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NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



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NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2023
VOL. 39 | NO. 6



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THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY: A MEETING ON MEETINGS

As anyone with access to Catholic social media knows, this month the Pope is meeting with bishops, priests, religious, and lay representatives from around the world in what has been designated as the first phase of the Synod on Synodality. We have been informed that the second phase will take place at this time next year. Having heard from many of you during the past week regarding your concerns and observations of the earliest goings-on in Rome, I, too, share your confusion at what has been presented as well as by the novelty of the participants who are comprised not exclusively of bishops, whose grace of ordination includes the three principle duties (*munera*) of teaching, governing, and sanctifying the Church. The novelty of this approach is that this initial gathering is intended to be more about listening so that we might develop our way of being the Church.

This is a welcome endeavor and project for the entire Church to undergo, especially after the almost sixty years since the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council that began a period of renewal and development in the Church's life in areas of liturgy, mission, family life, and sacramental theology and doctrine. The pontificates of each subsequent pope, St. Paul VI, John Paul I, St. John Paul II,

and Benedict XVI, have each contributed to this renewal through encyclicals, exhortations, and homilies. Pope Francis stood upon these developments and has now emphasized the importance of listening as an identifiable activity of the entire Church.

This activity of listening is twofold: first, listening to Christ through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, and second, listening to the entire People of God: clergy, religious, and laity who each offer insights into the authentic lived faith as well as the need for ongoing conversion and deeper understanding of the truth as revealed fully in Jesus Christ. For us to appreciate this twofold activity of listening called for by the Synodal process, I invite you to review the Diocesan Synthesis Report of our own participation and contribution to the Synodal process in listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other. You can find this report on the Diocese's website. The report describes how 3,311 participants took part in 112 listening sessions held throughout the Diocese in keeping with the expectations articulated by the USCCB for that phase of the Synod. These listening sessions were conducted in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and ASL (American Sign Language). Most importantly, each session, including the diocesan listening session, began with

prayer, Adoration, or Mass.

All of us as baptized members of the Catholic Church must begin with listening. It is basic that we begin our listening to Christ in His words spoken in the Gospels, and to the Word of God proclaimed in all Sacred Scripture. It is important that we follow by listening to the almost 2,000-year authentic Magisterium on Faith and Morals that has developed in articulating a deeper understanding of the Revelation of Christ. This is especially true regarding the nature of the human person as a member of a family, society, and the Church. If we begin with this type of listening, we can listen and understand each other better and, in listening to each other, come to understand the Word of God and the Church's authentic teaching with better insight.

Some mistakenly perceive listening as a kind of demanding that God ratify disordered desires for what cannot possibly be blessed. If we try this kind of listening without listening first with the Holy Spirit to the truth of Christ's own words, we will do more talking than listening in our life as the Church, while becoming miserably indifferent to the Ten Commandments and the complete message of Christ. The Holy Spirit cannot contradict Himself on these elements; we should not demand that the Holy Spirit do so. 🇺🇸

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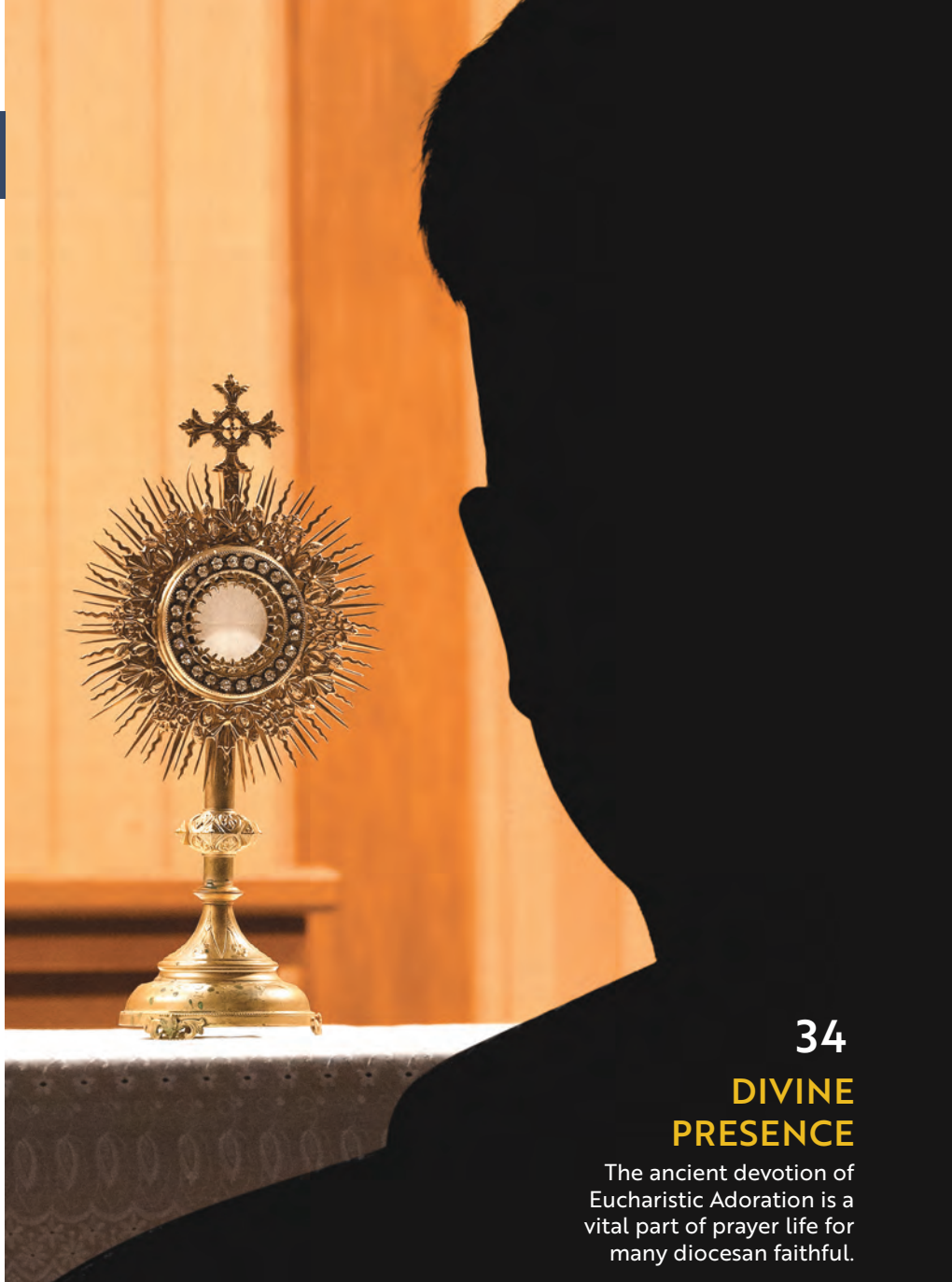
A monstrance at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in White Settlement (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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DIVINE PRESENCE

The ancient devotion of Eucharistic Adoration is a vital part of prayer life for many diocesan faithful.



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

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Time and time again

Never am I more aware of the passage of time than this part of the year.

It begins with the school supplies appearing on store shelves in July (is summer over, already?), continues with teases of fall weather in September and October, and races from Halloween through Christmas to the last page of the calendar.

Each year I try to ride the brake to slow the tempo, and each year my efforts prove powerless over the inevitable march of time.

The current *North Texas Catholic* offers at least three antidotes to the ever-accelerating whirlwind of days this time of year.

First, let me direct you to our website, NorthTexasCatholic.org. You'll find more local stories, photo galleries, and excellent columns. One in particular, "More than Morbidity" by columnist Walker Price, is a strangely comforting and countercultural exploration of why we should think about our death.

Our second countermeasure specifically inserts Advent — that oft-neglected liturgical season — in its rightful place beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. Instead of (or in addition to) decorating the home with Santa and reading books about the Grinch, use the beautiful artwork by Maria Diaz to make a Jesse Tree and read stories of salvation history each day until we celebrate the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ. You'll find an article about Jesse Trees beginning on page 26, plus a full set of Diaz's custom illustrations on our website.

And finally, bring time to its knees and spend some time on your knees in the place where time stands still, in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Beginning on page 34, correspondent Joan Kurkowski-Gillen explains the ancient devotion of Eucharistic Adoration and shares experiences of local Catholics who make Adoration part of their regular prayer habits.

In Adoration, you'll appreciate every moment in the presence of the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the One who promised He will always be with us, until the end of time.

Susan Moses

EDITOR

Views from the Pews

As fall unfolded in the Diocese of Fort Worth, we saw the faithful go outside to participate in traditions, both old and new, which focus on love of God, love of His creation, and love of neighbor.

Catholic Bowl III. In its third year, Catholic Bowl featured four teams (including Sacred Heart Catholic School in Muenster, pictured above), worshipping at Mass, enjoying barbecue, hearing presentations, and playing football at the Star in Frisco on Sept. 8-9.

CCFW Day of Service. For its second annual fall day of service, Catholic Charities Fort Worth organized dozens of volunteers for service projects at area schools, churches, and nonprofits on Sept. 30.

Blessing of the animals. At right, Father Mel Bessellieu, parochial vicar of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine, blessed some furry friends (and a few with scales) for the Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, on Oct. 4.



NTC/Kevin Bartram



NTC/Rodger Mattison



NTC/Scott Wagner

THERE'S MORE



See more photos from these events and more at North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com.

To overcome fear, look it in the face



After celebrating the Young Adult Mass, Bishop Olson took questions from the attendees. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ARLINGTON — The Exaltation of the Holy Cross was a fitting feast day on which to hold the diocesan Young Adult Mass.

More than 200 young adults from across the diocese gathered at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington for the Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael

Olson.

The reading from the *Book of Numbers* describes the Israelites as they encounter a plague of serpents sent as

punishment for their ingratitude and impatience.

Like the Israelites, today's young adults experience fear and have "a shared experience of feeling like strangers in a strange land," one attendee commented.

During the reception, Bishop Olson fielded questions.


When asked what he felt was the most uniquely challenging aspect of being a young Catholic today, his answer went straight to the heart of the matter. He said the mission of the Church has always been to seek out the biggest mess we can find and to put ourselves right in the middle of it.

In other words, to overcome what we fear, we must have the courage to look it in the face, like the Israelites gazed at the serpent on a pole.

The next Young Adult Mass is scheduled for Saturday, March 2, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. at St. Patrick Cathedral.

— Walker Price

An encounter to listen and grow

 University campus ministry retreat gathers students from throughout diocese

RENDON — An escape from distractions of the outside world and an opportunity to seek God's voice is how University of Texas at Arlington student Megan Colega summed up the Oct. 6-8 campus ministry retreat at Holy Family Religious and Retreat Center in Rendon.

"To keep some silence in my life so that I can listen to what God has in store for me specifically and what I need to do," Colega said.

"This is the first retreat where all the campuses came together in over 20 years," UTA Catholic Campus Ministry

leader Jeff Hedglen said.

Students from UTA, University of North Texas, Texas Christian University, Tarleton State, and Midwestern University attended.

"The retreat brought religious consecrated men and women and others in to speak to how God calls each of us, and how He is calling each of the participating students to live as a baptized Christian in today's world," Tarleton State campus minister Nathan Mena said.

— Matthew Smith



Dominican Sister Felicity and a retreatant.

NTC/Juan Guajardo

Sacred spaces



NTC/Scott Wagner



NTC/Juan Guajardo

GRAPEVINE — Bishop Michael Olson blessed a new Adoration oratory and catechetical center at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine Sept. 15. The two-story building features a central gathering area for youth events, guest speakers, and exhibitions. The second floor houses six atrium classrooms for the elementary faith formation program Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

A vision becomes reality



Ribbon cutting held for new parish hall at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Cisco

CISCO — Parishioners and well-wishers gathered at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Cisco on her feast day, Oct. 7, to celebrate the completion of a new parish hall.

Mass was celebrated by Vicar General Father Jonathan Wallis, assisted by current pastor of the parish, Father Joseph Pudota, SAC, and former pastors Father Robert Strittmatter and Father Vijaya Mareedu, SAC.

The parish hall project and dream started nine years ago with the land purchase.

Fr. Wallis, who served the parish from 2012-2014, said the parish hall is a “sign of tremendous hope, a great blessing,” a sentiment that was expressed by many. “It will be a place where people can gather to really share the Catholic faith, to experience joys and sorrows, to really build each other up



NTC/Carolina Boelter

Father Jonathan Wallis cuts the ribbon for the new parish hall in Cisco.

in the Church.”

Fr. Pudota is very grateful for “all the donors, the altar society who raised the funds, the people who had the vision, the

parishioners, and the building committee under the guidance of Jim Horton.”

— Katie Leonard

Unique in His eyes

Middle and high school students learn about Jesus' unconditional love



Presenter Dr. Alex Goray nabs a volunteer. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ARLINGTON — The diocesan-sponsored Word Made Flesh event brought together more than 150 7th through 12th graders and chaperones from six different parishes.

In addition to talks about salvation history, the program included small group discussions,

recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and Mass.

“The youth conference is a wonderful way for young people in individual parishes to get a sense of the larger Church,” said Gabe Gutierrez, emcee and worship leader for the Saturday afternoon gathering. “Unless you go to a

Catholic school, faith isn't something that is shared a lot with friends. An experience like this allows them to see they are not alone.”

Deb Pretzlaff, youth minister at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, traveled from Carrollton with several 8th to 11th graders. She tries to expose her group to a variety of faith-building opportunities offered in the diocese.

“Each one connects to the kids differently,” the youth minister said. “Some kids might leave here today and not get anything out of it. Yet others might make a real connection with Jesus and feel He is saying something specifically to them.”

— Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Heart of gold

St. Rita Catholic School trains therapy dog to support students, staff

FORT WORTH — Students and staff at St. Rita Catholic School in Fort Worth are learning many lessons of faith, love, and patience with a new addition to their ranks.

Well known for its sweet disposition, intelligence, and incredible patience with children, a golden retriever puppy seemed to Kindra Johnston, St. Rita school counselor, the perfect candidate to introduce.

And Scout, St. Rita's service-dog-in-training, has started off the school year proving her right.

“The kids are adoring her,” said Johnston, who fully funds and cares for Scout's needs as her owner.

“They've done little pictures of her, and she does really well around them.”

— Christina Benavides



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Catholic University of America honors Bishop Olson



Bishop Michael Olson (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

WASHINGTON — Bishop Michael Olson received the Catholic University of America Theological College 2023 Alumnus Lifetime Service Award on Oct. 4 in Washington, D.C.

Father Gladstone “Bud” Stevens, a priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, and rector of the national seminary of the Catholic University of America, presented Bishop Olson with a plaque “in recognition of a lifetime of outstanding priestly service as an educator, formator, rector, and champion of ecumenical dialogue and health care ethics.”

Presenting the award to Bishop Olson is “one of the highest blessings I've had in this role, to bestow this honor on behalf of the Theological College community,” said Fr. Stevens.

Bishop Olson, according to Fr. Stevens, “exemplifies a man of energy with a great pastoral heart. He communicates the truth of the Gospel with love and credibility.”

The award ceremony was the culmination of Alumni Day at Theological College, which included a Mass celebrated by Bishop Olson at the Crypt Church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.



Mass for the healing arts



Medicine is a profession and an art, says Bishop Olson



Dianna Nguyen, medical student at UNT Health Science Center, prays. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FORT WORTH — Called to health care, to Jesus, and to fellowship, about 85 health care professionals and their families attended the annual White Coat Mass and reception held at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth on Oct. 16.

Bishop Michael Olson, the celebrant of the Mass, spoke to the white-coated faithful of the importance of trust and vulnerability between health care workers and their patients.

“Medicine and health care are both a profession and an art,” Bishop Olson said.

“What is at stake is the patient’s health, but more specifically the patient’s very life and being and his flourishing,” he continued. “This is what identifies medicine as an art that is broader than just being a good technician.”

The relationship between patient and physician must be developed carefully and with faith, the prelate noted.

“Your vocation really is not just in the ethics of your thousands of years of tradition, of your field, but more so even from God Himself who gives you the gifts of the Holy Spirit to see and to act and to know, prudentially, what is the right course for health and the right course for this particular patient with a name, with a family.”

– Christina Benavides

Gathering for God



Second North Texas Women’s Conference sells out

KELLER — On Oct. 14, 500 women gathered at the second North Texas Catholic Women’s Conference. Keynote speakers Father Agustino Torres and worship leader Jackie Francois Angel gave encouraging messages about the love God has for each woman. Special guests at the event were a second-class relic of Our Lady of Guadalupe, as well as Jesus, present in the Eucharist.

While the majority of the attendees to the conference came from the Fort Worth and Dallas Dioceses, some attended from Midland, the Woodlands, De Leon, Forney, Allen, Canton, and Rowlett. Out-of-state attendees came from Arkansas, Michigan, and Idaho. Almost 40 Catholic parishes were represented, as well as an Episcopal church and a non-denominational church.

Tammy Sandoval, the other six board



Kimberly Eck laughs while listening to Jackie Francois Angel speak. (NTC/Ben Torres)

members of North Texas Catholic Women, and many volunteers worked together to create a beautiful atmosphere and arrange a day of formation for the women present.

Speaker Fr. Torres invited the women present to “allow the Father to

gaze upon you in love.”

Francois Angel believes “Mama Mary” is a perfect model for trusting in the Father’s love — Mary said yes to God as a teenager.

– Kiki Hayden

ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

REV. ROSALINO AGUIRRE BAHENA, CORC

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, effective Oct. 6.

REV. MICHAEL CISKI, TOR

Previously Pastor of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, has been appointed **Pastor** of Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, effective Aug. 1.

