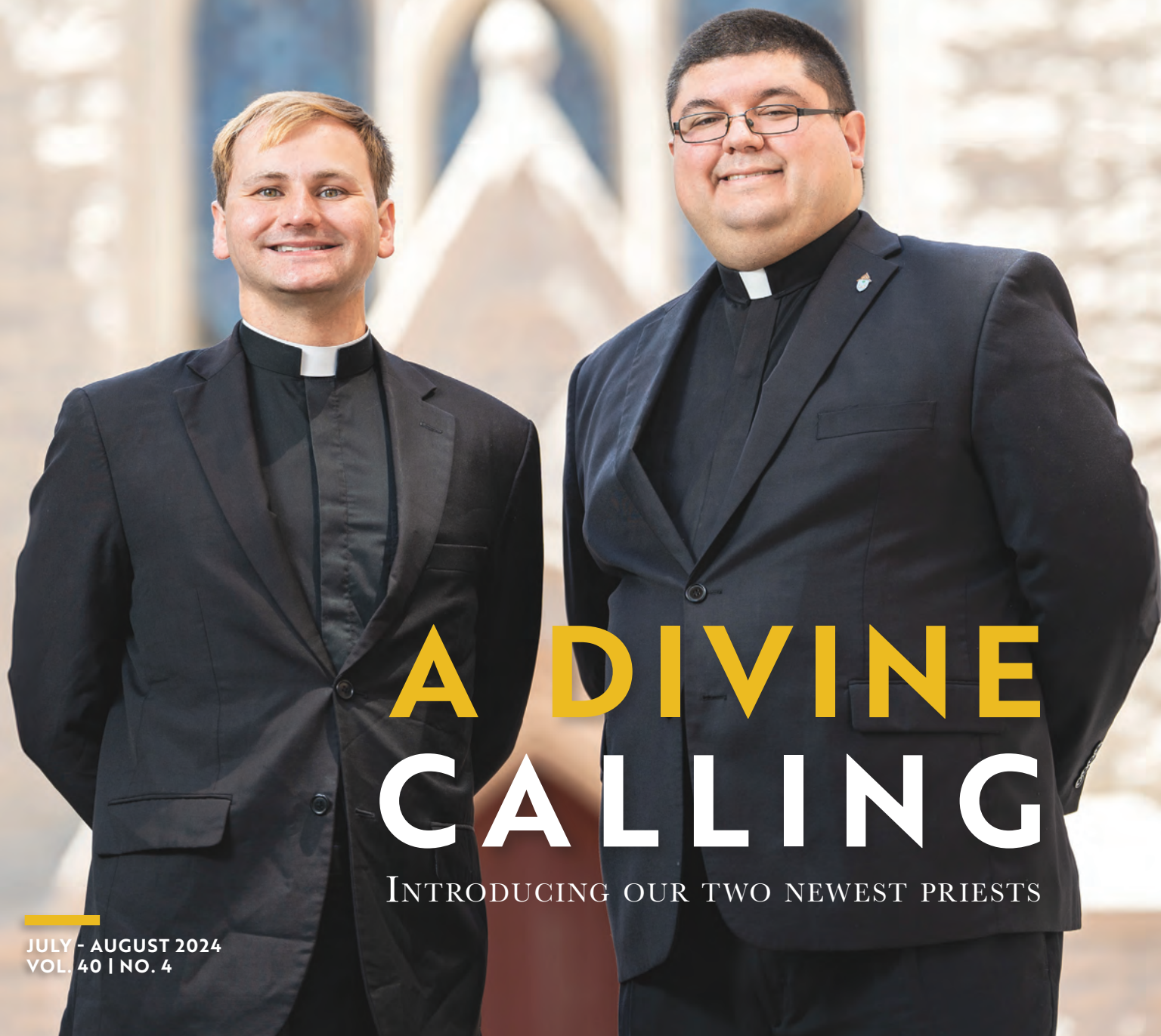


BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



A DIVINE CALLING

INTRODUCING OUR TWO NEWEST PRIESTS

JULY - AUGUST 2024
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THE MORALITY OF IN VITRO FERTILIZATION

Recent court cases in Alabama and here in Texas have reintroduced conversations into the public forum about the dignity of human embryos who have been conceived through in vitro fertilization (IVF) but remain frozen awaiting implantation into the body of a woman that they might be carried through pregnancy until birth. On Feb. 16, the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that the frozen embryos were persons allowing parents to claim civil damages for the deaths of their children if the embryos were to be destroyed in the IVF clinic. The court also cited a 2018 constitutional amendment passed by the State of Alabama that says, “It is the public policy of this state to recognize and support the sanctity of unborn life and the rights of unborn children, including the right to life.”

In Texas, the law banning nearly all abortions that went into effect last September after the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* by the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* decision defines an unborn child as “an individual living member of the *homo sapiens* species from fertilization until birth, including the entire embryonic and fetal stages of development.” Both the Alabama and Texas laws and subsequent court cases have prompted legal and moral considerations of the process of IVF and whether frozen embryos should be treated as persons or property.

While these issues might appear to be

new to contemporary courts and legislatures, they have been addressed with sensitive and pastoral reflection by the Catholic Church for many years. In 1987, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (now known as the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith — DDF) published the Instruction, *Donum Vitae*. This document considered the various procedures involved with IVF considering the moral teaching of the Church regarding the dignity of the human person and the principles of natural law. The document considered such varied issues as surrogate motherhood, the harvesting of embryos for the purposes of experimentation, and the morality of IVF itself. The teaching presented in *Donum Vitae* has been further developed in subsequent papal encyclicals and teaching documents, including most recently *Dignitas Infinita*, promulgated by the DDF on April 8.

