right hand beneath your left hand, which serves as a throne to receive our King. Keep your fingers together,

taking care that nothing is lost, and consume Him right away.

We bow our heads reverently before receiving. Afterward, step on either side and consume immediately without making any gestures to the Body of Christ. It is sacrilegious to do anything to the Host, such as returning to the pew carrying the Eucharist.



Fr. Thu Nguyen

WHAT ARE APPROPRIATE WAYS TO EXTEND THE SIGN OF PEACE?

Fr. Nguyen: According to Rome, the essential meaning of the Sign of Peace is not a moment of wishing your neighbor well, or a social moment of visitation.

The purpose of the rite of peace in the Church is peace and unity for herself and the whole human being. It's not a moment of acquaintance, where we ask, "Hi, how are you?"

It is a sign of extending charity and unity to each other.

Sometimes the assembly falls into an occasion of greeting, becoming acquainted at that moment, and then some individuals even run all over shaking hands and hugging. That's not what the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* recommends. You only extend the peace quietly to the nearest person around you, left and right, front and back, depending on the custom prescribed by the USCCB.

IS IT APPROPRIATE TO CLAP DURING MASS FOR THE HOMILY, CHOIR, OR A GUEST SPEAKER?

Fr. Nguyen: As explained by our beloved Pope Benedict XVI in *The Spirit of Liturgy*, the liturgy comes from God. It's not our social gathering; it is our gathering to worship God. Anything that breaks the flow of liturgy becomes disturbing and inserted for our own purpose.

What does clapping mean? You recognize whatever is great about

this moment or this person — the choir sings wonderfully, and so on. Maybe it's congratulations or a birthday. All these intrusive gestures break the importance of liturgy.

If you say the choir is wonderful, you can congratulate them afterward. But are they really there to perform for you?

There's one moment in a liturgical ceremony that we acknowledge by clapping, according to the ritual of the Ordination of the Priesthood. You have a young man whose superiors testify that he's ready to be ordained. Then he is presented to the assembly, and the bishop calls for applause.

WHY IS SILENCE IMPORTANT DURING MASS?

Fr. Nguyen: Many moments in the liturgy require a moment of silence: after the readings and after the homily. These moments are pauses for us to meditate and digest what we have heard. Another moment of silence is right after Communion to reflect on what we have been given, to offer thanksgiving for the Body and Blood.

The silence reminds us of *Luke 2:19*, "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." During silence at Mass, you can reflect on all these things you have been given. ✚

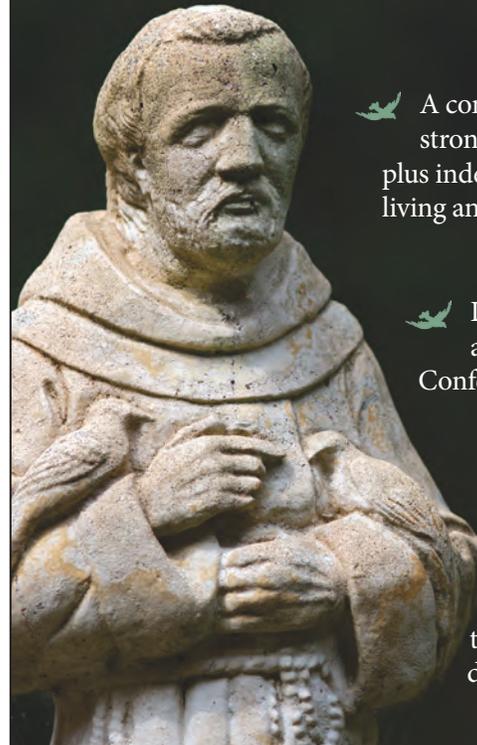
Father Thu Nguyen serves as Pastor at St. Paul the Apostle Church in Fort Worth and Director of Liturgy and Worship.



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MÁS QUE un matrimonio

El Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis tiene varios retiros que ayudan a hombres, mujeres y parejas a profundizar en sus matrimonios

Por Gabriel Hernández

Hoy en día pareciera que, para nuestra sociedad tan secularizada, el matrimonio no es más que la coronación que la pareja se merece tras haber mantenido vivo el romance por algunos años, o la etapa que necesariamente debe seguir al noviazgo, o sencillamente la vida en común que inicia tras una ceremonia nupcial.