REV. PRAKASH DIAS, SAC

Previously Pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Breckenridge and Jesus of Nazareth Parish in Albany, has been appointed **Pastor** of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Mineral Wells and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Graford, effective Aug. 1.

REV. THOMAS D'SOUZA, SAC

Previously Priest in residence at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Mineral Wells, has been **recalled** by his religious order, effective July 31.

REV. MICHAEL HIGGINS, TOR

Previously Pastor at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, has been **recalled** by his religious order, effective Aug. 15.

REV. STANLEY HOLLAND, TOR

Previously Parochial Vicar at St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, has been **recalled** by his religious order, effective July 31.

REV. AUSTIN HOODENPYLE

Has been appointed **Chaplain** of the apostolate Encourage, without prejudice to his assignment as Parochial Vicar of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, effective Sept. 1.

REV. BRIJIL LAWRENCE, SAC

Has been appointed to a three-year term as **Chairman** of the Diocesan Mission Council, without prejudice to his assignment as Pastor of St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Roanoke, effective Sept. 1.

REV. BONIFACE DANIEL MURO, SAC

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Martin de Porres Parish in Prosper, has been **recalled** by his religious order, effective Sept. 26.

DEACON ASSIGNMENTS

DEACON RODNEY ASEBEDO

Has been appointed **Interim Director of Diaconal Formation**, without prejudice to his assignment at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, effective Oct. 1.

DEACON ALFRED CAMARILLO

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been assigned to Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Wichita Falls, effective Sept. 22

DEACON STEVEN ROBERT HOLTON

Has been appointed **Chaplain** of the Fort Worth Serra Club, without prejudice to his assignment at St. Peter the Apostle in White Settlement, effective Aug. 25.

DEACON JIM NOVAK

Previously Pastoral Administrator of Sacred Heart Parish in Seymour and St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Megargel, has been appointed **Parish Life Coordinator** at the same parishes, effective Oct. 9.

RELIGIOUS SISTERS

SISTER MARIE SAVIO TRAM THI THU DINH, OP

To Holy Family Catholic School in Fort Worth, effective Aug. 8.

SISTER THI NHIEM NGUYEN, LHC

To St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, effective Aug. 1.

SISTER MARY AUGUSTINE DIEM THU NGOC PHAM, OP

To St. Andrew Catholic School in Fort Worth, effective Aug. 8.

SISTER MARY MONICA-NGOC TRAM VU, OP

To St. Maria Goretti Catholic School in Arlington, effective Aug. 1.

IN MEMORIAM

FATHER ALLAN HAWKINS



Fr. Allan Hawkins

Father Allan Raeburn Giles Hawkins, retired pastor of St. Mary the Virgin Parish in Arlington and a weekend minister at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound, died Oct. 4 at the age of 89.

A native of England, Fr. Hawkins led

his congregation at St. Mary the Virgin Parish as they left the Episcopal Church and sought incorporation into the Catholic Church in 1991. He continued to serve as the pastor for more than 20 years. After his retirement in 2012, he participated in sacramental ministry at St. Philip the Apostle Parish, celebrating weekend Mass and hearing confessions regularly.

Father Raymond McDaniel, pastor of St. Philip, said Fr. Hawkins will be deeply missed. "He really knew how to reach people with his beautiful homilies and his example of a deep and mature faith."

MILESTONES

SISTERS OF ST. MARY OF NAMUR

- Celebrating jubilee anniversaries with the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur are Sister Anselma Knabe, who entered the Fort Worth congregation 70 years ago, and Sister Gabriela Martinez, a 60-year jubilarian.
- The SSMNs will honor the congregation's 150th year in Texas with a reception at Nolan Catholic High School on Nov. 12 from 2-4 p.m.

CLOSER THAN THEY appear

Clergy visits between Ghana and Fort Worth
strengthen ties between the dioceses

By Susan Moses

The distance is long, but the bond is strong between the Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana, and the Diocese of Fort Worth.

In August, Father Jonathan Wallis, diocesan vicar general, and Father Brett Metzler, vocations director and Nolan Catholic High School chaplain, traveled to Ghana and spent three weeks with Archbishop Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye of Kumasi.

In September, Archbishop Anokye reinforced the enduring relationship by traveling 6,295 miles to the Diocese of Fort Worth, where he celebrated Mass with the diocese's Ghanaian Catholic Community and visited with the three priests from the Archdiocese of Kumasi who serve as missionaries in North Texas: Monsignor Francis Boakye Tawiah, parochial vicar at St. Philip the Apostle in Flower Mound; Father Philip Boateng Brembah, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington; and Father Peter Wiafe Akenteng, parochial vicar of St. Joseph Parish in Arlington.

Archbishop Anokye celebrated

Masses at each of the three parishes served by a Ghanaian priest, and he and the three Ghanaian priests also met privately with Bishop Michael Olson, Fr. Wallis, and Fr. Metzler.

What do the two dioceses from opposite sides of the world share?

A relationship that's deeper than one might speculate, considering the differences in culture, language, history, and economics. But it's a relationship that's poised to grow closer.

MILES OF JOY

In 2020, Bishop Olson, accompanied by Father Maurice Moon, who now serves as the director of collegian seminarian formation, traveled to the Archdiocese of Kumasi. Bishop Olson said the personal connection with the archdiocese "promotes our lives as brothers and sisters in Christ. Ghana is not just a place where we get priests."

When Fr. Wallis and Fr. Metzler visited Kumasi, they stayed with Archbishop Anokye. Fr. Brembah and





A girl presents flowers to Archbishop Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye before Mass on Sept. 3 in the parish hall of St. Joseph Church in Arlington. More than 200 Catholics from the Ghanaian Catholic community attended the Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Msgr. Tawiah served as guides, and the priests attended many Masses and visited a seminary, university, and orphanage.

The Catholic Church in Ghana, observed Fr. Wallis, “is very alive, very young — I think the average age in Ghana is 21. It’s amazing to see so many kids and young people with just a real openness to the faith, a love of the Church, and a tremendous hospitality as well. Fr. Metzler and I were welcomed not as strangers, but as brothers.”

Fr. Metzler noted that Catholic signs and Scripture passages were seen frequently as they moved “in the public, in the community, the city, everywhere. Everybody loves to be Catholic.”

Nowhere was the joy of faith more evident than in the procession on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15.

◀ Archbishop Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

The faithful began a nine-mile procession at 4 a.m., carrying a statue of the Blessed Mother while they danced and sang, remembered Fr. Wallis, who added that the visitors from Texas rode in the procession with the archbishop.

Fr. Metzler perceived that Ghanaian Catholics may be poor materially, but they are rich in spirit. “They’re really, really grateful for what He’s done for them, which I think this is why there’s so much singing and dancing. There’s so much happiness. There’s also a lot of suffering, a lot of suffering. But the people are very resilient. They’re very faithful, and they’re very joyful and grateful.”

Another highlight for Fr. Wallis and Fr. Metzler was being welcomed into the homes of the families of Msgr. Tawiah and Fr. Brembah. The vicar general said, “For the men who serve as missionaries, there is a tremendous sacrifice because it’s a long way from home and the culture is quite different, but the Gospel is the same. Their own willingness to lay down things that they love and take up ministry

here in our diocese — it’s a tremendous witness to their faith and love and dedication to Christ in the Church to be here with us.”

A TEXAS-SIZED WELCOME

Archbishop Anokye spent Labor Day weekend in North Texas. He celebrated Mass in Arlington with more than 200 members of the Ghanaian Catholic Community at St. Joseph. The liturgy, celebrated in Twi and English, was marked by joyful music and cultural traditions from Ghana.

Archbishop Anokye began his homily by telling the congregation he was visiting the 23 priests from his archdiocese who serve in various locations in the U.S., and then he added, “When I come to see my priests, I come to see you.”

He thanked the Ghanaian Catholic Community for “keeping the faith alive. You came here to keep your faith alive. That is our joy when I come to see you.”

Continued on Page 14

From Page 13

He said he was happy and overwhelmed by their “imagery of faith, of solidarity, and of unity.”

Agatha Agyemang, who sings in the choir, said, “The archbishop’s visit means so much to us. He’s like a father visiting all of his children — the priests from his diocese and us.”

Music plays a central part in the liturgy, and the congregation sang and swayed with the choir. Many waved small white cloths that symbolize victory and purity, according to Agyemang.

At the offertory, each person danced up the aisle according to the hymn’s rhythm and dropped their donation into a large bowl.

Agyemang explained that the offertory procession shows each person is grateful to God and offers something to Him. It’s a great moment of thanksgiving, she said, and no one “is empty-handed.”

Fr. Akenteng celebrates Mass with about 80 members of the Ghanaian Catholic Community each Sunday at St. Joseph, and it’s always a joyous occasion, for Agyemang and others who attend.

The community began in 2004 with a handful of Ghanaian immigrants who gathered for a monthly Rosary. As the numbers grew, the founders, including Juliana Konadu, began communicating with the leadership of the Kumasi and Fort Worth dioceses to request a Ghanaian priest to lead the congregation. Fr. Brembah was assigned to the Diocese of Fort Worth in 2008.

Konadu said Ghanaian immigrants living as far away as Frisco and Wylie come each week to participate in the

celebration of religious sacraments in Ghanaian languages and culture.

“We can keep our culture and raise our children where they learn everything they would learn back in Ghana. We get to worship in our own language,” said Agyemang, a middle-school math teacher.

ONE CHURCH

Fr. Wallis picked up a few phrases in Twi during his visit to Ghana, but a more enduring lesson was firsthand observation of the universality of the Church. He said, “The Church is everywhere; the Church has something to say to all people and all cultures, and all cultures can find a home in the Church. All that is truly of the Lord has a place in the Church as well.”

The trip “strengthened those fraternal bonds” with priests, Fr. Wallis said. “It was really great sharing time

with the other priests that were there because, no matter what, we’ve all been through seminary, we all studied philosophy, and we all studied theology. There’s a lot of common experience, even if we’re not all in the same place,” he said.

Fr. Brembah, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul, has served 15 of his 25 years of priesthood as a missionary from Ghana to the Diocese of Fort Worth. When the diocesan priests of Ghana and Fort Worth gather, he said, “We understand each other. Faith is the same everywhere. Love and friendship binds everyone around the world, especially our two dioceses.” 🇵🇸

EDITOR’S NOTE: In November 2024, the Diocese of Fort Worth plans a special collection to support the needs of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana.



Fr. Wallis, Fr. Metzler, and Archbishop Anokye prepare for Mass and harvest at a local college. A harvest is a fundraiser, in this case for the campus Catholic church building. (Courtesy Photo/Father Brett Metzler)

Safe Environment Team

From left, Gabriela Garcia, Coordinator; Sandra Schrader-Farry, Director; Patrick McGrail, Assistant Director; and Alma Garcia, Coordinator. (NTC photo illustration/Juan Guajardo)



COMMITTED TO Progress

Safe Environment department passes its three-year audit with flying colors

By Christina Benavides

Called to tirelessly protect the most vulnerable while extremely aware that every day provides a new opportunity to learn and improve their processes, the hardworking staff of four that lead the Diocese of Fort Worth's Safe Environment department, along with all of the local safe environment coordinators and facilitators, earned a hard-won recognition in their most recent audit.

The stipulations outlined in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* set the standard for the care and protection of the vulnerable for the 196 dioceses and archdioceses in the U.S.

"We're happy with the results because we were found to be in compliance with the USCCB charter requirements," said Sandra Schrader-Farry, director of Safe Environment.

The auditing team, made up of two professional staffers from Stone Bridge Business Partners who perform compliance auditing on the USCCB's behalf, "looked at the different articles of the charter and made sure that we've maintained compliance with the training for all of the adults and children and we've conducted the background checks and vetting that's required," Schrader-Farry said. "They checked our compliance diocese-wide, and we gave them an opportunity to choose parishes to see."

While the chosen parishes for the auditing review visit were given prior notice of the on-site interviews, a coordinator's

sudden illness called for a last-minute change in plans. Because of the circumstances, Schrader-Farry and her Safe Environment team instead brought the auditors to visit St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller "unexpectedly, and they did beautifully, the parish and the school. And then we went that afternoon to a cluster of parishes, including St. Mary Parish in Dublin, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in De Leon, Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche, and St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville — and they did beautifully as well."

Schrader-Farry and her team at the Catholic Center work with about 110 local coordinators and 175 active training facilitators throughout the diocese. The coordinators primarily work with their respective parishes or schools to ensure compliance with diocesan and charter Safe Environment requirements and the availability of training sessions. The volunteer facilitators lead the live training sessions that the diocese requires every ministry member to attend.

The director of three years was very appreciative of "our local coordinators and all of the parishes and the schools, all of our facilitators and the diocesan teams around us, catechesis, communications — everybody worked together during the audit process."

Schrader-Farry and her team "thank our local coordinators and our local facilitators who give of their time and their talent and their love for the ministry every single day, seven days a week, 365 days a year here in the diocese. It's amazing to me." 🇺🇸

Faith in Service

Recipients of the diocese's school service awards demonstrate that faith is at the heart of Catholic education

By Sandra Engelland

The Diocese of Fort Worth hosted School Service Awards on Oct. 13 at Nolan Catholic High School, beginning with a Mass led by Bishop Michael Olson and followed by addresses by Bishop Olson and Melissa Kasmeier, chief operations officer of schools.

The culmination of the event was award presentations to faculty and staff members celebrating service milestones at schools in the diocese.

Several honorees shared with *North Texas Catholic* why they work in Catholic education.

A MISSION WITH PURPOSE

Catholic schools have been a part of Linda Kuntz's life for as long as she can remember.

She was a student at Our Lady of Victory (OLV) in Fort Worth and graduated from Nolan.

After earning a business degree and working in business for a while, she decided she wanted to teach.

Kuntz got a full-time job working in the office at OLV while she completed her teacher certification at the University of Texas at Arlington at night.

She taught pre-K and kindergarten for many years before becoming principal at OLV for eight years until it closed in 2021. Then she became the assistant

principal at St. Joseph Catholic School in Arlington.

Now she's celebrating 30 years in Fort Worth diocesan schools and said that she's stayed so long because she sees the job as a mission.

"It's not the vacation or the money. My faith is very important to me, and I'm able to take my faith to work with me," she said. "I get to serve God. I get to serve in a mission with purpose and people."

Kuntz enjoyed her years as a kindergarten teacher and teaching young children about God, Jesus, and Mary in ways they could understand.

"We taught them through prayer, children's Bible reading, song, movement, all encompassed in the classroom," she said.

She talked with students about the meaning behind what went on during Mass, and they learned about the saints.

In recent years, she has enjoyed seeing her former students as they have become successful adults and citizens, seminarians, and parents.

"It's a warm feeling to see what Catholic education has done for them as they've grown," Kuntz said.

FAITH AT THE CENTER

Chuck Petter, athletic director and physical education teacher at St. John the Apostle Catholic School in North Richland Hills, was a St. John's parent years before he began teaching there.

Petter's oldest daughter was a fifth grader when the vice principal asked Petter to apply for an opening in the P.E. department. He was unemployed at the time, so he decided to apply.

Now he's receiving a service award for 25 years at St. John's.

Petter has taught both P.E. and religion classes.

"I enjoy watching kids grow and mature and develop, not just in their personality but athletically, too," he said.

He sees how they learn coordination and begin to develop talents for different sports. He's got former students playing football at Nolan and college soccer.

The second of nine children, Petter grew up playing all kinds of sports.

"We had our own baseball team," he joked.

Petter was a walk-on member of the Oklahoma State University football team and learned to play rugby there.

Children can learn a lot about life from sports, but faith is the central element at St. John's.

Catholic schools allow students and staff to pray, talk about their faith, and make the Sign of the Cross, he said.

"We see faith in the daily operation of how you live your life," he said.

Petter said he counts it as a privilege to work in such an environment.

"It's been a pleasure working here," he said. "I'm not really considering it as just a job — it's a service, helping these kids."



Bishop Olson congratulates Linda Kuntz for serving diocesan schools for 30 years. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Like Petter, Debbie Steidle, who teaches Spanish to students from pre-K to third grade at Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine, was a parent at the school before she began teaching.

She taught special education in public schools before her son was born, then stayed home with him until he started kindergarten at Holy Trinity.

She began substitute teaching, but they asked her to take on the role of teaching Spanish.

“I said, ‘How about if I do it until you find somebody else?’” Steidle said.

Now she’s celebrating 20 years at Holy Trinity.

When she was training to be a teacher, she always wanted to focus on special education, but teaching Spanish to early elementary students turned out to be a dream job.

“When you start them young, they’re little sponges,” she said. “They learn fast and say the words correctly. They’re so loving and caring and enthused about learning.”

Steidle said she treasures going to Mass with students once a week and on Holy Days. While her son was in school at Holy Trinity, she enjoyed seeing him at Mass and helping out as a Scripture reader.

She said it’s hard to believe that it’s



Nolan Catholic High School Principal Oscar Ortiz (left) congratulates Chuck Petter for 25 years of service during the awards ceremony for diocesan teachers and staff on Oct. 13. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

been 20 years.

“I stayed because of being able to go to Mass and being able to pray,” she said. “Teachers have prayer for the day. What a wonderful way to start the day!”

A COMFORTABLE CLASSROOM

Ron Clark just passed the 15-year mark as a math teacher at Cassata Catholic High School in Fort Worth.

Why has he stayed so long?

“Overwhelmingly, I like the students. I like working with students,” Clark said. “The administration is exemplary. And the

14 people who work here — everyone gets along well.”

Clark said that Cassata students “are respectful and courteous,” where the most common problem is kids not finishing their homework.

Cassata is an alternative school for students who prefer a more flexible schedule, small classes, and self-paced curriculum.