The reasoning of the Church regarding the issue of IVF and the human embryos brought into being through IVF is that IVF mistreats the dignity of the personhood of the embryos conceived. Embryos are human beings and unborn children. IVF also mistreats the dignity of the biological mothers and fathers of these unborn children and the dignity of the adoptive mothers and fathers because the technology of IVF replaces the human relationship of the marital act between one man and one woman as designed by God for the just and respectful procreation

of human life. IVF invites third parties into the intimate marital relationship while exploiting the emotions of couples naturally desiring to conceive and welcome children into their family.

IVF, because of financial costs and the high possibility of failure involved with implanting a frozen embryo within the body of a woman, requires the conception of more than one embryo, which goes beyond the number of embryos that a woman could safely carry through her pregnancy. This places an unfair distinction between implanted embryos and “spare” embryos who are frozen in case they are “needed” as replacements in case of miscarriage.

As the conversation about the morality, legality, and advisability of IVF continues in our courts, legislatures, and public discourse, it is important for Catholics to realize that the Church teaches that unborn children brought into being through IVF, frozen or implanted, are human beings to be accorded the same respect and rights of any other born or unborn child and should never be treated as property. We should also remember that the strong and natural desire to conceive and have children that married couples experience when sadly frustrated by infertility should not be emotionally or financially exploited by the false promises of IVF clinics who incorrectly but sincerely claim that a couple has a right to a child on their own terms. 🇺🇸

A saint in sneakers

So much can be learned from the short life of Blessed Carlo Acutis.

If you aren't familiar with the 15-year-old Italian youth, he is poised to become the Church's first millennial saint. Last month, Pope Francis approved a second miracle attributed to the prayerful intervention of Blessed Carlo, opening the path to his canonization.

Born in 1991, Carlo relished computers and video games like many in his generation, and he enjoyed playing soccer and basketball and hanging out with friends.

But beginning in his childhood, he had a special devotion to Jesus and the Virgin Mary, and he convinced his not-so-devout parents to bring him to Mass daily. He used his own money to buy food and sleeping bags for the poor.