De ahí lo importante de resaltar es que para nosotros el Matrimonio no es única y simplemente un acuerdo social ni un contrato legal. Es un Sacramento.

Como lo mencionábamos antes, en la actualidad se percibe al matrimonio como un estado civil al que se llega cuando uno se vuelve adulto, cuando la relación ha llegado a su madurez, cuando los novios pueden verse juntos por el resto de sus vidas, o cuando la convivencia y los puntos en común permiten ver en el horizonte un futuro predecible de reciprocidad y mutua satisfacción. No me malentiendan. Las razones antes enumeradas tienen cierto sentido. Es más, dada la superficialidad y banalidad con la que hoy se concibe el matrimonio, ojalá y muchos de quienes se casan lo hicieran por razones semejantes... y no por sentimentalismo, superficialidad, ansiedad, insatisfacción, aburrimiento, egoísmo, inseguridad o interés materialista.

Lo que quiero decir es que, por encima de toda noción incluso sensata del matrimonio, para nosotros el Matrimonio es un Sacramento. ¿Qué quiere decir esto? La palabra misma lo dice: sacramento. El Matrimonio hace referencia a algo ‘sagrado’, a algo que tiene que ver directamente con Dios.

¿Grandioso, cierto? ¿Algo que parece ser únicamente asunto de hombres, para nosotros hace referencia también a Dios! Es Dios —Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo— quien da un nuevo y originalísimo sentido al

Matrimonio. De hecho, es Dios mismo quien lo instituyó.

El Matrimonio contiene un significado profundamente vocacional

Reza así un fragmento de Isaías: “Así es toda palabra que sale de mi boca; no volverá a mí vacía, sino que hará mi voluntad y prosperará en aquello para que la envié” (*Is 55:11*).

Pensemos en nuestro matrimonio. Dios con su palabra nos llamó a la existencia con la única finalidad de un día volver a Él. Nuestro esposo es el instrumento más precioso con el que contamos para no solo no volver a Dios vacíos, sino principalmente para hacer su voluntad y prosperar en aquello para lo que Dios nos envió.

¡Qué bella la luz que irradia este pasaje sobre nuestra imagen del matrimonio! ¿cierto? Mi esposo no es alguien a quien por suerte conocí, de quien por suerte me enamoré, con quien por suerte me casé y con quien por suerte quizá y hasta ya formé una familia.

No. Por el contrario, Dios tuvo a bien llamarme a mí — a ti, a cada uno de nosotros — a encontrarnos con Él a través del compañero de vida que un día conocimos, del cual nos enamoramos, con quien nos casamos y con quien quizá ya incluso hemos formado una familia, gracias al plan concreto por el que Dios nos fue guiando misteriosa y amorosamente.

La gracia que Dios derrama a través del Sacramento da al Matrimonio un carácter virtuoso y santo

Dice así la *Carta a los Efesios*: “Y así les sea dado a comprender con todos los santos cuál sea la anchura, la longitud, la altura y la profundidad del amor de Cristo... que supera todo conocimiento para que puedan así recibir



Noe Rosales y Lupita Rosales llevan a cabo un taller sobre el matrimonio y la ruptura de los estereotipos tradicionales dentro de un matrimonio, durante el retiro matrimonial Jornada Familiar, en el Centro de Formación Diocesana en Fort Worth, el sábado 25 de marzo. (NTC/Ben Torres)

la plenitud de Dios” (Ef 3:18).

Si de por sí estas palabras son ya inspiradoras, cuánto más lo son si se las considera en el contexto particular del Matrimonio. Me explico. En esta carta, Pablo expresa su más íntimo deseo y la más alta vocación a la que tú, yo, cada uno de nosotros — lo mismo que la comunidad de Éfeso — debemos aspirar en la vida: conocer en plenitud el amor de Cristo.