He enjoys the challenge of adapting his teaching to different learning styles. You can’t teach the same way to every student.

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Clark places a high importance on controlling “the demeanor of the classroom” with humor and compassion.

“I don’t mind if they talk to each other,” he said. “There’s a feeling of respect and acceptance. It’s not my classroom, it’s our classroom. By making the classroom comfortable, you avoid some of the consternation.”

He said he didn’t set out to teach in a Catholic school but appreciates the focus on faith and service and that students and staff are able to pray.

“I just think it’s a very healthy religious environment to be in,” Clark said.

All his hobbies include math. Whether it’s writing music, art, carpentry, or home renovation, Clark sees the connection to numbers. He’s even made his DIY paver patio project a math problem in his classroom, complete with measurements and photos.

“They can see the application of math to everyday life,” he said.

A FAMILY TRADITION

Annette Cihak is celebrating a decade of working at St. Rita Catholic School in Fort Worth.

Her children were students at the school when she became an office aide, then an aide for pre-K and kindergarten, and, most recently, cafeteria manager.

Cihak sees it as her role to go where they need her.

“I’m very honored that they not only allowed me to work here, but they moved me to where they thought I could be of assistance,” she said. “I’m glad I can help them in that manner because I really appreciate this school.”

When Principal Mary Burns asked her to take over as cafeteria manager, Cihak got her kitchen management certification.

“I like the fact that the kids are super nice,” Cihak said. “St. Rita is a smaller school, and everyone is so close here.”

She also appreciates seeing the students practice their faith so it “gets to be a part of their everyday life.”

Children and staff members experience Catholic liturgy and practices.

“We make a point of having prayer before school and at lunch,” she said.

St. Rita is a family tradition for the Cihaks.

Both of her sons attended St. Rita. The oldest is 24 and the youngest is a senior at Nolan. Her husband also attended St. Rita, and her mother-in-law Kathy Cihak was a long time teacher at the school and now helps out as a cafeteria monitor.

“We love it as a family, being part of the St. Rita community,” she said. 🇺🇸



Catholic school teachers pray during Mass on Oct. 13 at Nolan Catholic High School during a diocesan in-service for teachers and faculty. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



COO Dr. Melissa Kasmeier (left) congratulates Annette Cihak for 10 years of service during the awards ceremony for diocesan faculty on Oct. 13. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Bishop Olson elevates the Eucharist during Mass on Oct. 13. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Dana Nygaard leads the Cana Commandments retreat at Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton on Saturday, Oct. 14. (NTC/ Kevin Bartram)

STRENGTHENING THE connection

A series of Cana Commandment retreats offer support to married couples

By Lance Murray

Catholic couples in the Diocese of Fort Worth have the opportunity to find ways to strengthen their marriages at the Cana Commandments retreats, one-day marriage enrichment events offered at three different locations in the diocese: Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton on Oct. 14, St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth on Oct. 28, and Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls on Jan. 13. There is a \$30 registration fee for each retreat.

Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville will then host the Big Event — Marriage Conference on March 9, with Jackie and Bobby Angel.

The retreats help couples discover how God's gift of the Ten Commandments applies to their lives

as individuals and to their marriages. Attendees learn to open their hearts and minds about how to approach their marriages.

Dana Nygaard, the featured speaker at the retreats, is a Plano-based, licensed professional counselor as well as a speaker, wife, and mother. She and her husband, David, created and facilitate the Cana Marriage Retreats, which she said teach couples to “live out a deeper level of loving intimacy through faithful understanding of what it means to live a valid and sacramental marriage through experiential exercises.”

Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Director Chris Vaughan said that marriage is something that the Church prepares people for from childhood, and parents are responsible for setting a good example of what a good marriage

can be as well as how to be a good person.

“They should start teaching children the faith,” he said. “Teaching them to pray, getting them their sacraments, taking them to church; even secular things like teaching them to work with money, and communicate, and all those things that help make a good, well-rounded person.”

Vaughan said that Pope Francis called for stronger and more effective catechesis in preparation for marriage, something the pope said is “an appropriate path of preparation geared to rediscover marriage and the family in keeping with God's design.”

It is important that couples turn to Christ to make their marriages strong and to know that the Catholic Church can help them achieve that. 🇺🇸

A MISSIONARY church

Call to mission spans from local to worldwide

By Matthew Smith

For many, thoughts of mission call to mind travel to distant lands and a sense of duty. True mission, however, something to which all baptized Catholics are called, consists of the latter though not necessarily the former.

“Mission work is not only going out of the country,” Father Philip Brembah of Arlington’s St. Vincent de Paul Parish said. “It can be within or without. The Church is missionary by nature.

“Even within your home, you can be a missionary to your family, extended family, neighborhood, or school. You don’t have to leave the country.”

In conjunction with the Diocese of Fort Worth’s Oct. 22 celebration of World Mission Sunday at St. Rita Parish, Fr. Brembah and others stressed both the attributes of and importance of mission.

“Our faith is a lived faith,” Fr. Brembah said of mission. “It’s not only sit in Mass, listen, and go home. It is about living the Gospel and our call to mission.”

Thus, Fr. Brembah reminded, the final words of each Mass: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,” reminding all that the work God calls us to do extends beyond the walls of the church.

A native of Ghana, Fr. Brembah,

for example, performed mission, mainly working with high school students, before coming to the Diocese of Fort Worth 15 years ago.

“Parishioners at St. Vincent used to go to Guatemala, the Appalachians, and other places for mission work,” Fr. Brembah said. “But with the restrictions of the last few years, people were withdrawn from traveling.

So, within the parish, our neighborhood, our parishioners continue to reach out and live the Gospel that way.”

Through the theme of “Hearts on Fire, Feet on the Move,” Pope Francis invites Catholics to heed the Holy Spirit’s guidance to “kindle the fire of Christ’s love in our hearts and intentionally share this warmth with the world around us.”

Such, Bishop Michael Olson reminded, is the duty of all Christians in light of World Mission Sunday, as in all times.

“We renew our baptismal commitment to be missionaries of the Gospel throughout the world in

this annual Eucharistic celebration,” Bishop Olson said. “As Catholics, we are obligated to share in the mission of spreading the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.”

Mission, Fr. Brembah stressed, involves a call of duty, yes, but also so much more.

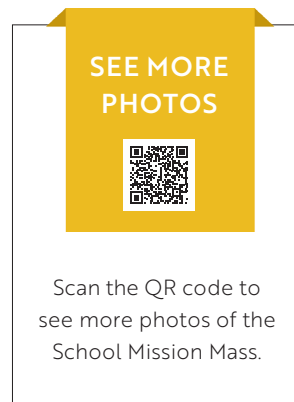
“It involves sacrifice,” Fr. Brembah

said. “But it is also a very beautiful and honorable thing that everyone can take part in. Mission is also a very joyful undertaking and a privilege to every missionary to appreciate the gifts of being able to receive and help someone else.”

Diocesan Mission Council Chairman Father Brijil Lawrence reiterated that our baptismal call

entails missionary discipleship and that, as such, every action — as one people of God in the diocese, individual or collective — directs toward mission.

“This commitment finds tangible expression through various parish ministries, catechetical education, and formation, and particularly in





Father Brijil Lawrence, SAC, celebrates the Student Mission Mass on Oct. 11 at Nolan Catholic High School. Fifth through eighth graders from the Catholic schools in the diocese came together for the liturgy celebrated by Fr. Lawrence, chairman of the diocesan mission council. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Father Philip Brembah, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington, distributes Communion during his 25th anniversary Mass of Thanksgiving on July 18. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

the worshipping community,” Fr. Lawrence said. “As long as the apostolates and ministries are carried out in the name of Christ, they are missionary efforts and are living expressions of the Gospel.”

Bishop Olson and others spoke of the roles that prayer and financial support play in mission in addition to volunteering for mission work.

“Our prayers and our offerings support the formation of seminarians and religious men and women,” Bishop Olson said. “They assist in the construction of schools and orphanages and enable missionaries to build churches in remote and resource limited areas and meet the essential needs to proclaim the Gospel and celebrate the sacraments.” 🇺🇸





A young woman mourns and prays for the repose of her beloved's soul at a cemetery. (NTC Photo Illustration/Juan Guajardo)

Preparing to meet Him

Purgatory cleanses human imperfections
to ready the faithful for heaven

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Pose a question about purgatory and you're likely to get a range of responses from the general public. Some are serious, others snarky.

"I used to have questions, but now I'm certain there is a purgatory," admitted longtime St. Rita parishioner Joan Grabowski. "God in His mercy gives us the last chance to be purified before spending life in eternity with Him."

Legions of children who filled Catholic schools in the 1950s and 1960s were encouraged to "pray for the souls in purgatory" by the religious sisters who taught them.

One of those cradle Catholics recalled learning about the Blessed Mother's promise to deliver from purgatory "those that have been devoted to the Rosary" and considered the opportunity to "wipe the slate clean" in purgatory a gift.

But there are also those who claim purgatory isn't in the Bible or say the word simply reminds them of a popular

ski resort in Durango, Colorado. The latter was named Purgatory by Spanish explorers for its location near a tributary of the Rio de las Anima Perdidas (the River of Lost Souls).

November is traditionally dedicated in the Catholic Church to honoring the dead and relieving the sufferings of the souls in purgatory. It comes at the end of the liturgical year, before the start of Advent, to remind the people of our earthly death and hope for a new life with God in heaven.

On All Souls' Day, Nov. 2, the Church pays particular attention to praying for the faithful departed who are being purified before entering heaven.

Dr. Christopher Malloy, theology department chairman at the University of Dallas, fields questions about purgatory while teaching eschatology — a course studying the "last things"— death, judgment, heaven, and hell.

Students frequently ask the professor: Is there time in purgatory? Is it a place of

pain? Where is the scriptural evidence for purgatory?

"It's in the Bible if you look with care," Dr. Malloy pointed out. "There are so many passages in Scripture that speak of the purity or the holiness without which no one will see God. Spotlessness is expected of us at the judgment in order to get into heaven."

Both experience and the Bible give us examples of people who are just and faithful to God but not perfectly holy.

"If you die in that state — many people do — what is the alternative? Do you go to hell because you're not ready for heaven or [do you go to] heaven with your impurity?" he asked. "Neither of those is a reasonable position."

Catholics believe in a time of purgation after life.

"It's an unfolding process," the professor said, explaining it occurs "in time but not in the same kind of time we

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Fr. John Martin celebrates a special All Souls' Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Cemetery in Pilot Point on Nov. 2, 2022. (NTC/Ben Torres)

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have now,” and “not in a place where you and I are in a place.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines purgatory as a necessary purification needed to enter heaven.

“All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but are still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death, they undergo purification so as to attain the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name ‘purgatory’ to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned.” (CCC 1030–1031)

The first biblical mention of purgatory is found in *2 Maccabees 12:46*, “Thus he made atonement for the dead

that they might be freed from their sin.”

“An Old Testament book, Second Maccabees, talks about a group of Jewish men who died heroically, but had pagan amulets on their person,” Malloy explained. “They sinned before the heroism.”

To atone for this act of superstition, Judas Maccabee took up a collection for the fallen warriors and paid for sacrifices in their name at the temple.

“[The author of Second Maccabees] said this was a good thing because it shows belief in resurrection. The men didn’t just die and that was it. They needed atonement,” the professor added, noting Protestants don’t accept Maccabees as part of the Bible.

Catholic theologians say *2 Maccabees* is scriptural proof for purgatory and evidence that Jews in 2nd century B.C.

thought they could help the deceased by praying for them.

In his book *The Afterlife: Purgatory and Heaven Explained*, author Father Dolindo Ruotolo states, as members of the Communion of Saints, the living have duties of justice and charity toward the souls in purgatory.

“Among the works of suffrage for the souls in purgatory are these three, all of which have a marvelous effect: prayer, the Holy Mass and indulgences,” he writes. “A simple desire, a short prayer, an act of love to God — they all have an extraordinary power of suffrage.”

The souls in purgatory are holy and very noble because they are already assured to be citizens of heaven, according to Fr. Ruotolo.

“We see that they are more closely possessed by God, for whom they thirst



I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. /s/ Susan Moses, Editor

- Publication Title:** North Texas Catholic Magazine
- Publication number:** 0899-7020
- Filing date:** September 12, 2023
- Frequency of issue:** Bi-monthly
- Number of issue published annually:** 6
- Annual subscription price:** \$18
- Location of Known Office of Publication:** 800 West Loop 820 South, Fort Worth, TX 76108
- Mailing Address:** Same as above
- Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor:** *Publisher*, Bishop Michael F. Olson, 800 West Loop 820 South, Fort Worth, TX 76108; *Editor*, Susan Moses, 800 West Loop 820 South, Fort Worth, TX 76108.
- Owner:** Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth, 800 West Loop 820 South, Fort Worth, TX 76108
- Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities:** None.
- The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal purposes of this organization has not changed in preceding 12 months.**

15. **Extent and nature of circulation:** Households, parishes, and schools.

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No Copies Printed	76,354	71,887
B. Paid/Requested Circulation		
1) Outside County Mail	30,136	29,377
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3) Outside the Mail	0	0
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3) Free Distribution through USPS	0	0
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E. Total Free Distribution	2,739	2,151
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G. Copies Not Distributed	175	175
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and hunger, and we shorten the time of their unutterable pains, making it easier for them to gain their eternal happiness.”

Praying for the dead is a corporal work of mercy, agreed Father Jack McKone, pastor of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills, who urges his congregation to pray for the souls in purgatory.

Occasionally, parishioners ask him about this often misunderstood teaching of the Church.

“Where is purgatory? That’s troubling because we’re talking about something that is not temporal and not spatial,” he insisted. “We come closer to understanding if we think of it more as a

process and not a place.”

The imperfect cannot exist in the perfect.

“So we can’t be with Christ in heaven if we are imperfect,” the priest explained. “Purgatory is a process in which we are made ready for existing with Christ — with God — for eternity.”

What happens in purgatory? Is there pain? Fire? No one knows, Fr. McKone conceded.

“The final purification is entirely different from the punishment of the damned,” he continued. “Certain texts of Scripture speak of a cleansing fire.”

A passage from the first letter of St. Paul to the *Corinthians* suggests, “The

work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire (itself) will test the quality of each one’s work.” (*1 Corinthians 3:13*)

The pastor considers purgatory a hopeful place for souls because they know where their final destination is.

“I think our belief and teaching about purgatory is closely tied to hope,” Fr. McKone said thoughtfully. “I know I’m not perfect. It’s an article of hope that there is a process — a purging fire — which, in God’s mercy, He will make sure we’re prepared for perfection in Him and heaven.

“We can’t do it on our own.” 🇺🇸

tree of KNOWLEDGE

Grow in your understanding of salvation history with
the Advent tradition of the Jesse Tree

By Susan Moses
Illustrations by Maria Diaz

In December, you'll find car magnets saying, "Keep Christ in Christmas," and in the spring, yard signs boast, "He is Risen!"

But what about Advent?

Advent often gets subsumed in the hustle and bustle of Christmas preparations.

Several traditions — Advent wreaths, Advent calendars, and Jesse Trees — can help the faithful focus on the Advent season, when we prepare our hearts and minds for the anniversary of Jesus' birth and His second coming at the end of time.

While Jesse Trees might not be as ubiquitous as Advent wreaths or Advent calendars, they are much older — dating back at least to 1086 when a Gospel manuscript features an illustration of a Jesse Tree.

Tapestries and stained-glass windows from the medieval era also depict Jesse Trees.

WHAT IS A JESSE TREE?

A Jesse Tree helps tell the story of salvation history, from creation to the birth of Jesus by using illustrations or ornaments portraying Old Testament stories, people, or prophecies. Some use the tree that they will later use as their Christmas tree; others use a branch or a paper tree.

Jesse Trees derive their name from the prophesy in *Isaiah 11:1*: "A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse."

Angie Smith and her family, parishioners at St. Mary the Virgin Church in Arlington, have marked Advent with a Jesse Tree for ten years.

Each evening of Advent, a

family member places a handmade ornament on the tree and reads the related Bible passage.

The tradition teaches a valuable lesson, Smith said. "We're not just counting down to Christmas morning and presents — we're counting down to Jesus, and it took a whole bunch of people to get there. I really enjoy the faith aspect of anticipation that comes with the Jesse Tree," said the mother of three.

Smith's children have favorite ornaments. Her daughter claims the pink shell representing John the Baptist, and her oldest son's favorite is the candle representing the light of Christ. Smith's choice: the Key of David, "because it looks really awesome, and I worked really hard on it."

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This sun symbolizes the Story of Creation. *Genesis 1:1-5*

This coat symbolizes Joseph being sold into Egypt. *Genesis 37:2-36*



This ladder symbolizes Jacob's Dream. *Genesis 28:10-22*

This apple symbolizes the Fall of Adam and Eve. *Genesis 3:1-24*





A girl decorates a Jesse Tree. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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NO TREE ALIKE

Deacon Andrew Thomas of Saint Martin de Porres Parish said the Prosper congregation made Jesse Tree ornaments as a family faith formation activity a few years back, then used them to decorate a tree in the church’s narthex during Advent. “They really did enjoy it,” he remembered.

There’s not one correct set of ornaments for a Jesse Tree. Dcn. Thomas has seen representations with the descendants of Jesus from Matthew’s genealogy, “really fun” Old Testament stories, or individuals who prefigure Jesus, like Noah and Joseph.

“There’s lots of ways to do it. With the Jesse Trees that I’ve seen, there’s a lot of flexibility in terms of picking particular

Biblical stories that point to God saving His people,” said Dcn. Thomas.

The Old Testament has no shortage of examples. Dcn. Thomas explained, “Our God is so loving and so merciful that whenever we need a deliverer and turn to Him, He’ll send someone. That leads to Jesus Christ.”

“If we want to know the fullness of who Jesus is and what He does for us, having an understanding of the Old Testament is so important,” he continued. “In looking at those Old Testament accounts, for God to deliver, there’s some act of the people to acknowledge their need for repentance and to reignite their trust in God’s promises.”

Like our Old Testament forebears, we also need to repent and reignite our trust in God’s promises — appropriate reflection points during Advent.

Dcn. Thomas, who serves as the director of religious education at St. Martin de Porres, admitted that the trappings of December, such as school programs, shopping, and parties, can make spiritual preparation for Christmas a challenge.

“Doing these activities like the Jesse Tree are ways for us to reinvigorate in terms of our traditions. Just spend those limited four weeks acknowledging the past through salvation history, culminating in the birth of Christ,” he advised. 🇺🇸

NOTE: A full set of Jesse Tree ornaments created for *North Texas Catholic* readers by the artist Maria Diaz are available on our website, NorthTexasCatholic.org/feature-articles.



This tree symbolizes the Garden of Eden. *Genesis 2:15-25*



This ark symbolizes Noah and the Ark. *Genesis 6:12-22*



This campfire symbolizes the Sacrifice of Isaac. *Genesis 22:1-19*



This tent site under a starry night symbolizes God's Promise to Abraham. *Genesis 15:1-7*

messengers of HOPE

St. Vincent de Paul conferences bring Good News,
resources to neighbors in need

By Christina Benavides

In this past year, St. Vincent de Paul conferences in the Diocese of Fort Worth have been blessed with a wave of the faithful's support and God's providence.

Vincentians make home visits to neighbors who request financial assistance for rent, utilities, and emergencies; offer spiritual and emotional support; distribute free food and other goods; and provide a micro-loan program to relieve high-interest payday and title loans. Now, diocesan Vincentians are able to assist with expensive prescription medications.

In an annual letter to Bishop Michael Olson, St. Vincent de Paul Fort Worth Council President Victor Craig explained the collective impact borne from the ministry's hard work: "We are the second-most referred agency provided by 211 (the statewide information and referral service), and although our funds are limited, other community agencies frequently refer to us when they cannot assist individuals, as our only qualifying criteria is that the neighbor resides in a zip code covered by a conference, typically within parish boundaries, and is facing a legitimate need."

WITNESS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Since he was first voted into his position as the president of the Fort Worth council last fall, Craig has continuously felt God's presence in his work to organize and serve the 12 conferences within the diocese, each made up of local volunteers who

dedicate their time and service to help the poor in their communities.

"It's a good feeling to know that God is with you and that with God, you can accomplish anything," the Vincentian of six years said. "God wants you to make yourself available so that He can use you."

Craig initially had been hesitant to take on the responsibility of presidency of the diocesan SVdP council, but his unease abated once the community of conference leaders rallied around him and promised their support.

"Hey, we know this is new to you," those present at the vote told Craig. "But we'll be right there with you."

Their warmth greatly encouraged him, and he threw himself into the leadership role.

"It's been amazing, from being afraid on Oct. 1 of last year [when he assumed the position] to now. I feel like I got my feet wet; I feel stronger; I feel like I'm making a difference; and I feel like I'm growing the conference," he enthused. "But none of it is happening because of me. God is doing this."

Craig credits God's enduring providence in the many blessings he's encountered since taking on the position. From being awarded a \$20,000 grant, distributed among the conferences, early in his tenure; to the "out-of-the-blue donation" of a small thrift store in Wichita Falls that may potentially become a small line of revenue for the council; to



Shani Ginani, St. Maria Goretti conference president; Victor Craig, president of the Fort Worth District Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul; and Alex Benavides, SMG conference member, prepare to deliver baby essentials to an Arlington client on Oct. 6. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

the ministry’s attempt to provide pharmaceutical assistance for the poor in the diocese — “This is nothing I’m doing; it’s just totally a blessing ... I tell people all the time: God is blessing us.”

PRAYERS FOR THE POOR

The St. Vincent de Paul conference based at Arlington’s St. Maria Goretti Parish has seen a record-breaking fiscal year in 2023.

“Last year, we were in the \$80,000 range of help given out, and this year ... we’re due to hit \$100,000, if we haven’t already,” Shani Ginani, president of the parish conference, said.

“That’s really something to speak about, showing how much we’ve been able to help the neighbors in need, which is only possible by the generous donations that we’ve received from St. Maria Goretti parishioners,” said Ginani.

Magnanimous giving has made it possible for the conference to spend less time

organizing fundraising and instead invest in the community.

PRESCRIPTION RELIEF

The Dallas council of St. Vincent de Paul developed a pharmacy program, which it plans to make available throughout Texas.

The program, the Fort Worth council learned, helps neighbors without insurance receive their medications free of charge. The conference would cover the “delivery costs, the transportation of the medicine, because they send it directly to the neighbor’s house,” Craig said.

The need was clear, but funding wasn’t.

Craig and the Fort Worth leadership team expressed initial reluctance but reconsidered their hesitance to participate.

“We signed an agreement with Dallas at the end of December of last year,” Craig said. “We’d not allocated money for this, but it was the right thing to do.”

To help offset the costs, the Fort Worth

council attempted, without success, to imitate a Dallas fundraiser. Health issues, graduations, trips — the timing was just not right, Craig lamented. However, God provided, and a spontaneous grant covering the first quarter of pharmacy use “just showed up.”

“That’s how God is. He’s saying we are not going to leave you short,” Craig said. He believes God has assured him, “I’ve got you covered, and we’re going to do this. I know you tried really hard.”

According to the letter Craig sent to Bishop Olson, the councils have assisted 468 individuals with a total of 5,436 prescriptions in January through June of this year. Courier costs for the 830 deliveries totaled \$6,882.44.

Generous donations recently received on North Texas Giving Day spur Craig’s hope that they may be able to cover the cost of the program, as he firmly believes it is “the right thing to do, so we’re trying to budget for it.” 🇹🇽

LAW GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Bishop Olson celebrates
the Red Mass on Sept. 28.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Gifts of Holy Spirit, religious liberty stressed at Red Mass

By Matthew Smith

The practice of law, as opposed to the exercise of one's faith life, represent not separate, unrelated spheres of activity as some might think but are rather inexorably linked, Bishop Michael Olson said during the Diocese of Fort Worth's Sept. 28 Red Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral.

A tradition stretching back to the 13th century when it officially opened the term of court for many European cities, the Red Mass gathers attorneys, judges, and public officials, encouraging them to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in their pursuits of justice and truth.

This year's Mass, followed by dinner at the Fort Worth Club, attracted record attendance.

"Largest turnout in our 17 years of holding the Mass," St. Thomas More Society Fort Worth President Courtney Taylor said. "This year we had about 250 come to dinner and even more attend the Red Mass."

Referencing the first reading from the *Book of Daniel* — Susanna falsely accused by corrupt officials yet, through intervention of the Holy Spirit, stood up for Daniel — Bishop Olson underscored the symbiosis between law and faith.

"The truth [is] that the lawyer's role in defending and promoting justice is more than a technical understanding of the law accompanied by artful glib," Bishop Olson said.

Rather, Bishop Olson stressed, it involves "the advocacy of God on behalf of the vulnerable for the sake of truth."

The vocation of Catholic lawyers, judges, and officials entails reliance on the grace of God including the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Bishop Olson added.

"Your Catholic faith, which engenders hope, must hold pride of place in your practice of law and ethics so that it will become the source of your good and just works," Bishop Olson said. "He has called you to advocate for truth in the promotion of authentic justice for all. We ask Him to protect you from temptation

to corruption and cowardice."

Notre Dame Law School Professor and Associate Dean Nicole Stelle Garnett, during the dinner following Mass, discussed religious liberty battles and challenges particularly within the realm of education.

Garnett cited a litany of 20th century Supreme Court opinions "all over the map" on questions of religious liberty albeit also largely hostile toward religion in the century's increasingly secularized culture.

Of late, the tide has turned toward religious liberty's favor, Garnett said.

Good news, Garnett said, but also foolish to declare victory just yet as numerous challenges legal and logistical still lie ahead.

Work, and much prayer, remains to be done.

"We understand that education is more than just instruction," Garnett said. "It is also about the formation of children made in the image and likeness of our loving God." 🇺🇸



Deacon Dave Poole and his wife, Margie, pose inside St. Jude Thaddeus Church in Burkburnett on Oct. 3. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Gift of a lifetime

By Mary Lou Seewoester

Deacon Dave Poole and his wife Margie have made stewardship a major part of their faith life for their entire marriage, even during times of reduced income. But when Laura Soltero, Catholic Charities Fort Worth director of endowment, asked them to consider making a planned gift to CCFW as part of their will, they were at first taken aback.

“Once you get over the initial ‘What?!’ and you start thinking about it, you realize it’s just an extension of the faith we have tried to live our whole lives,” Dcn. Poole explained.

“It does take you by surprise,” Margie added. “But if you pray about it and talk about it, then it makes so much sense.”

And that’s what they did — for a year.

During their discernment, they realized that a planned gift would continue the stewardship they had practiced for decades. And they knew their adult

children would understand because “they have lived it with us,” Dcn. Poole said.

“We found it was a powerful way for us to directly impact future generations,” Margie explained. “Everything we have, God has given to us. So, we felt it was up to us to continue to provide resources to help Catholic Charities end poverty and transform the lives of their clients.”

Margie and Dcn. Poole have volunteered with CCFW since attending their first Creating Hope luncheon in Wichita Falls in 2014. As CCFW clients shared their personal stories during the mission-centered fundraiser, Margie “totally fell in love with the mission of Catholic Charities.”

She began volunteering with CCFW’s fund development and major gifts. From 2016 to 2019, she was the agency’s major gift officer. During that time, Dcn. Poole also volunteered there for a year as part of his deaconate formation. Currently Margie is on the CCFW Northwest Campus Advisory Board.

The couple live in Burkburnett where Margie is the city clerk and Dcn. Poole is the business manager for the St. Jude Thaddeus Parish. He serves as deacon there and at Christ the King Parish in Iowa Park and St. Paul Parish in Electra.

Soltero said 118 people have contributed to the endowment, either with cash donations or planned gifts, since it began in 2011. Most donors give a percentage of their overall estate or life insurance, or they donate a set cash amount from their estate, she added. She pointed out that the investment income from the nearly \$15,000,000 endowment supports various CCFW programs, and donors may designate which program their gift will support.

Dcn. Poole summed up his spiritual motivation for planned giving.

“We’re called to love everybody we encounter in this life and to be Jesus for them,” he said. “Planned giving is a way, even when we are not here, to continue bringing Christ into lives of other people.” 🇺🇸





In Eucharistic Adoration, the faithful bask in His

P D I V I N E P R E S E N C E

Article by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Photography by Juan Guajardo

The Church and the world have a great need of Eucharistic worship.

Jesus waits for us in this sacrament of love.

Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Him in Adoration.

- St. John Paul II

Jewel D’Cruz admits feeling a little lost when she first arrived at the University of Texas at Arlington from her home in the Middle East. Culture shock, coupled by navigating a large student population, left the undergraduate anxious and lonely.

“The only thing familiar was going to church, and I dove in,” recalled D’Cruz who graduated last May with a degree in interior design. “I joined the Catholic community on campus and went to Eucharistic Adoration anytime it was available. It calmed me and brought me closer to my faith.”

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A monstrance on the altar at St. Peter the Apostle
Parish in White Settlement.



Deacon Dave Poole prepares to repose the Eucharist at the end of Adoration on Oct. 3 at St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett.

SEE MORE
PHOTOS



See more photos of Adoration around the diocese by scanning the QR code or visiting the photo gallery at NorthTexasCatholic.org.

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Praying before Christ’s presence in the monstrance every Wednesday was not a new experience. Growing up, the 22-year-old routinely attended Eucharistic Adoration with her parents in one of the two Catholic churches in her Oman neighborhood.

Today, she continues to carve out time for worship while building a career at a Dallas architectural firm. D’Cruz believes the religious practice benefits young people struggling to find their way in the world.

“Adoration calms the mind and helps you focus. When you don’t have

the answer — pray and listen. In a moment of quietness, you can hear God’s plan,” she advised. “Sometimes you just need peace and God’s comforting touch in Adoration.”

A CENTURIES-OLD DEVOTION

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a centuries-old devotion rooted in an essential teaching of the Catholic Church: Jesus Christ is truly and completely present in the Eucharist. Conducted outside the typical Mass, the Eucharist is exposed on the altar in a monstrance and people are invited to offer prayer and praise to Jesus in silence.

Why is Adoration an important aspect of prayer life? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides this explanation.

“Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the ‘King of Glory,’ respectful silence in the presence of the ‘ever greater’ God. Adoration of the thrice holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications.” (CCC 2628)

In the sermons he always prepared in front of the Blessed Sacrament, the Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen told listeners a Holy Hour of Adoration was necessary for authentic prayer. A gifted author and evangelist who revitalized America’s religious landscape in the 1930s, ’40s, and ’50s, he believed frequent Eucharistic Adoration was transformative for participants and generated inner personal change as well as greater empathy toward others.

“The most brilliant ideas come from meeting God face to face [at Adoration],” he pointed out. “The Holy Spirit that presided at the Incarnation is the best atmosphere for illumination.”

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI INSTITUTED

From the 11th century on, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament became more and more prevalent in the Catholic world with religious orders of men and women taking the lead. The lay practice of Adoration formally began in Avignon, France, in 1226. To give thanks for a victory over aggressors, King Louis VII of France asked the bishop of Avignon to have the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Chapel of the Holy Cross. The number of people visiting the chapel was so great, the bishop allowed Adoration to continue day and night.

Eucharistic Adoration grew in popularity across Europe, and in the 13th century, Pope Urban IV established the Feast of

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The Eucharist is present in the monstrance during Adoration at St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett on Oct. 3.

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Corpus Christi (Body of Christ).

St. Thomas Aquinas composed the Liturgy of the Hours for the feast to highlight the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

The Adoration hymns, “*O Salutaris Hostia*,” “*Tantum Ergo Sacramentum*,” and “*Panis Angelicus*,” were written by the saint and continue to reverberate in churches during the Solemnity of Corpus Christi and Benediction services when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

SPENDING TIME WITH JESUS

St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills celebrated Corpus Christi Sunday this past June by hosting its first Eucharistic procession for the faith community.

More than 500 parishioners braved sweltering summer temperatures as they walked behind Father Jack McKone. The pastor carried a blue and gold monstrance outside the perimeter of the church.

During the procession, the congregation stopped twice for Scripture readings and traditional hymns.

The parish used the occasion of Corpus Christi Sunday to reintroduce 24-hour Adoration in the daily chapel every Thursday after morning Mass.

“We’re trying to bring back the idea of spending some time with Jesus,” explained Paul Epperley, a parish volunteer. “An hour in silence in front of Christ is nothing compared to three hours on the cross He endured for us.”

Rebounding from the isolation caused by the COVID pandemic is challenging for many parishes.

“A lot of people are in a different place in their faith life, and they’re looking for something different spiritually,” Epperley observed. “As a Catholic Church, we have to capture that and bring them back to the faith.”

Encouraging parishioners to develop a one-on-one relationship with Jesus is key to achieving that goal.

“Adoration is probably the first and best way to make that happen,” he asserted.

“If you come to Adoration and leave everything outside the door of the church, you can do, say, and hear what you want. It really changes your thinking,” he added.

Participants tell Epperley an hour spent at Adoration improves their home life and relationship with children, “because it allows a person to decompress.”





The monstrance in the sanctuary of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in White Settlement.

PRAYER ANSWERED

For some, like Father Joseph Moreno, Adoration is also the catalyst for a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. After grieving the loss of his wife, Sarah, to cancer in 2013, the husband and father began to feel “a restlessness in my heart.” His job as an IT security specialist was no longer fulfilling, and he began to explore the possibility of doing something more with his life.

“But I had no idea what that could be,” said Fr. Moreno, who considered becoming a permanent deacon during his marriage. “I took this restlessness to Him in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.”

The struggling 44-year-old would visit the chapel at St. Matthew Parish in Arlington, sit in front of the tabernacle, and ask Jesus for some direction.

“He didn’t answer immediately,” remembered Fr. Moreno, who felt a renewed pull to become an ordained minister. “It took a year, but I finally came to understand that Jesus was calling me to become one of His priests.”

With the blessing of his daughter, Kathryn, the former catechist and acolyte entered the seminary and was ordained in May 2021. Today, he is pastor of three rural parishes: St. Paul in Electra, Christ the King in Iowa Park, and St. Jude Thaddeus in Burkburnett, where he organized weekly Adoration on Tuesday as his first ministry. Parishioners responded enthusiastically.

“In my small rural parishes, the flock has found a way to do amazing things fueled, I’m sure, by the graces poured into the parishes from Adoration,” the pastor asserted.

First Saturday devotion has increased, outreach giving is more generous, and more adults are attending religious formation. Sharing their faith with the greater community, one parish refurbished a four-story, lighted cross at Mt. Carmel Cemetery, and another constructed a Marian shrine.

“This is Christ at work in their hearts,” Fr. Moreno said confidently.

BEARING LIFE’S STRUGGLES

Deacon Wendell Geiger noticed a similar awakening in the faith community he serves. When St. Peter the Apostle Parish in White Settlement began offering Adoration inside its newly constructed St. Teresa of Calcutta Oratory in 2017, parishioners quickly embraced the devotion. The chapel welcomes worshippers Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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Father Brett Metzler leads Adoration for more than 45 college students from Catholic campus ministries across the Diocese of Fort Worth.