¡Es en gran parte a través de la alianza de amor que estableciste con tu esposo que él podrá conocer la anchura, la longitud, la altura y la profundidad del amor de Cristo! Vaya reflexión tan profunda y quizá hasta abrumadora. Los esposos estamos llamados a experimentar el uno en el otro el amor de Cristo. ¡Vaya compromiso y responsabilidad! No por nada un matrimonio vivido a fondo se convierte en un verdadero gimnasio de virtud y de santidad. Amar a nuestro esposo como Cristo lo ama, no es un cometido fácil, por lo que requiere ejercicio de virtud constante, oración, fe, petición incesante de la gracia, etc.



La hermana Diana Rodríguez, HCG, dirige una charla durante el retiro “Mujer de Fe” el 6 de mayo en el Centro de Formación Diocesana. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

El Matrimonio tiene una finalidad salvífica

En un bellissimo párrafo al respecto, el Vaticano II se expresaba así: “La salvación de la persona y de la sociedad humana y cristiana está estrechamente ligada a la prosperidad de la comunidad conyugal y

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 58



Jorge Alvarado escucha un presentador durante el retiro de Hombre de Fe organizado por la Oficina del Ministerio Hispano el 3 de junio en el Centro de Formación Diocesana. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

DE LA PÁGINA 57

familiar” (GS 47,1).

Para nosotros, el Matrimonio no es algo temporal, pasajero e intrascendente. Por el contrario, tiene implicaciones eternas.

El amor de Cristo —del cual participan los esposos y que emana de estos — tiene el poder de unir a los distintos miembros de la familia, convirtiéndola en una comunidad. Una unidad hecha de muchos que comparten las alegrías y las penas, que se ayudan mutuamente en la búsqueda de la santidad, que se apoyan fraternalmente superando los retos de la vida y que finalmente aspiran a encontrarse un día con Dios.

Espero que las presentes reflexiones te ayuden a redescubrir lo que para nosotros como católicos representa el Matrimonio y a renovar tu fe en Dios quien te llamó a encontrarle a través

de tan sublime Sacramento. Dios, en su infinita grandeza nos eligió por el Bautismo y nos regaló gratuitamente el don de la fe por el que somos capaces de ver más allá de las apariencias e internarnos en la intimidad del amor de Cristo manifestado en el Matrimonio.

Si deseas vivir en plenitud tu vocación de esposo católico; o si estás buscando una oportunidad para renovar tu matrimonio, el Ministerio Hispano de la diócesis de Fort Worth ofrece retiros con este propósito. Por cierto, en mayo tuvo lugar un retiro para mujeres y en junio habrá uno para hombres. La Diócesis también ofrece clases de Crecimiento Matrimonial y de Preparación para el Matrimonio.

Para más información favor de contactar al Diácono Rigoberto Leyva, Director del Ministerio Hispano al 817-945-9366 o visite nuestro sitio web fwdioc.org/ministerio-hispano. ✝

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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



Rosario por LA PAZ

La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana de la Diócesis de Fort Worth organizó el Rosario por la paz, un evento transformador para los jóvenes

“Nunca había rezado el Rosario de esta manera.”

“Fue algo que nunca había vivido.”

“Se pudo expresar nuestra fe en la comunidad como nunca antes.”

Por Karla Silva

Estos fueron algunos de los comentarios que realizaron varios jóvenes el sábado 13 de mayo en el “Rosario por la Paz y la Unión Familiar”, organizado por la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana de la Diócesis de Fort Worth en el parque Trinity.

Alrededor de cien jóvenes asistieron a este evento, algunos miembros de diferentes parroquias, y otros que lo escucharon a través de las redes sociales, todos reunidos por un mismo propósito: unirse en oración para pedir por la paz en la comunidad y en el mundo entero.

Si bien, este no fue un Rosario como el que comúnmente se reza dentro de la Iglesia. Los jóvenes tuvieron la oportunidad de participar rezando los misterios, ofreciendo flores a la Virgen María por cada Ave María, y del mismo modo, entonando diferentes alabanzas. Muchos de los jóvenes se sintieron identificados con los cantos, mientras que, en otros, al ver tantos jóvenes congregados en la oración del Rosario, despertó su

curiosidad y motivación para seguir rezándolo aún más frecuente.