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“We thought it would be difficult to get people to sign up so the Host is never alone, but we always find people in the chapel who are not on the schedule,” said the ministry’s organizer who estimates at least 30 visitors stop by the oratory daily. “There are people who never thought they wanted to participate in Adoration but once becoming involved, they never stopped.”

A deacon at St. Peter for 13 years, he emphasized to parishioners the importance of bringing Christ into their lives on an intimate basis and not just as something to think about on Sunday. Forming that relationship has benefits that are hard to

describe because each individual is affected differently.

“Through the grace of Christ and the grace of prayer time, people notice subtle changes in the way they act with other people — their friends and family,” Dcn. Geiger continued. “People come up and tell me about things going on in their lives that would be difficult to cope with if they weren’t able to turn to Christ in prayer.”

Parishioners come to Adoration to pray for sick children, for their own health problems, or for their grandchildren to return to the faith.

“Adoration allows them to release that anxiety and turn to the Lord,” the deacon said.

WHEN
AND
WHERE



Find parish Eucharistic Adoration schedules on the diocesan website at: FWDioc.org/parish-finder.

He finds curiosity about Adoration, along with the increasing number of parishes in the diocese offering Blessed Sacrament worship, encouraging.

“It’s wonderful to see people becoming aware of the joys of spending time in prayer before Jesus.”

WITHOUT GOD, NOTHING IS POSSIBLE

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth provides Eucharistic worship every Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. in its adjoining chapel.

“We wanted to give our parishioners the opportunity to be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament outside the Mass and spend some quiet time with Him,” explained Deacon Humberto Serrano. “It’s where we can praise, adore, and contemplate Him and, in return, He bestows His mercy, forgiveness, and unconditional love in our daily struggles.”

Adoration continues to play an important part in his vocation to the diaconate.

“It helps me stay firm and committed to the ministry the Lord has entrusted to me,” he said. “It is there, in Adoration, where I receive the necessary grace that keeps me going as I serve Him and His Church.”

Philomena Varghese prays for her husband when she attends Mass and Adoration at the northwest Tarrant County parish. The native of India recently moved to the area from New Jersey, and Adoration is an important part of her faith journey.

“Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior, and He’s there in the Eucharist,” stressed Varghese, who comes from a “great family of believers.” Spending time in quiet prayer helps her bear the crosses and pain that comes with life.

“Without God, nothing happens,” she added with certainty.

TAKING THE TIME TO LISTEN

The world is a noisy place full of mental and physical distractions. Finding inner serenity conducive to prayer and

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Deacon Wendell Geiger kneels before the Eucharist during Adoration at St. Peter the Apostle Parish's St. Teresa of Calcutta Oratory in Fort Worth on Oct. 2.



Sister Felicity, of the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, prays during Adoration at the Holy Family Religious and Retreat Center on Oct. 7.



Deacon Michael Handler leads Benediction at the end of Adoration on Sept. 29 in the oratory of St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Fort Worth.

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meditation is a challenge for many people.

In his book, *The Divine Encounter: Meeting Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration*, author Mark Hart offers practical suggestions for “getting the most out of Adoration.” Paramount is developing the ability to put the stress and routines of daily life on hold, “to make time to enter in, be heard, and really listen to what the Lord wants to speak to you,” the author states.

He suggests choosing a spot close to the altar to maintain focus and sitting down if kneeling for long periods of time is uncomfortable. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament would rather have someone’s full attention, Hart writes, than witness a person struggle on a kneeler for 10 more minutes.

Giving your time in Adoration structure is another useful tip, especially if work or parenting schedules require watching the clock. Start by taking deep breaths to promote a feeling of peacefulness followed by periods of offering thanks, petitioning for the needs of others, and then meditating on what the Lord might be saying to you. The author advises spending the final few minutes at Adoration praising God for “His goodness, love, and divine mercy.”

Bringing a Bible to read a few Scripture passages or a journal to write down thoughts can promote inspiration.

FAITH FIXED ON JESUS

There is no one correct way to spend time in Adoration. Concentrating on Jesus can be enough. St. John Vianney, patron saint of priests, would pray for long hours before the Blessed Sacrament. A local farmer, sitting in the back of the church, often joined him. Finally, one day, the saint asked the man what he did during his time of Adoration. The farmer responded simply, “I look at Him, and He looks at me.”

Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus. (*CCC 2715*)

Interest in Eucharistic Adoration waned after the Second Vatican Council but is experiencing a resurgence thanks, in part, to the influence of St. John Paul II.

The late pontiff, who served as pope

TOP RIGHT: Deacon Dave Poole prepares to repose the Eucharist at the end of Adoration on Oct. 3 at St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burburnett.

MIDDLE: Deacon Dave Poole elevates the Eucharist during Benediction at St. Jude Thaddeus Church in Burburnett on Oct. 3.

BOTTOM: Deacon Michael Handler prays before the Eucharist at St. Thomas the Apostle during Adoration on Sept. 29 in the oratory of the church.



from 1978 until his death in 2005, believed the Eucharist was the Church's greatest treasure and often turned to it for revelation. When he wasn't spending hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament, praying specifically for each of the 30 to 40 petitions he received each day, the late pontiff was known to place a desk and chair in front of the tabernacle to find wisdom, strength, and support while writing his encyclicals.

Pope John Paul II also had the uncanny ability to locate chapels in places he had never visited before. Spending time in Adoration often derailed his travel schedule during the many pilgrimages he took around the world.

Known as the Pope of the Real Presence, he credited the Eucharist — Christ present on earth — for everything he accomplished.

“The Eucharist is the secret of my day. It gives strength and meaning to all my activities — of service to the Church and to the whole world,” he explained in a Sept. 27, 1997, address to young people in Bologna, Italy. “Let Jesus, present in the Blessed Sacrament, speak to your hearts. It is He who is the true answer of life that you seek.” ✝





Josephine Crane at the Holy Family Oratory on Sept. 15. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Holy Helper

Josephine Crane encourages others to join her in adoring the Blessed Sacrament

By Mary Rampellini

Josephine Crane had just retired from a career in banking in 2007 when she was pegged as coordinator for the Adoration program at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine. She came armed with a profound devotion to the Eucharist, developed as a child in her native Philippines.

Now, 16 years later, the 83-year-old joined her fellow parishioners Sept. 15 to celebrate a significant milestone for the growing ministry, the blessing of the new Holy Family Perpetual Adoration Oratory at the Grapevine parish.

The Adoration oratory seats 40 to 50 adorers in a bright space with high ceilings, white stone walls, and strategic wood

paneling, to be accented in the future by stained glass windows.

But, of course, it's Who is adored within those four walls that's at the heart of the parish's plans to deepen reverence for the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Many are answering that call at St. Francis of Assisi. Crane said single-day attendance for Adoration, even before

**THERE'S
MORE!**



Check out photos of Bishop Olson's blessing of the Holy Family Oratory at St. Francis of Assisi:

NORTH-TEXAS-CATHOLIC.SMUGMUG.COM

the oratory opened, reached 50 to 75 parishioners.

YOUNG LOVE

A love for the Eucharist was embedded in Crane from childhood. The youngest of 10 children, she lost her father when she was 1 and her mother when she was 5.

"Growing up, my Aunt Segunda and I attended Holy Mass daily at our parish," Crane said. "Eucharistic Adoration flows in and out of the Mass. And during Holy Week on Maundy Thursday when the Eucharist is exposed for Adoration, we adored until midnight, when it is reposed."

Crane said there were also other activities that cultivated her love for the Eucharist.

"The Solemnity of Corpus Christi is highly celebrated in our hometown in the Philippines," she said. "The streets are decorated with white flowers for the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament and the four altars set up for Benediction."

"First Holy Communion is the most celebrated occasion with my family," Crane said. "My brother John and I had our first Holy Communion together. All my family, neighbors, and close friends of my Aunt Segunda came. The priest who celebrated the Mass also came. There was lots of delicious food all day long."

After growing up in the Philippines, Crane went on to earn a degree in business administration, majoring in banking in college in Manila. She came to Dallas to work for Mercantile Bank.

ALL ARE CALLED

Father Sojan George, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi, said Crane has been

essential to the local ministry, a "full-time volunteer" who helps with setting up Eucharistic Adoration and scheduling adorers.

She also recruits new faces, encouraging them to make a Holy Hour.

"I tell them to have faith in the real presence of our Lord in the Eucharist," Crane said, "and also to come regularly every week. Who knows? You might have an encounter with the Lord during Adoration."

"The Mass and Eucharistic Adoration are complementary," Crane said. "At Mass, the sacrificial and communal aspects of the Eucharist are emphasized. In Eucharistic Adoration, the real presence is emphasized. St. John Paul II said our communal worship at Mass must go together with our personal worship of Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration in order that our love may be complete."

"God is calling everyone to Eucharistic Adoration," she said.

With the new oratory, the ministry expects to expand its Adoration schedule.

Fr. George said, "We have a lot of committed adorers at St. Francis. Our goal is to make Eucharistic Adoration available 24-7. We strongly believe this will truly transform our parish community."

The pastor reminds his congregation of St. Teresa of Calcutta's words: "The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time you will spend on earth. Each moment you spend with Jesus will deepen your union with Him and make your soul everlastingly more glorious and beautiful in heaven and will help bring about everlasting peace on earth."

Not sure what to do? Fr. George

recommended, "When doing a Holy Hour, we can always pray the Psalms or the Liturgy of the Hours. We can also meditate using sacred Scripture. Read a passage from Scripture and let the word of God speak to your heart."

"We can intercede for others and ask for forgiveness for our own sins. We can pour out our heart to Christ in prayer and adore Him or we can sit quietly in His presence and try to listen to Him in our heart," he concluded.

SPEAKING TO THE HEART

Crane can be found praying before the Blessed Sacrament at St. Francis of Assisi on a regular basis.

"During Monday, Wednesday, or Friday Adoration, my personal Holy Hour is spread out as I monitor attendance," she said. "But when attendance is low, then I use the time to focus my attention to the Blessed Sacrament and pray, which could be for guidance and wisdom, reparation and thanksgiving, safety and protection."

Crane said she offers thanksgiving for her health; for family, friends, her Catholic faith; for St. Francis Parish, its clergy, staff, and her fellow parishioners. She also prays for those who ask for her prayers, as well as "those who have no one to pray for them."

Crane also says several traditional prayers while in Eucharistic Adoration.

"Eucharistic Adoration is important for building up the life of the Church and seeking God's help in the many trials of our times. The Eucharist is the heart of the Church. St. John Paul II said in 1980, 'Where Eucharistic life flourishes, there the life of the Church will blossom.'" 🇺🇸



Lots of love

Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*On Love in the Family*) writes, “Large families are a joy for the Church. They are an expression of the fruitfulness of love.”

Married 14 years, David and Jill Foley have six children, which David said is “great for us. Each kid is easier in a lot of ways because the others help and they run along and fit in with the other kids.”

The Foleys, parishioners at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, shared their experiences of family, love, and faith with the *North Texas Catholic*.

STARTING TOGETHER: Jill and David went to Mass at different times, but a mutual Catholic friend introduced them.

David’s best marriage advice is to choose the right spouse. “Your shared

faith is most important,” he said.

STAYING TOGETHER: Jill explained David works from home, “so we get to be around each other all day long. David has opportunities to show me love through acts of service constantly — little things like making my cup of coffee when I need to run out the door.

“After the kids go to bed, we have more meaningful conversation and connect in that way.”

TABLE TALK: Jill said, “Family meals are very important to us. It’s really Dave’s time to lead conversation and talk about the things that are important to our family. It has to be in a bit of a fun way, because we have six kids around the table, but that’s when we talk about the Gospel

and the homily, that’s when we talk about what the kids are studying in school, what we have coming up on our schedule as a family.”

SCHOOL DAYS: The Foleys intentionally selected a home in a neighborhood with good public schools, but when it was time to enroll John David, they chose Catholic education. David said, “Even if everything’s great and neutral at the [public] school, it’s not going to be positively Catholic.”

Jill added, “We both agreed that our children’s day should be filled with faith and filled with God.”

BIGGER AND BETTER: With six children, Jill said, “[The children’s] relationships are just beautiful to watch — the

◀ Jill and David Foley with their children John David (13), Abigail (10), Thomas (9), Mary Elizabeth (6), James (2), and Katherine (9 months) at their home parish of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller on Sept. 18. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

way that the older ones take care of the younger ones, but then also the way the older kids are a lot more likely to play silly games and enjoy things when they have a younger one to bring that out in them.”

She cherishes watching them teach each other, “especially teaching things about the faith or about virtue, like when your six-year-old teaches your two-year-old to make the Sign of the Cross.”

VILLAGE PEOPLE: Jill said, “If we only had a few children, we could manage everything ourselves and we could be contained in the Foley household. But with all of the children, we are part of the village, but we also need the village. That really strengthens the community when you’re able to help others, but you also need the help of others, whether it’s a ride to practice or prayers.”

CENTRAL COMMUNITY: David is involved with the Knights of Columbus, the Troops of Saint George, and the legal organization St. Thomas More Society. He coaches a basketball team at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

Jill’s participation revolves around the school: the school advisory council, Seton Moms, Bible study, and Parent and School Association. This fall, she has helped plan the school’s Nov. 11 gala.

David said, “We’re just trying to make the Church the center of our lives.”

Jill explained the parish and school community take on more importance since their families live out of state. “It’s so important that we have friends and neighbors that live our faith.”

David added their involvement

“helps you get through things. It’s not just — rely on yourself, your own self-discipline” to be a faithful disciple of Christ.

MEDIA MATES: The busy parents eliminated “vapid media” that they sometimes watched before they had children, according to David.

The children “helped us to discern what media should be in our lives. Once there are always little eyes and ears around, we think, ‘Really we don’t need that in our life.’ We don’t even have time or space for things if it’s not truth, goodness, and beauty. It just doesn’t fit,” said Jill.

TEACHING THE KIDS: Routine, Christian books, and religious objects help teach faith to the Foley children. Books and videos prompt discussion on virtues and character. Their house has a family altar, candles, a crucifix, and other religious art. They pray in the car, at bedtime, and at meals, as well as a family Rosary on Sundays.

“Part of our prayer routine is a litany of saints, and each person has at least one patron saint. We’re praying for their intercession. It helps me to feel like even if I’m dropping a ball, a saint for each of the people in our family can be there,” said Jill.

TEACHING THE PARENTS: Jill said her children have taught her “a lot of humility. The lowering of standards and letting go of pride. The most important thing is that we love. We love our children well; we love each other well; and that’s what we have to shoot for.

“We might be late, we might have stained clothes, we might have screaming kids, but the most important thing is we try to love.” ✦

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





NTC/Ben Torres

How to Pray

As vocations director, my number one request of people in the pews is to pray for more vocations. This is not only because asking the Master of the Harvest for more laborers is what Jesus instructed us to do. It is also because our spiritual life as believers is fed by our life of prayer.

Without consistent prayer, we have little to no spiritual life.

I have noticed that many want to pray but either find themselves too busy or even don't really know how to pray.

Below are very simple instructions I've given to my students at Nolan Catholic High School based on what I've learned from many priests in and outside of seminary.



Fr. Brett Metzler

FIRST AND ONLY RULE

Show up and spend time: either in the chapel, most especially during Adoration, or in a space set aside in your house.

HOW TO PRAY: PETITION, TALKING, LISTENING, RESTING

Petition. Lord, I offer up this prayer time for Cynthia. Jesus, please take care of Mark's family. Lord, please help me get through this week. Lord, please calm my anxiety about my tests, my parents,

my children, my fear of the future. Lord, please send us more good and holy priests for our diocese.

Talking.

Lord, what am I doing here? Lord, I don't know how to pray. Lord, this is weird. Jesus, help me pray. Who are you? Jesus, I am super nervous and anxious about my job and school, please help me.

Listening. *Option 1:* Pick up a Bible and read a small section.

Read it again.

Whatever line pops out at you, even slightly, read again and again and think over it in your mind.

Allow your soul to listen to it.

Don't try to wrestle with it, just listen to it, and allow God to move (sometimes imperceptibly) in your heart.

If you feel nothing, perceive nothing, hear nothing, that is okay.

Spend 10 to 15 minutes on this exercise.

Option 2: Literally listen to the silence of the space. Allow yourself to simply become more aware of the space around you and try to focus that attention on Jesus' presence.

There is no goal or agenda here. Simply, you are becoming more aware of the Lord's presence and putting your focus on Him.

Resting. *Option 1:* the Jesus prayer. Calm yourself down with some deep breathing. Repeat the name of Jesus slowly and with each breath. This focuses your attention on Jesus; helps get your mind off your stresses; and allows you to place your trust in Him. Ancient monks would sometimes do this for the entire hour. You are free to do so. The Rosary is also a powerful prayer where we restfully meditate on the life of our Lord.

Option 2: Show up to the prayer space and if you fall asleep, don't worry! If you are super tired, if you are fighting to stay awake in your prayer time, if coffee has not worked, just allow yourself to fall asleep. You still showed up to be with the Lord, and He can still work in your soul. ✝

"I should be distressed that I drop off to sleep during my prayers and during my thanksgiving after Holy Communion. But I don't feel at all distressed. I know that children are just as dear to their parents, whether they are asleep or awake, and I know that doctors put their patients to sleep before they operate. So I just think that God 'knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.'"

St. Therese of Lisieux

Father Brett Metzler serves as the Vocations Director for the diocese and is chaplain at Nolan Catholic High School.

In God's hands

NTC/Juan Guajardo

HE IS: Father Prakash Dias, SAC, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Mineral Wells and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Graford. He was previously pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Breckenridge and Jesus of Nazareth Parish in Albany, and he has also served the tri-parish community of Bridgeport, Decatur, and Jacksboro.

RAISED: The youngest of three sons, Fr. Dias remembers the first decade of his life as “beautiful and amazing.” He lived in a clearing in the woods of Karnataka, India, where his family grew vegetables, fished, and hunted. Fr. Dias remembers using fire and drums to chase the elephants away from their crops.

The property was too remote for school, so his father taught him how to read and write. The family made a 20-mile round-trip walk to attend Mass each Sunday.

HOME AGAIN: When he was 10, the family returned to his father’s ancestral village, and Fr. Dias attended a boarding school run by Catholic nuns.

The next year, his father drowned tragically. Fr. Dias remained with his mother and enrolled in the village school.

“The Church became a second home to me at the time,” and he became an altar server and a leader in the children’s club.

CALLED: In the silence of frequent visits to his father’s grave, Fr. Dias questioned, “Is this all that life is about?” and felt called to the priesthood. A Pallottine priest came to his local parish to promote vocations and the pastor recommended Fr. Dias. Fr. Dias traveled to the Pallottine seminary with just a backpack but nearly turned around when he arrived. “When I came to the seminary, everyone is talking English. ‘Hi. Hello. How are you?’ I didn’t know anything of English. I said, ‘I’m leaving, I’m going back.’ And they told me, ‘Stay for a month and we’ll see.’”

MISSIONARY LIFE: After his ordination on April 24, 2013, Fr. Dias taught for two years and then was assigned to serve small communities of Native Americans in Alberta, Canada. “I would always tell them I’m the real Indian,” he joked.

There, he arrived for Mass in a four-seater airplane and earned the nickname “the People’s Priest” for his friendly nature. However, after two years in Canada, he asked to be assigned someplace warmer, and he came to the Diocese of Fort Worth in 2017.

FAVORITE SACRAMENT: The anointing of the sick, because “it surely brings them healing. I’ve seen people die in peace.”

And the Eucharist: “There is nothing

— no greater sacrifice or no greater form of worship than the Eucharist.”

“A very special moment for me is after Communion, because the Lord is so close to you at that time, and you are one with the Lord, and the Lord is one with you.”

FAVORITE SAINT: St. Vincent Pallotti “gathered people from different walks of life, different trades, and he brought them together in one celebration. Wherever I’ve been, I try to see a participatory church where people do things — the priest is there to assist and animate.” At Sacred Heart of Jesus in Breckenridge, the labor for renovation of the sanctuary and altar was provided by parishioners. “I take that inspiration from St. Vincent Palotti, who worked with people. That sounds like exactly how he would’ve done it.

“He always prayed, may there be one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ. He always prayed for unity in the Church.”

THE TAKEAWAY: Despite the trauma of his father’s unexpected death and other ordeals in his youth, “I see God’s hand in all my childhood. God was there leading me, guiding me. I’m a different person now because of those experiences that I have gone through in life. I have no bitterness in me.” He wants his congregation to focus on “love, forgiveness, and compassion. Try to see God in everything.” 🇺🇸



The Sound of Music

Daniel Flores and other choir members sing during the blessing of the pipe organ at St. Philip the Apostle Parish. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

In the last issue, Father Thu Nguyen, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth and diocesan director of liturgy, introduced the purpose and a little history of music’s place in the celebration of the Mass.

In this issue, Fr. Nguyen continues with some specific questions about sacred music.



Fr. Thu Nguyen

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SACRED MUSIC AND RELIGIOUS MUSIC?

Fr. Nguyen: Sacred music is sung prayer used in the worship of the Mass and also our Catholic sacraments. Music used in liturgy expresses the presence of God and guides the assembly to encounter the presence of God.

Its lyrics also portray the language of God through biblical Scripture. When we sing lines from Scripture, we are using God’s own language to speak to God.

Only sacred music belongs at Mass. If the words of a song are religious, any song can be said to be religious. Religious music is fine, in its place.

Popular secular Christian music is not adequate for liturgical celebration. Its lyrics or melody draw out feelings and emotions but don’t connect with the theological meaning of the liturgy or the doctrinal teaching from the Catholic Church.

For one simple example, music with the instruments and beats of a rock song may stir up the same kinds of emotions evoked at a rock concert, which is not liturgically correct for the celebration of Mass.

IS THERE A PLACE FOR PRAISE MUSIC?

Fr. Nguyen: A youth gathering, retreat, or devotional service would be an appropriate setting for Christian music.

HOW DOES A PARISH MUSIC DIRECTOR SELECT MUSIC FOR THE LITURGY?

Fr. Nguyen: Music directors bear in mind that the liturgy of the Mass is primary, and sacred music supports and enhances the liturgy. Musical selections must allow the rite to unfold with the proper participation and express the nature of worship according to its theological requirement.

Music directors need to follow the instructions from “Sing to the Lord – Music in Divine Worship,” a 2007 document from the USCCB which conforms to *Musicam Sacram (Instruction on Music in the Liturgy)*.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THOSE GUIDELINES?

Fr. Nguyen:

- Sacred music is holy when it mediates the holiness of God and forms the holy people of God more fully into communion with Him and with

- each other in Christ.
- Music must be based on Scripture and relevant to the readings of its celebration.
 - The music director must evaluate the qualities of music for Mass using liturgical judgment (*theme that relates to the readings of its celebration*), pastoral judgment (*relating to the spirituality of its community and culture*), and musical judgment (*ability of the assembly in music*).
 - The music director is aware that the bishop is the chief liturgist of the diocese, and the parish pastor oversees musical selection for liturgy.

IS IT IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE TO SING THE HYMNS AND RESPONSES? WHAT IF I'M NOT A GREAT SINGER?

Fr. Nguyen: The human voice is the first instrument of music.

In Pope Paul VI's *Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)*, the Church reminds us that at liturgical celebration, all those who are present at the celebration must enter with active, conscious, and full participation (14).

Regardless of whether singing prayer or chanting responses, everyone needs to participate.

In the chanting mode, all responses and acclamations are easy for any person. You are not required to be a great singer, just listen and join with others in the same tune.

In the third edition of the *Roman Missal*, the simple

melody of the Mass parts has been created so all can enter in sung prayer.

WHAT ARE THE TWO LEVELS OF SUNG PRAYERS AT MASS?

Fr. Nguyen: The Ordinary, the first degree of sung prayer, is the unchangeable prayers of the liturgy. Many of the 16 ordinary sung prayers are quite familiar, such as the Gloria, the Holy Holy, and the Lamb of God. Parishioners may not hear it often, but Mass chant is also written for the Signing of the Cross, the Creed, and the invitation to the Sign of Peace, among others.

Some priests in the diocese will chant the Ordinary Mass parts, because chanting uplifts your heart and makes you grow spiritually in the celebration of Mass.

The Proper, or second degree of sung prayer, varies according to the particular celebration because of the fixed readings of that celebration. It includes the antiphons at Entrance, Offertory, and Communion, as well as the Responsorial Psalm and Alleluia and sequence, if appropriate. A recessional hymn is optional but in the early tradition has been instrumental organ music.

To see Fr. Nguyen's previous columns, go to NorthTexasCatholic.org/understanding-the-mystery 🇺🇸

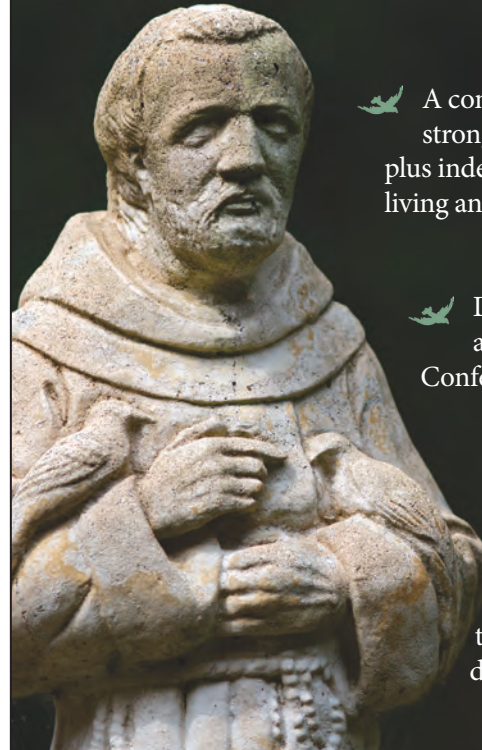
Father Thu Nguyen serves as Pastor at St. Paul the Apostle Parish and Director of Liturgy and Worship for the Diocese of Fort Worth.



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La Radio de DIOS

Bella jornada a partir de una búsqueda personal hacia una misión en la radio

Por Karla Silva

“Dios no te dará algo que no puedas lograr.” Estas palabras inspiraron a Cipriano y Lidia Prado, feligreses de la Parroquia de Immaculate Heart of Mary de Fort Worth, a lograr su misión. Reconocen que su camino no ha sido fácil, pero han sacado adelante la estación Radio Católica Cristo Rey sostenidos por su profunda fe y la ayuda de mucha gente.

Cuando la pareja ya estaba casada por lo civil pasó por un período difícil que los llevó a acercarse a Dios. Comenzaron entonces a llevar sus hijos a la Iglesia.

“Nosotros queríamos que nuestros hijos tuvieran una vida diferente de la que teníamos nosotros”, comentó Lidia. “Yo no quería que ellos crecieran con el mismo vacío que yo tuve”.

Iniciaron además el proceso de casarse por la Iglesia para darle un buen ejemplo a sus hijos.

Lidia comenzó a asistir a las clases de RICA para poder recibir los Sacramentos de Iniciación y expresó que, “poco a poco mi corazón se fue llenando más y más con todo lo que iba aprendiendo”.

Cipriano, por su parte, no estaba muy convencido de casarse por la Iglesia, pero una vez que empezaron a asistir a las clases prematrimoniales, explica que todo cambió: “Dios me fue hablando;

y mientras más aprendía, más hambre sentía de Él”.

Después de asistir a un retiro de Jornada Familiar, los organizadores del mismo invitaron a la pareja a las reuniones de seguimiento para reforzar lo que habían aprendido.

Lidia añadió: “Asistimos sin falta a estas reuniones que se celebraban cada quince días por casi dos años y medio. Aprendimos muchas cosas que desconocíamos y comenzamos a experimentar el amor de Dios. Podemos decir que éste fue el inicio de la jornada de nuestra conversión”.

A fin de cuentas, la pareja Prado se casó por la Iglesia Católica en el 2012 y ese mismo día, Lidia fue también bautizada.

Más importante aún es que el compromiso de la pareja con la vivencia de su fe no se detuvo ahí.

Cipriano y Lidia continuaron asistiendo a las reuniones de Jornada Familiar por varios años y sirvieron en el ministerio mediante charlas, organizando eventos y ofreciendo su ayuda en lo que fuera necesario.

Cipriano compartió un momento de reflexión sobre cómo su conversión impactó su vida diaria y nos dijo: “Habíamos aprendido tanto en estas reuniones que, de repente, me di cuenta

de que ya no podía escuchar algunos programas de radio que antes escuchaba porque no concordaban con mi conversión”.

Por eso, él se dio a la tarea de buscar una estación de radio que estuviera más alineada con su fe y experiencia espiritual. “Quería escuchar alabanzas, así que busqué en línea ‘radio católica en Dallas’ y lo primero que me salió fue la Radio Católica Cristo Rey”.

Desde ese momento, Cipriano empezó a escuchar esta estación de radio durante el día y en particular, el programa de “Buenos Días, Cristo” conducido por Davis y Manuela Lira, a quienes se les conocía como Tío Davis y Tía Nelly respectivamente. Ellos fueron los fundadores de esta estación.

“Le conté a mi esposa sobre esta estación de radio y empezamos a escucharla juntos e incluso cuando salíamos con nuestros hijos, la poníamos también. Nos gustó tanto que contacté a Tío Davis por Facebook y él nos invitó a un concierto católico en Dallas, en el que pudimos conocerlo personalmente”, comentó Cipriano.

La interacción entre el matrimonio Prado y los fundadores de Radio Católica Cristo Rey dio paso a una gran amistad.

Tío Davis y Tía Nelly fundaron la estación de radio con la misión de ayudar



Lidia Prado y su esposo Cipriano, que son los fundadores y presentadores de Radio Católica Cristo Rey, aparecen en la foto dirigiendo juntos un programa en vivo en español desde su estudio en Crowley el 7 de septiembre. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

a los oyentes a aprender y fortalecer su fe a través de diversos programas de evangelización y alabanzas. Ellos se mantuvieron en la radio desde el 2011 hasta que fallecieron — primero, Tía Nelly en el 2017 y luego, Tío Davis en el 2020.

No obstante, su legado continúa.

Tío Davis le dejó la estación radial a su hijo Michael, pero como él no podía hacerse cargo de ella, buscó a personas cercanas para dirigir la estación. Entre estas personas se encontraban Cipriano y Lidia Prado. Ellos acudieron al Padre Sánchez de la Parroquia de Immaculate Heart para que les aconsejara, ya que los conocía bien desde que los casó en la Iglesia Católica.

“El Padre Oscar nos dijo que Dios no nos daría algo que no pudiéramos lograr, y con esas palabras supimos cuál era la decisión que debíamos tomar”, aseveró Cipriano. Al contar con el apoyo del Padre Oscar como su guía espiritual, el matrimonio Prado decidió lanzarse a este gran proyecto.

Al reflexionar sobre sus primeros

pasos frente a la estación de radio, Lidia manifestó: “Al principio, sólo íbamos a hacernos cargo por un año, pero durante el año fuimos escuchando a Dios y sabíamos que era aquí donde teníamos que estar. Sin lugar a duda, fue y sigue siendo un proceso de aprendizaje. Cuando empezamos no sabíamos nada de cómo manejar una estación de radio, no sabíamos lo que necesitábamos, ni como hablar frente al micrófono. Varias personas nos ayudaron en el camino y cuando no podían, nosotros lo resolvíamos solos”.

El compromiso de Cipriano y Lidia con la radio es tan grande que decidieron construir una cabina en el patio de su casa para transmitir desde ahí mismo y poder manejar los programas que se originan en la cabina principal de Dallas. “Cuando el Diácono Rigoberto Leyva, el Director del Ministerio Hispano, supo de la inauguración de la cabina invitó al Obispo Michael Olson para bendecirla y eso nos llenó de mucha alegría. Supimos entonces que habíamos tomado la

decisión correcta”, Cipriano declaró con regocijo.

En la actualidad Radio Católica Cristo Rey transmite el rezo del Rosario a diario, la Misa dominical y cuenta con ocho programas en los que participan diferentes locutores e invitados. Todos tienen el mismo fin de evangelizar y llevar el conocimiento de la fe a todas las personas. Como esta radio se transmite en línea, la gente puede escuchar los programas desde cualquier parte del mundo en la página web o a través de una aplicación. Muchos de los programas son transmitidos también en YouTube. Cipriano y Lidia esperan poder tener un edificio propio para la estación, que les permitiría emitir la radio en FM y llegar a muchas más personas.

Pese a todos los obstáculos que han enfrentado en su camino, la pareja Prado sigue adelante con la misión que Dios les encomendó e invitan a todos a apoyar la estación de radio con sus oraciones, aportaciones económicas, si es posible, y sintonizar los diferentes programas de Radio Católica Cristo Rey. 🇺🇸

ESCUCHANDO LA voluntad de Dios

Los facilitadores de Ambiente Seguro protegen a los hijos de Dios al cultivar y exigir una cultura de discusión abierta

Por Christina Benavides

Todos los que practican activamente su fe y hacen voluntariado en su parroquia conocen el Departamento de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Cada voluntario o empleado de una parroquia, escuela, o ministerio aprobado por la Diócesis debe someterse a la Verificación de Antecedentes Penales y asistir a las sesiones de capacitación introductorias y de renovación de Ambiente Seguro.

A continuación, se describe cómo este departamento protege y sirve a todos los hijos de Dios dentro de la comunidad.

¿De qué se trata la capacitación?

En la sesión introductoria, llamada “Protegiendo a los niños de Dios”, uno de los 175 facilitadores capacitados de la Diócesis dirige la discusión con los voluntarios sobre el abuso de niños y adultos vulnerables.

“No se trata simplemente de que una persona se pare frente al grupo y dé una charla sobre el ambiente seguro o el abuso sexual infantil, sino que el objetivo es que se motive al grupo a participar y se conduzca una discusión abierta al respecto”, dijo la Directora de Ambiente Seguro, Sandra Schrader-Farry. “Todos sabemos que cualquier tipo de abuso es un problema serio. ¿Qué podemos todos

hacer para proteger a nuestros hijos, nuestros ancianos, las personas que están confinadas en sus hogares o a alguien que sea vulnerable? ¿Cómo se puede evitar todo tipo de abuso?

“El sistema que se ha establecido brinda la oportunidad de que personas con experiencia de vida, experiencia práctica y experiencia profesional puedan interactuar y compartir esa sabiduría con otras personas de su parroquia o de la Diócesis”, afirmó la Directora que lleva tres años en su puesto. Se requieren sesiones de renovación más cortas cada dos años para introducir nuevos contenidos y actualizaciones necesarias.

No espero trabajar con niños. ¿Por qué necesito estas sesiones de capacitación?

“El requisito dentro de nuestra diócesis se basa en el deseo del Obispo Michael Olson de que cada persona involucrada en cualquier ministerio ha de recibir dicha formación y ser examinada”, explicó Schrader-Farry.

Al eliminar cualquier tipo de conjetura ante la consideración de que un miembro de un ministerio podría encontrarse con personas vulnerables, la regla ayuda a crear entre los fieles activos expectativas uniformes y oportunidades para difundir la tan necesaria conciencia sobre el abuso.