Luis Miguel Urrutia, coordinador de la Pastoral Juvenil y uno de los organizadores de la actividad, compartió que, uno de los propósitos de realizar este evento al aire libre fue poder expresar la fe de una manera pacífica. Sin lugar a duda, el evento no tardó en captar la atención de las personas que paseaban por el parque, quienes mostraron curiosidad por lo que estaba ocurriendo. Tal fue el caso de una señora que, al percatarse del evento, no

dudó en unirse a rezar el Rosario junto con los jóvenes.

“Nos alegra mucho ver la respuesta de los jóvenes y de la comunidad hacia estos eventos, y nos anima a seguir organizándolos”, comentó Deicy Martínez, subcoordinadora de la Pastoral.

La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, organiza diferentes eventos cada mes. Para obtener más información sobre futuros eventos visite: fwdioc.org/pastoral-juvenil-hispana-en. 🇺🇸



Jóvenes adultos de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana participan en un Rosario por la Paz y la Unión Familiar el 13 de mayo de 2023 en Trinity Park en Fort Worth. Cien jóvenes adultos asistieron al evento, que se celebró en la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Fátima. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



ENCONTRANDO A DIOS
A TRAVÉS
de su creación

Irasema y Cipriano Beltrán, feligreses de la Parroquia Immaculate Conception de Denton. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

El ministerio Kairós busca el ‘tiempo de Dios’ para evangelizar y servir

Por Violeta Rocha

El ministerio Kairós, de origen mexicano, utiliza sus campamentos como la principal herramienta para facilitar el encuentro con Dios de sus participantes. Algo muy peculiar de este ministerio es que la manera de llevar a sus integrantes a sentir el amor de Dios en profunda reflexión es mediante sus campamentos, que se celebran en contacto directo con la naturaleza, ya sea observando el horizonte frente a un lago o mirando las estrellas del firmamento en la quietud de la noche.

Irasema y Cipriano Beltrán, feligreses de la Parroquia Immaculate Conception de Denton, aceptaron hace unos 10 años una invitación de sacerdote local que introdujo el ministerio Kairós en el 2013 a la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Este evento cambió la vida del matrimonio Beltrán para siempre.

“Era algo muy diferente de aquello a lo que estábamos acostumbrados”, dijo Irasema. “En aquel momento pensamos ‘esto es lo nuestro’ y nos enamoramos de lo que nos ofrecía Kairós”, agregó acerca de la dinámica y esencia de los campamentos de tres días, durante los cuales se duerme y se convive a la intemperie. Ella explicó además que “los campamentos comprenden escuchar la Palabra de Dios para luego hacer comunidad o simplemente servir ‘con más fuerza’ en los ministerios que ya uno hacía antes”.

El matrimonio Beltrán es originario de Chihuahua, México. Los esposos son los coordinadores del programa de Kairós Papás, apostolado que fue aceptado y reconocido en el 2019 por la Diócesis de Fort Worth. “La aceptación del programa fue renovada en el 2022 por el Diácono Rigoberto Leyva”, apuntó Cipriano. Hay hoy día tres comunidades Kairós que se encuentran en la Parroquia de Immaculate Conception de Denton, St. John the Apostle de North Richland Hills y St. Peter the Apostle de White

Settlement, que suman en total unos 120 matrimonios.

“Es una gran bendición ver cómo el apostolado ha crecido y ver también cómo las parejas tienen su encuentro con Jesús. Nos sentimos que al ayudar a estas parejas estamos poniendo un granito de arena para seguir edificando nuestra Iglesia”, comentó Irasema.

La palabra Kairós “viene del término bíblico en griego que significa el tiempo de Dios”, señaló Cipriano. El apostolado Kairós nació en Guadalajara, Jalisco, México, fundado por el Padre Baca y el cantautor católico Martín Valverde en el 1990 como respuesta a la inquietud de evangelizar a la juventud mediante campamentos y retiros de verano.

El ministerio Kairós está actualmente presente en 52 comunidades de México y los Estados Unidos. Se ofrecen campamentos también para niños, matrimonios, y hasta para seminaristas y sacerdotes.

“Con la ayuda de los sacerdotes, y mientras ellos nos apoyen con este tipo de evangelización, podemos hacer mucho y tener campamentos por toda la Diócesis”, resaltó Irasema.

“La misión principal de Kairós es formar líderes y para nosotros es muy inspirador ver cómo ese servidor nato que cada uno tenemos dentro de nosotros surge en el momento preciso, en el ‘tiempo de Dios’, que es el Kairós”, afirmó Cipriano.

El Diácono Rigoberto Leyva, Director del Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, apunta que Kairós es un ministerio que ofrece una manera “diferente y original de cómo tener un encuentro profundo con Jesús”.

“Ver las parejas sentadas alrededor de un lago mientras escuchan a alguien predicando la Palabra de Dios, me parece algo muy único y genuino”, añadió al referirse al formato de los campamentos.

“El testimonio que estos muchachos dan al asistir a estos campamentos es de personas entregadas, dispuestas a

servir a la Iglesia y a la comunidad de nuestra Diócesis”, apuntó el Diácono Leyva. Resaltó también el servicio que el ministerio Kairós brinda, no sólo a la Diócesis a través de los campamentos, sino también a cada una de sus parroquias al servir como acomodadores y acólitos. “Algunos de ellos son acólitos instituidos, ministros de la Eucaristía y ayudan en numerosas áreas de la parroquia. Yo creo que dan un testimonio muy bueno”.

El Diácono Rigoberto apunta que el hecho de que, los participantes de Kairós lleven a cabo el campamento una vez que se les abren las puertas de una parroquia y que, al salir, tengan la plena determinación de decir a su sacerdote “estamos listos para servir, ¿en qué área nos necesita?” habla de una conversión auténtica que se traduce en amor al servicio.

“Uno los ve sirviendo al párroco y la comunidad parroquial con disponibilidad, flexibilidad y una generosa actitud sin titubeos. Eso se los aplaudo mucho”, agregó.

Si bien la espiritualidad de Kairós no es para el gusto de todos, explica el Diácono Leyva, “todos los fieles están invitados a experimentarla”, apuntó.

“Es una herramienta útil para la persona que busca profundizar su espiritualidad y aún no lo ha logrado”, señaló el diácono. Como Director del Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis, Leyva apoya al ministerio Kairós “porque lo he visto y estoy convencido de que es un apostolado que realmente se preocupa por llevar la mejor evangelización al pueblo y que lo hace de una forma diferente y genuina”, afirmó.

Cipriano explica que todos los campamentos son diferentes. La preparación de cada campamento toma seis meses “porque nuestro propósito es que sean íntegros, y que su preparación sea detallada y bien estructurada”.

Se espera que el próximo campamento se lleve a cabo entre septiembre y octubre de este año. ✚



Los gestos comunes realzan la reverencia y la unidad

Para quien mire desde fuera — y a veces para los católicos mismos — los gestos de la Misa pueden resultar un tanto confusos. Ponerse de pie. Sentarse. Ponerse de rodillas. Hacer una genuflexión. Hacer una reverencia.

En esta entrega de “Entendiendo el Misterio”, el Padre Thu Nguyen explica el significado existente detrás de los gestos, el momento en el que se realizan y por qué son importantes para la celebración que los fieles hacen de la Misa.

¿CUÁL ES EL SIGNIFICADO DETRÁS DE LOS GESTOS PRINCIPALES DE LA LITURGIA (PONERSE DE PIE, ARRODILLARSE Y SENTARSE)?

Padre Nguyen: Dirijamos nuestra atención a estos tres gestos principales. Se describen en el *Misal Romano*, párrafo 42: “Los gestos y posturas corporales, tanto del sacerdote, del diácono y de los ministros, como del pueblo, deben tender a que toda la celebración resplandezca por el noble decoro y por la sencillez, a que se comprenda el significado verdadero y pleno de cada

una de sus diversas partes y a que se favorezca la participación de todos”.

Esa es la razón por la que tú y yo adoptamos las mismas posturas. Me puedes decir: “Verás, yo soy muy piadoso, por eso me pondré de rodillas en este momento” mientras que el resto de la asamblea está de pie. Sin embargo, a su vez estar de pie también significa algo.

Volvamos al documento del papa Francisco *Desiderio Desideravi*, párrafo 53. Ahí escribe: “Cada gesto y cada palabra contienen una acción precisa que es siempre nueva, porque encuentra un momento siempre nuevo en nuestra vida.