María Orand, que es detective del

Departamento de la Policía de Fort Worth, enfatizó durante la capacitación introductoria que imparte en la Parroquia de Holy Family de Fort Worth, que “cualquiera de nosotros, en cualquier momento, podría ser o haber sido vulnerable, y pudiéramos haber estado en una posición en la que la gente pudiera haberse aprovechado de nosotros o habernos manipulado de alguna manera... Si estás pasando por un divorcio, si has perdido a tu cónyuge, a un hijo o un padre... los abusadores saben lo que hacen; están constantemente al acecho, saben captar las cosas y se aprovechan”.

¿Por qué necesito proporcionar información confidencial?

Si bien los que manejan las finanzas, proporcionan transporte u obtienen empleo en la Diócesis deben proporcionar detalles de identificación más específicos, como la licencia de conducir y/o su número de seguro social, la necesidad de información privada se debe a que el “estándar establecido por la Diócesis y la Conferencia de los Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos es que todo aquél que se relacione con niños o adultos vulnerables tenga la debida capacitación y que se verifiquen sus antecedentes penales”, explicó Schrader-Farry. El requisito de nuestra diócesis local es volver a verificar estos historiales, al menos, cada cinco años.



María Orand, facilitadora de capacitación de la Parroquia de Holy Family de Fort Worth presenta la capacitación introductoria de Ambiente Seguro el 26 de septiembre. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Toda la documentación proporcionada, explicó Schrader-Farry, se maneja a través de una empresa de selección privada que procesa los datos a base de datos locales, estatales y nacionales, dependiendo del rol del individuo en la Diócesis. La información personal se mantiene estrictamente confidencial y segura.

La necesidad de esta verificación exhaustiva se debe a que la solicitud y la verificación de antecedentes penales “dicen mucho sobre una persona (sus intenciones, planes y objetivos) y un poco sobre sus antecedentes y quiénes son realmente. Sólo queremos estar seguros de que estamos creando ese círculo de seguridad en la Diócesis”.

¿Por qué debería ser voluntario?

Aracelis Rivarola, facilitadora de capacitación de la Parroquia de St. Joseph y la Parroquia de St. Matthew en Arlington, disfruta mucho servir en este ministerio, pues “me trae mucha alegría y mucho orgullo ver que los voluntarios están poniendo los dones dados por Dios al servicio de la Iglesia. Mi misión es ayudar a que los voluntarios participen en los ministerios utilizando los dones recibidos. Eso es lo que quiero compartir con el grupo”.

Rivarola, que brinda a este

ministerio los cuarenta años de experiencia como trabajadora social en el Metroplex, ha observado que “una gran mayoría de voluntarios, especialmente los nuevos, nunca se habían planteado este tema. En las sesiones de ambiente seguro se sienten más cómodos y abiertos a hablar sobre el tema porque reconocen que es muy importante, sensible y afecta a muchas personas. Algunos de los participantes lo han experimentado por sí mismos o conocen a alguien que ha sido víctima de abuso.

“Esto es más que una simple clase; consiste en compartir, discutir y asesorar. Así nos asesoramos y ayudamos unos a otros... Me siento muy orgullosa de que la Iglesia esté haciendo estas capacitaciones porque muchas organizaciones no lo hacen”, agregó.

Schrader-Farry espera también que todos recuerden que “cuando quieres ser voluntario, no se trata sólo de involucrarte con tu parroquia porque es un deber con Dios, sino que también es tu responsabilidad como miembro de nuestra sociedad. Podrías hacer una diferencia en la vida de alguien gracias a lo que aprendes en esta clase. Es una responsabilidad social y moral de cada uno y es también lo que Dios quiere que hagas”. ✚

AMBIENTE SEGURO

Para Reportar Mala Conducta Sexual:

Si usted o alguien que usted conoce es víctima de abuso sexual por parte de cualquiera que sirve a la Iglesia, puede:

- ▶ Llamar a la Línea Directa de Asistencia a Víctimas: (817) 602-5119.

- ▶ Llamar el Director Diocesano de Ambiente Seguro: (817) 945-9334 y dejar un mensaje.

- ▶ Llamar al Canciller de la Diócesis: (817) 945-9315.

Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha de Abuso:

Si usted sospecha de abuso de un niño, anciano, o adulto vulnerable, o si abuso ha sido revelado a usted,

- ▶ Si alguien está en peligro inmediato, llame al 911

- ▶ Llame al Departamento de Servicios para la Familia y de Protección (DFPS) de Texas al (800) 252-5400.

- ▶ Reporte inmediatamente el presunto abuso a su supervisor, sacerdote o director, y presente el Aviso Confidencial de Preocupación con la información requerida por DFPS.

Para más información sobre nuestros programas de prevención de abuso, visite fwdioc.org/safe-environment





Amor puro

Pastoral Juvenil ofrece orientación a los jóvenes sobre la Teología del Cuerpo a partir de la antropología y la teología católica

Por Gabriel Hernández

La Oficina de la Pastoral Juvenil de la Diócesis de Fort Worth celebró el 19 y 20 de agosto un taller sobre la Teología del Cuerpo en el Centro Diocesano de Formación, al que asistieron unos cincuenta jóvenes.

“La Teología del Cuerpo” es un término que se utiliza para referirse principalmente a la catequesis sobre el amor, la sexualidad humana y el matrimonio desde el punto de vista de la

antropología y la teología católica.

El cristianismo ha contado desde sus inicios con fuentes doctrinales que exponen e incluso fundamentan su concepto del amor humano y la sexualidad en el plan de Dios. Podemos mencionar al respecto la vocación unitiva y procreadora del hombre narrada en el libro de Génesis y exaltada en el libro del Cantar de los Cantares, que describe en abundancia la belleza del amor propio de los enamorados. Se añaden las

escenas evangélicas de Jesús, que se hace presente en las bodas e incluso realiza su primer milagro en una de ellas. Vemos en los Evangelios a un Jesús que declara categóricamente la indisolubilidad del matrimonio. Se culmina en el Nuevo Testamento con al apóstol Pablo, que evoca a Cristo como modelo pleno de amor conyugal.

Tras casi dos milenios de cristianismo aparece en escena la Teología del Cuerpo; y esto es obra de un papa polaco,

◀ Diego Salazar, izquierda, y José Rocha se sonríen mientras escuchan al orador durante una conferencia de jóvenes adultos titulada Teología del Cuerpo celebrada en el Centro de Formación de la Diócesis Católica de Fort Worth el 19 de agosto. (NTC/Ben Torres)

San Juan Pablo II. Sin embargo, aunque este tema se agrega al escenario doctrinal en el 1979, la preocupación pastoral por instruir a los cristianos, especialmente a los jóvenes, acerca del amor y la sexualidad fue algo que el Papa San Juan Pablo II tuvo a lo largo de toda su vida ministerial.

Podemos encontrar rastros de su interés en este tema ya desde el 1948. Sus declaraciones y enseñanzas, tan característicamente suyas, establecen que el hombre y la mujer sólo pueden conocerse plenamente en el don mutuo de sí mismos, y nunca en el tratarse como meros objetos y medios que se usan para conseguir algo más.

Cabe señalar que provienen de esa época las enseñanzas contundentes de San Juan Pablo II que hoy en día constituyen el fundamento de la Teología del Cuerpo. Tomemos por ejemplo la catequesis sobre la bondad original del deseo sexual y la sexualidad como un llamado a la donación, — ya sea a Dios, a través de la virginidad, o al cónyuge, a través del matrimonio — y el amor como la búsqueda operante del bien del otro.

Al ser elegido Papa en el 1979, Karol Wojtyla se convirtió en Juan Pablo II. Su nuevo puesto como cabeza de la Iglesia y sumo líder de la cristiandad le brindó innumerables ocasiones para hablar del amor humano y la sexualidad. San Juan Pablo II eligió las Audiencias semanales de los miércoles para catequizar y transmitir su mensaje sobre la Teología del Cuerpo.

Fue así como la vida le dio la oportunidad al Papa San Juan Pablo II de expresar su amor y dedicación a los fieles en general y, en particular a los jóvenes, para transmitir sus enseñanzas sobre cómo Dios desea que vivamos el amor y practiquemos la sexualidad, tanto para alcanzar la felicidad en esta vida como para rendirle gloria viviendo de acuerdo con Su plan amoroso.



Alba Pichardo, centro-izquierda, y Ruby Ponce, a su derecha, escuchan al orador Gabriel Hernández durante su presentación en la conferencia de jóvenes adultos. (NTC/Ben Torres)

La cristiandad y la humanidad en general pudo gozar por cinco años (1979-1984) de su amor paternal e instrucción sobre un tema muy actual, importante y fundamental como lo es el amor y la sexualidad humana. Papa San Juan Pablo II mismo designó sus enseñanzas al respecto con el nombre de Teología del Cuerpo. Los líderes que dirigen la formación y catequesis en la Iglesia y los teólogos recurrieron a dichas catequesis para obtener pautas y puntos de referencia al tratarse de dicha materia. Poco a poco, sus clases y conferencias fueron dando forma a una nueva disciplina educativa independiente, que es como hoy día se la concibe y conoce.

Tanto en el pasado como en la actualidad este tema resulta ser de suma relevancia. No sólo porque hoy como entonces el amor y la sexualidad humanas constituyen aspectos muy fundamentales del ser humano en cuanto a la apertura al otro y la necesidad del otro para realizarse en plenitud, sino porque hoy — como nunca antes — el hombre se ve bombardeado por todos los flancos con una visión utilitaria y hedonista del sexo y del ser humano. Tales perspectivas anulan parcial o totalmente el valor infinito del amor y la sexualidad definidos en base a que el ser humano es creado a imagen y semejanza divina; y que, como

Sus hijos amadísimos, estamos llamados a la santidad y a rendir gloria a Dios Padre.

El taller titulado “El gozo de ser plenamente humano” comprendió una amplia gama de temas al respecto. Los jóvenes participantes tuvieron tiempo para aprender acerca del significado y las implicaciones de ser creaturas hechas a imagen y semejanza divina. Durante el taller los jóvenes tuvieron la oportunidad de reflexionar sobre un Dios todopoderoso y bueno que nos ha creado para amar y entregarnos a los demás. El gran desafío es superar nuestro egoísmo.

La Pastoral Juvenil planifica a menudo actividades semejantes a este taller con el fin de guiar y formar a los jóvenes de nuestra Diócesis. Los jóvenes participantes quedaron muy agradecidos de todo lo que se compartió y aprendió en el taller. Expresaron además su deseo de seguir formándose y aprendiendo más acerca de su identidad católica.

Para obtener más información acerca de la Oficina de la Pastoral Juvenil de la Diócesis, así como de próximos eventos y actividades, recomendamos a nuestros lectores que revisen constantemente la página web de la Diócesis de Fort Worth. En ella encontrarán más información sobre éste y otros temas de gran importancia para la comunidad católica del norte de Texas. 🇺🇸

MATRIMONIOS renovados

Los retiros de Sean Uno ayudan a los esposos
mediante una sola palabra

Por Karla Silva

Imagínate que un nuevo año está a punto de comenzar y estás lleno de ilusión, pues tienes numerosos propósitos que quieres lograr en tu vida. Llegas enero y te inscribes en el gimnasio, cambias tu dieta, te preparas para solicitar el trabajo de tus sueños o simplemente empiezas a dar los primeros pasos para lograr tus metas. Llegas marzo y sigues trabajando para lograr tus objetivos, pero ya un tanto desanimado porque las cosas no han sido tan fáciles como te imaginabas. Al llegar el mes de julio ya se te olvidaron la mitad de tus propósitos y te diste por vencido en las metas que te acuerdas y no pudiste alcanzar. ¿Te ha pasado algo así en tu vida? Lo mismo podría suceder a una pareja que está casada. Las cosas empiezan muy bien, pero luego vienen las dificultades y temes que te vas a dar por vencido. No obstante, ¿qué tal si lo único que necesitaras para empezar a cambiar este patrón fuera una palabra? María y Jesús Gras, organizadores del retiro matrimonial ‘Sean Uno’, nos explican cómo una palabra puede llegar a mejorar y fortalecer la relación de una pareja casada.

María y Jesús Gras son una pareja de laicos comprometidos que han impartido por casi diez años clases de preparación al matrimonio y de convalidación matrimonial en la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Como de costumbre, este año volverán a dirigir el retiro para matrimonios ‘Sean Uno’ en tres diferentes parroquias de la Diócesis.

“Chris Vaughan, Director de la Oficina de Matrimonio y Vida Familiar de la Diócesis, se comunicó con nosotros y nos pidió organizar este retiro. Al preguntarle cuál quería que fuera el fruto de este retiro nos dijo “que los matrimonios redescubran la belleza del sacramento del matrimonio católico, que tengan un mayor compromiso a la oración, que vivan un discipulado intencional con mejor comunicación y que esto se vea reflejado en su familia”. “Nosotros tomamos estas pautas provistas por Chris y empezamos a trabajar”, añadió María Gras.

Organizar y planificar este retiro es un tiempo de oración y reflexión para la pareja Gras. Ellos cuentan cómo les impactó mucho la cita del Evangelio de Juan 17, 21, en el que Dios nos llama

a ser uno. Así es que nace el nombre del retiro ‘Sean Uno’ y, a su vez, su propósito: dar a los matrimonios las herramientas y destrezas para ser uno solo, y que no sólo sean más unidos como pareja, sino también como familia, explicó Jesús Gras.

Por medio de testimonios, varias dinámicas y un poco de humor el retiro guía las parejas por un manual que comprende cinco pasos, mediante los cuales aprenderán temas cruciales, como perdonar, escuchar a Dios, tener una buena comunicación y cómo ser un discípulo intencional. Además, adquirirán las herramientas para hacer esto posible. Una de estas herramientas es escoger una palabra. Una palabra que sea única.

“El proceso de escoger una palabra única es simple. Es parecido al de elegir los propósitos del año nuevo, pero la diferencia es que se trata de una sola palabra, que es única para cada persona; lo que hace que ésta sea más intencional. Esta palabra se convierte en el enfoque para crecer en unidad con Dios, la pareja y la familia”, explicó el matrimonio Gras.



Dulce Castillo abraza a su esposo Florentino Gutiérrez durante una actividad del retiro matrimonial 'Sean Uno' en la Parroquia Most Blessed Sacrament de Arlington el 7 de octubre. (NTC/Ben Torres)

No obstante, la pregunta es ¿cómo se escoge esta palabra única? “Escoger esta palabra conlleva tener una comunicación constante con Dios para escucharle mejor y saber en qué quiere que nosotros nos enfoquemos para poder mejorar primero como individuos en nuestra espiritualidad y unidad con Él y, por ende, con nuestra pareja y la familia”, aclaró Jesús Gras. “Nosotros decidimos hacer este ejercicio como familia e incluimos a nuestra hija Ana María de 17 años. Mi palabra es obediencia, la de mi esposo es impacto y la de mi hija, compromiso. Desde entonces, hemos visto un gran cambio en nuestra dinámica como esposos y como familia. Nuestra comunicación mejoró, nos sentimos más unidos y cumplimos con el propósito de ser todos uno. Queremos compartir esta linda experiencia con los demás matrimonios”, añadió María.

La importancia de este tipo de

retiro para matrimonios no es sólo enfatizada por sus organizadores, sino también por Papa Francisco. “El Papa recalca la importancia de cuidar de los matrimonios. No se trata sólo de estar con ellos antes del sacramento en las pláticas prematrimoniales, sino también de caminar con ellos luego de haberse consagrado como esposos por el sacramento del matrimonio”, comentó Chris Vaughan.

Al preguntarle a Vaughan cuál sería la razón por la que las parejas deberían participar en este retiro, él respondió que “ninguna pareja es perfecta y el asistir a este tipo de retiros no es un signo de debilidad. Todos los matrimonios necesitan ayuda. Los invitamos a que vengan y experimenten a Cristo en su matrimonio y verán como un solo día puede dar muchos frutos para su futuro como pareja”.

María y Jesús invitan a los matrimonios a darse la oportunidad de

escuchar a Dios y descubrir esa palabra única que transformará su vida, su matrimonio y su familia para poder ‘Ser uno’. “Nosotros hemos recibido, trabajado y cosechado; y queremos que ustedes experimenten lo mismo. Vengan y vean”.

El horario del retiro de un solo día será de 9:00 am a 5:30 pm y se llevará a cabo en tres parroquias diferentes, Most Blessed Sacrament de Arlington, el 7 de octubre de 2023, Immaculate Conception de Denton, el 10 de febrero de 2024 y Our Lady of Guadalupe de Wichita Falls, el 2 de marzo de 2024.

Deseamos ofrecer esta oportunidad para que el mayor número de matrimonios se beneficien de un día de reflexión. Para obtener más información acerca del retiro para parejas casadas, puede comunicarse con la Oficina de Matrimonio y Vida Familiar por email a cvaughan@fwdioc.org o puede llamar al 817-945-9351. 🇺🇸

rezando

POR LA FE DE LA JUVENTUD

Cómo la oración y la autenticidad ayudan a los jóvenes a encontrar la fe

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Garrett Martin asistió a una escuela católica de varones durante la mayor parte de su niñez y adolescencia, pero esto no previno que se alejara de practicar su fe en la universidad. El nativo de Missouri ya se sentía un poco resentido con Dios debido a que un ascenso en el trabajo de uno de sus padres hizo que la familia se tuviera que mudar a Chicago y él tuvo que dejar atrás a sus amigos de la escuela secundaria. Al asistir a Michigan State University se sintió aún más alienado y solo, ya que la bebida, las fiestas y la vida de fraternidad tuvieron prioridad sobre cualquier cosa que pudiera estar relacionada con su fe y la Iglesia.