Permitidme explicarlo con un sencillo ejemplo. Nos arrodillamos para pedir perdón; para doblegar nuestro orgullo; para entregar nuestras lágrimas a Dios; para suplicar su intervención; para agradecerle un don recibido: es siempre el mismo gesto, que expresa esencialmente nuestra pequeñez ante Dios”.

Es por eso que, en la Plegaria Eucarística, cada uno de nosotros se arrodilla. El sacerdote celebrante, hace una genuflexión. Hace una reverencia tras la consagración porque no solo reconoce la presencia de Dios que se transforma de pan en Cuerpo y de vino en Sangre, sino que también reconoce la Resurrección de Jesucristo. La tercera genuflexión, cuando fragmenta el Cuerpo y lo deposita en el cáliz de la preciosa Sangre, simboliza la unión del Cuerpo y de la Sangre, la Resurrección del Señor.

Él hace una genuflexión, significa que está adorando. Por lo mismo, el gesto de arrodillarse es importante.

¿POR QUÉ Y CUÁNDO HAY QUE ESTAR DE PIE DURANTE LA MISA?

Padre Nguyen: Estar de pie es signo de respeto y de honra para Dios, para el celebrante y para los sagrados elementos de la liturgia. Desde los inicios de la Iglesia, esta postura se ha entendido como la disposición de quienes han resucitado con Cristo y buscan las cosas de arriba.



P. Thu Nguyen

Estar de pie demuestra nuestra plena reverencia en oración ante Dios, no por orgullo, sino en humilde gratitud, reconociendo los hechos salvíficos que Dios ha realizado al crear y redimir a cada uno de nosotros. Estar de pie demuestra que se reconoce el maravilloso don que llega por el Bautismo, gracias al cual participamos en la vida de Dios. Estar de pie es apropiado también para oír y prestar atención a las palabras y hechos del Señor durante la proclamación del Evangelio.

La USCCB ha elegido el estar de pie como la postura adecuada para recibir la Comunión.

¿EN QUÉ MOMENTO NOS SENTAMOS Y POR QUÉ?

Padre Nguyen: Por otro lado, los fieles se deben sentar durante las lecturas que preceden al Evangelio, durante el salmo responsorial, la homilía y durante la preparación de las ofrendas a la hora del ofertorio; y, pueden sentarse o arrodillarse, según resulte apropiado, durante el periodo del silencio sagrado que sigue a la comunión.

Tomar asiento es la postura de la escucha y la meditación durante la celebración de la Liturgia de la Palabra. Mientras se encuentran sentados, los fieles deben esforzarse por asumir dicha postura como de estar a la espera y atentos, más que simplemente como una postura de descanso (como lo son, por ejemplo, el encorvarse o echarse hacia atrás).

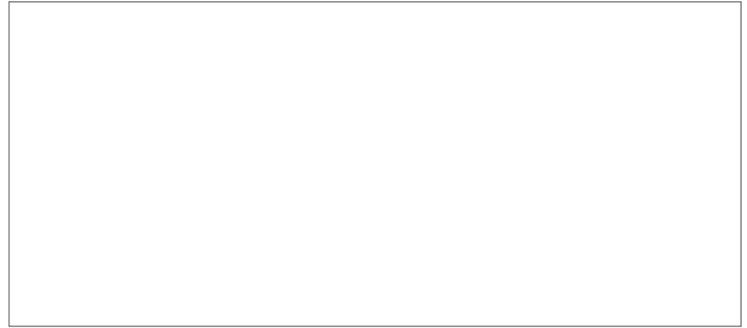
Por el bien de la uniformidad, la reverencia y la unidad comunitaria en los gestos y posturas durante la misma celebración, el fiel debe seguir las enseñanzas e instrucciones de cada conferencia y obispo que le corresponde y, de manera especial, con lo que se establece en el *Misal Romano*. ✚

El Padre Thu Nguyen sirve como párroco de la Parroquia de St. Paul the Apostle en Fort Worth y director de la Liturgia y Adoración.

APRENDA MÁS



Para leer más entregas de "Entendiendo el Misterio," escanea el código QR.



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For more information, contact Laura Sotelo at lsotelo@ccdofw.org or 817.289.2780.



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