“Dediqué gran parte de mi tiempo a muchas actividades egoístas”, admitió el joven de 28 años que continuó con ese estilo de vida aún después de tomar un internado de trabajo en Fort Worth tras graduarse de la universidad.

Sin embargo, un día, al despertarse con una fuerte resaca un sábado por la mañana, reflexionó y se replanteó el rumbo de su vida.

“Sentado en la cama, me di cuenta de que tenía que haber algo más en la vida que salir con amigos y beber hasta embriagarme”, dijo el analista de negocios. “Fue un gran momento de luz que inició mi retorno a la fe”.

Fue a Misa al día siguiente en la Catedral de St. Patrick, donde se sentó en el último banco y se empapó de los rituales

que ya conocía.

“Pasé los siguientes cinco o seis meses rezando mucho y tratando de reconectarme con mi fe”, recordó Martin.

Comparte hoy día en la actualidad su jornada de regreso a la fe con los adolescentes de la Parroquia de St. Andrew de Fort Worth.

“Quiero evangelizar a los jóvenes y compartir con ellos algunas palabras de sabiduría antes de que se vayan a la universidad”, agregó el líder juvenil. “Viví el estilo de vida de las fiestas y la bebida; y quiero decirles que no sigan ese camino pecaminoso”.

¿POR QUÉ LOS JÓVENES SE VAN DE LA IGLESIA?

La historia de Martin es actualmente bastante común entre los jóvenes. Las estadísticas muestran una disminución de la membresía de las iglesias en todas las denominaciones. La Iglesia Católica experimenta la pérdida más pronunciada. El por ciento de católicos pertenecientes a una parroquia se redujo del 76 % en el 2000 al 58 % en el 2020. Según la empresa Pew Research, ocho de cada diez personas que abandonan la fe lo hacen antes de cumplir sus veintitrés años.

No se trata de adultos estadounidenses de mediana edad descontentos con los cambios que resultaron del Concilio Vaticano II, afirma Brandon Vogt en su libro publicado en el 2015, “Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church” (“Retorno: Cómo lograr que sus hijos

regresen a la Iglesia”).

“En estos momentos son adolescentes y adultos jóvenes desencantados los que están abandonando la Iglesia”, escribió. “Ellos están en las redes sociales todos los días, pero hay un lugar en el que no están: las iglesias”.

Son muchas las razones para rechazar la fe, pero se reducen mayormente a dos hallazgos principales, según Vogt. La gente simplemente se aleja de la religión o se va por razones espirituales y teológicas específicas.

La desconfianza general hacia las instituciones, las figuras de autoridad y la jerarquía de la Iglesia impide que algunos jóvenes sigan cualquier tradición religiosa. Estos adultos no afiliados se denominan los “ningunos” (“nones”, en inglés) porque marcan la casilla “ninguna” en los formularios que se les pregunta acerca de su preferencia religiosa.

Jeff Hedglen, que es ministro experimentado de jóvenes y adultos jóvenes, tanto a nivel parroquial como diocesano, ve una dicotomía cuando se trata de los millennials y la Iglesia.

“Según mi experiencia, hay en estos momentos un pequeño porcentaje de adultos jóvenes católicos que están muy involucrados en la Iglesia. Los que están adentro, están completamente adentro”, explicó el director del ministerio de jóvenes del campus de la Universidad de Texas de Arlington. “Sin embargo, tengo que también señalar que cuando están fuera de la Iglesia, están completamente fuera”.



Los jóvenes meditan durante la misa del Welcome Retreat el 18 de septiembre. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Los católicos jóvenes que están seriamente comprometidos van a Misa una o más veces a la semana.

“Y otros no van nunca”, señaló Hedglen.

“Un número creciente de jóvenes de los Estados Unidos se consideran espirituales, pero no religiosos”, agregó.

“Una de las razones es que la religión conlleva seguir reglas, pero muchos jóvenes no quieren lidiar con reglas”, explicó. “Quieren vivir su propia vida, y a su manera”, afirmó.

“Otro factor es que se ha ido desarrollando poco a poco un cambio de actitud hacia la atracción por personas del mismo sexo que está contribuyendo también al creciente número de “ningunos”, según Hedglen. Los jóvenes aceptan mucho a los compañeros que son diferentes a ellos, especialmente aquéllos que se identifican como LGBTQ.

“Las religiones organizadas no apoyan esto; y ésta es una de las razones por las que los jóvenes desconfían”, comentó Hedglen. “No entienden por qué la religión organizada no puede aceptar la homosexualidad. Eso es lo que están pensando; y lo que pasa por la mente de los adultos jóvenes que no quieren pertenecer a la Iglesia”.

Un estudio reciente de Pew Research sobre el panorama religioso cambiante de los Estados Unidos encontró que por cada persona que se convierte al catolicismo, aproximadamente 6.5 personas

abandonan la Iglesia. No obstante, el ministro del campus universitario ve signos de esperanza en su propia comunidad estudiantil. Al menos una persona se ha convertido y unido a la Iglesia Católica o ha sido confirmada en cada uno de los veintiún semestres que Hedglen lleva en la Universidad de Texas de Arlington.

“Sucede todo el tiempo, pero no en grandes cantidades”, observó Hedglen. “Basado en mis conversaciones con ellos, veo que la principal razón para convertirse es que sentían que la vida que vivían ya no tenía sentido. “Hay una profunda hambre espiritual que los llama, incluso entre las personas que no asisten a la Iglesia”.

UN SENTIDO DE PERTENENCIA

Es palpable la falta de participación en la Iglesia entre los jóvenes de escuela secundaria y edad universitaria, pero el deseo de no ir a Misa puede comenzar ya en el cuarto y quinto grado, señaló Victoria Ramón, la Directora Diocesana del Ministerio de jóvenes, adultos jóvenes y universitarios.

“Tiene mucho que ver con los padres que no practican su fe en casa. Ir a misa es impredecible debido a los deportes y las ligas a las que pertenecen”, explicó. “No es una prioridad para ellos”.

Al mismo tiempo que la asistencia a las cosas de la Iglesia disminuye, los estudiantes de intermedia y secundaria están en la edad que comienzan a hacerse preguntas fundamentales como: ¿Cuál es nuestro

propósito en la vida? ¿De dónde venimos? ¿Qué creemos?

Es sumamente importante que los jóvenes sepan que pueden acudir a la Iglesia en busca de respuestas.

“Ellos son parte de nuestra Iglesia. Es su familia”, enfatizó la Directora. “Rezo con gran esperanza para que la comunidad de personas mayores en nuestras parroquias dé una calurosa bienvenida a los adultos jóvenes que ingresan o regresan a la Iglesia”.

Hay que dar cabida a los católicos más jóvenes en los consejos parroquiales y otros roles de liderazgo en la parroquia. Esto puede inspirar a otros jóvenes a involucrarse y seguir participando de forma activa.

“Sus nuevas ideas y la perspectivas en su forma de pensar son diferentes de las que tiene la población envejeciente de la Iglesia”, señaló Ramón. “Necesitamos a los jóvenes para guiar a la Iglesia hacia el futuro”.

SER AUTÉNTICOS

Cuando se les pregunta a los jóvenes por qué no asisten a los servicios de la Iglesia, la respuesta que el Diácono Benjamin Grothouse escucha con mayor frecuencia se centra en la autenticidad. Las almas jóvenes impresionables ven personas que dicen ser cristianas, pero no actúan como Cristo.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 62



Un miembro del ministerio de Millions of Monicas reza por la juventud en la Parroquia de San Martín de Porres en Prosper. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

DE LA PÁGINA 61

“Si el testimonio que damos no es auténtico y no muestra una vida que ha sido transformada y convertida a la de Jesucristo, entonces somos solamente parte de una vieja tradición”, explicó el Diácono. “No ven el amor que debería mostrarse cuando se vive auténticamente la fe católica, por lo que los jóvenes se apartan de la Iglesia, especialmente si su fe es débil”.

Formarlos en la fe desde temprana edad es muy importante. Mantenerse al tanto con los adolescentes y sus necesidades es, sin duda, más desafiante.

“Nunca fuerces a alguien a creer en algo. Ésa no es la manera de ganarse los corazones y almas de los jóvenes”, advirtió el joven de 27 años que está en su último año de estudios para ordenarse como sacerdote. “Se comienza con la educación, pero lo más importante es mostrarles a Jesucristo a través de nuestras acciones y de cómo oramos. Es fundamental construir una auténtica vida de oración en el hogar”.

REZAR COMO SANTA MÓNICA

Millions of Monicas es un ministerio de oración nacional que brinda a las familias la oportunidad de orar juntos por sus

hijos que han abandonado la fe. Madres, abuelas, tías y madrinan se reúnen una vez a la semana frente al Santísimo Sacramento para orar no sólo por los miembros de su familia, sino también por su propio crecimiento en la santidad. La patrona del ministerio es Santa Mónica, cuya oración y ejemplo llevaron a su esposo pagano al cristianismo y a su hijo, San Agustín, a la conversión.

La Parroquia de San Martín de Porres de Prosper se convirtió en julio de este año en el primer capítulo de Millions of Monicas de Texas. Los participantes se reúnen todos los miércoles de 2:30 p.m. a 3:30 p. m. en la capilla para participar de la Misa diaria.

“No se trata de buscar consejos ni de un grupo de apoyo; nos reunimos sólo para orar en silencio”, explicó la organizadora Eileen Keller.

Con la excepción de un canto de apertura y otro canto al final, la única palabra pronunciada es una oración con la intención del día. No se hace ningún otro compartir.

La Hora Santa ha atraído visitantes de Sherman, Denton y Luisiana.

“Poder rezar e interceder por nuestros hijos y los hijos de otras personas es algo

muy necesario en nuestra Iglesia, y estamos viendo los frutos de esto”, dijo la madre de dos hijas. “La gente viene aquí con una sonrisa en la cara y llena de esperanza en el corazón. Están muy agobiados, pero encuentran paz y alegría”.

BRINDAR APOYO

Gabe Gutiérrez trata de motivar a los estudiantes de Texas Christian University (TCU, por siglas en inglés) a involucrarse en la fe sin presionarlos a través de diversas actividades, como, por ejemplo, una noche de trivia que fomenta el sentido de comunidad. Pese a que están inmersos en las redes sociales y la tecnología, muchos estudiantes se sienten muy solos.

“Es una generación más conectada que nunca en la historia de la humanidad, pero esas conexiones no son personales”, explicó Gutiérrez que dirige el ministerio universitario. “Si se agrega a eso la desconfianza que tienen de las instituciones, se tiene entonces la tormenta perfecta de personas solitarias que no saben a dónde acudir”.

Si no fuera por estas actividades, la mayoría de los estudiantes no entrarían nunca al Centro Católico Newman de TCU.

“Puede ser intimidante, por lo que hay que estar dispuesto a ofrecerles apoyo, compartir la fe y llegar a las personas en el punto que se encuentran en la vida”, dijo. “Empieza con establecer una conexión y luego invítalos a algo más profundo como la Misa o el estudio bíblico”.

Gutiérrez y su hermano Tony, que es maestro de escuela católica y pasado editor asociado de *North Texas Catholic*, son católicos comprometidos. A menudo, la gente le pregunta qué los mantuvo activos en su fe.

“Mi mamá rezaba el Rosario todas las noches por mi familia”, reveló Gutiérrez. “Veo nuestra participación en la fe como el fruto de sus oraciones”.

Él anima a los padres a seguir el ejemplo de Santa Mónica.

“Sed persistentes en la oración”, instó. “Además, vivan su fe. Si quieren que sus hijos sigan siendo católicos, ustedes han de practicar la fe y nunca dejen de invitarlos a unirse a ustedes para rezar y asistir a Misa”. 🇺🇸



NUESTRO PASTOR HABLA

Obispo Michael F. Olson, STD, MA

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

 @BpOlsonFW



EL SÍNODO SOBRE LA SINODALIDAD: EL ENCUENTRO DE LOS ENCUENTROS

Como bien saben quienes tienen acceso a las redes sociales católicas, el Papa se reunirá este mes con los obispos, sacerdotes, religiosos y representantes laicos de todo el mundo en lo que ha sido designado como la primera fase del Sínodo sobre la Sinodalidad. Se nos informó que la segunda fase se llevará a cabo el próximo año alrededor de esta misma fecha. Muchos de ustedes me expresaron la semana pasada sus preocupaciones y observaciones sobre los primeros acontecimientos sucedidos en Roma. Comparto también la confusión de ustedes debido a lo que se ha presentado, así como a la novedad de que la participación no está limitada exclusivamente a los obispos. La gracia de ordenación de los obispos comprende las tres funciones principales (*munera*) de enseñar, gobernar y santificar la Iglesia. El aspecto nuevo de este enfoque es que la reunión inicial se trata más bien de escuchar para que podamos desarrollar nuestra manera e identidad como Iglesia.

Acogemos muy bien este esfuerzo y consideramos que es un proyecto que debe emprender toda la Iglesia, especialmente luego de haber pasado casi sesenta años desde la conclusión del Concilio Vaticano II, que inició un período de renovación y desarrollo en la vida de la Iglesia en las áreas de la liturgia, la pastoral, la vida familiar, la teología y la doctrina sacramental. Los pontificados de cada Papa posterior al Concilio, que incluyen a San Pablo VI, Juan Pablo I, San Juan Pablo II y Benedicto XVI, han contribuido a esta

renovación a través de las encíclicas, las exhortaciones y las homilías. El Papa Francisco se ha pronunciado acerca de estos acontecimientos y enfatiza la importancia de escuchar como una actividad identificable de toda la Iglesia.

Esta acción de escuchar tiene dos aspectos: en primer lugar, escuchar a Cristo a través de la Gracia del Espíritu Santo y, en segundo lugar, escuchar a todo el Pueblo de Dios, al clero, a los religiosos y a los laicos, pues cada uno de ellos ofrece ideas sobre la auténtica fe vivida, así como sobre la necesidad de una conversión continua y una comprensión más profunda de la verdad revelada plenamente en Jesucristo. Para que podamos apreciar esta doble actividad de escucha que exige el proceso sinodal, los invito a revisar el Informe de Síntesis Diocesano que resume nuestra propia participación y contribución al proceso sinodal de escucha al Espíritu Santo y de unos a otros. Este informe se puede encontrar en la página web de la Diócesis. El mismo describe cómo 3,311 personas participaron en ciento doce sesiones de escucha celebradas a través de toda la Diócesis, de acuerdo con las expectativas establecidas por la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos (USCCB, por siglas en inglés) para esa fase del Sínodo. Estas sesiones de escucha se llevaron a cabo en inglés, español, vietnamita y ASL (lenguaje de señas americano). Lo más importante es que cada sesión, incluida la sesión de escucha diocesana, comenzó con oración, adoración eucarística o Misa.

Todos nosotros, como miembros bautizados de la Iglesia Católica, debemos comenzar por escuchar. Es fundamental que iniciemos nuestra escucha de Cristo en Sus palabras habladas, que encontramos en los Evangelios, y en la Palabra de Dios proclamada en toda la Sagrada Escritura. Es importante que sigamos escuchando el auténtico Magisterio de la Iglesia sobre la fe y la moral constituido a través de casi dos mil años y que se ha desarrollado para articular una comprensión más profunda de la Revelación de Cristo. Esto es particularmente cierto en lo que respecta a la naturaleza de la persona humana como miembro de una familia, de la sociedad y de la Iglesia. Si comenzamos a escuchar de esta manera, podremos escucharnos y comprendernos mejor y, al escucharnos unos a otros, llegaremos a comprender con mayor profundidad y claridad la Palabra de Dios y la doctrina auténtica de la Iglesia.

Algunos perciben erróneamente que escuchar implica una especie de exigencia de que Dios ratifique los deseos desordenados de lo que no es posible que sea bendecido. Si intentamos este tipo de escucha sin verdaderamente escuchar primero, acompañados del Espíritu Santo, la verdad de las propias palabras de Cristo, hablaremos más de lo que escucharemos en nuestro peregrinar en la vida de la Iglesia y, al mismo tiempo, nos volveremos miserablemente indiferentes a los Diez Mandamientos y al mensaje pleno de Cristo. El Espíritu Santo no puede contradecirse respecto a estos elementos; y de ninguna manera debemos exigirle al Espíritu Santo que lo haga. ✝



The Official Publication of the
Diocese of Fort Worth

November / December Issue 2023

800 West Loop 820 South
Fort Worth, TX 76108



A Tax-Saving Way to Help Catholic Charities Fort Worth

Are you looking to make a difference to help further the mission of Catholic Charities Fort Worth (CCFW)? An IRA charitable rollover is one way you can help continue our work.

Benefits of an IRA charitable rollover:

- Avoid taxes on transfers up to \$100,000 from your IRA to the CCFW Endowment.
- Beginning the year you turn 73, your gift can satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year.
- Reduce your taxable income, even if you don't itemize deductions.
- Investment earnings from your gift will be used today, allowing you to see the impact your donation is making.



How an IRA charitable rollover gift works:

- Contact your IRA plan administrator to make a gift from your IRA to Catholic Charities Endowment.
- Your IRA funds will be directly transferred to our organization to help continue our work.
- Please note that IRA charitable rollover gifts do not qualify for a charitable deduction.

 **817.289.2780**

 **Isotelo@ccdofw.org**

 **CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org**

Please consider seeking advice from your financial advisor or tax professional to understand how recent changes in laws governing retirement plans may impact you and your charitable gift.

The information presented is not intended as legal, tax, or other professional advice. For assistance in charitable estate planning, please consult an attorney for legal advice or the services of a qualified professional.