As a teen, Blessed Carlo devoted more than two years to researching and designing an online database of Eucharistic miracles around the world.

He died of leukemia in 2006, less than two weeks after falling ill.

Along with more than a thousand others, I visited the Eucharistic Miracles exhibition created and designed by Blessed Carlo and hosted by Holy Redeemer Parish in Aledo. Displays featured about 150 Eucharistic miracles the teen had painstakingly researched. (A virtual exhibition can be found at CarloAcutis.com.)

According to his spiritual director, Carlo hoped the scientific evidence of Eucharistic miracles would help people understand the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and compel them to return to Mass. But many more lessons can be learned from Blessed Carlo's 15 years.

- All of us are called to holiness, at every age and in every age.
- Do the good now, not later. Don't wait to serve or to donate or to love.
- Focus on the infinite.
- Stay close to the Eucharist. In the words of Blessed Carlo, "The Eucharist is the highway to heaven."

Susan Moses

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cma
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Views from the Pews

Summer is a special time of year, even if your school days are long behind you. Longer days and more relaxed schedules allow for special activities to grow in faith and community with fellow Catholics.

Last day of school. The end of the school year is often bittersweet, combining the fun of field days and band concerts with summer goodbyes to friends and teachers. The last day often features a Mass honoring graduates, shown here at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Classical School in Fort Worth.

Summer nights. On May 29, young adults enjoyed Young Adult Summer Nights, featuring Mass and Eucharistic Adoration followed by a social hour with food and beverages. Two more young adult evenings are planned for June 26 and July 10.

Stepping outside. Proving you're never too old to try something new, St. Mary Parish in Gainesville held its first Eucharistic Procession on June 2, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. First communicants led the procession for the church, which was founded in 1879.

THERE'S
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NTC/Juan Cuajardo



NTC/Matthew Redden



NTC/Thomas Otto

Candidates profess faith



Three men prepare for permanent diaconate

NTC/Annette Mendoza-Smith



Scott Elder, Guillermo Muñoz, Bishop Michael Olson, and Alan Vu.

FORT WORTH — Three men to be ordained to the permanent diaconate took an important step in their vocational journey before receiving holy orders on June 21 at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington.

Scott Alan Elder, Guillermo Muñoz Medina, and Alan Hung Quoc Vu made a profession of faith and signed an Oath of Fidelity during Mass on Monday, June 3 at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth.

“The profession of faith is a matter of integrity,” said Bishop Michael Olson during his homily. “Faith is not a private experience or a personal preference or just simply an assumption in wishful thinking. There is a public dimension that involves all the members of the church.”

Before ordination, all ordained ministers take the Oath of Fidelity, signing a public declaration that they believe all the Catholic Church teaches and promising to uphold the entirety of the Catholic faith in their ministry.

Formation for permanent deacons in the Diocese of Fort Worth includes about five years of theological, pastoral, and spiritual training.

Check NorthTexasCatholic.org and the next issue of the magazine for photos and an article about their June 21 ordination.

A holy encounter



Holy Redeemer Parish hosts exhibit on Eucharistic miracles

ALEDO — The most modern of future saints devoted his life to one of the oldest of mysteries: the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

Blessed Carlo Acutis, an Italian teen, showed an early devotion to the Eucharist, calling it his “highway to heaven.” Born in 1991, the youth spent almost two and a half years researching and making a virtual exhibition of Eucharistic miracles before he died in 2006 at the age of 15 from leukemia.

Pope Francis beatified the youth in 2020 in Assisi, making him the first millennial to be declared blessed.

On May 23, 2024, Pope Francis announced a second miracle has been attributed to the teen, opening the path for Acutis’ canonization.

The Eucharistic miracles exhibition created and designed by Blessed Carlo Acutis was



Karen Amaya from St. Ann Parish in Burleson views the exhibit with her niece and nephews.

NTC/Juan Guajardo

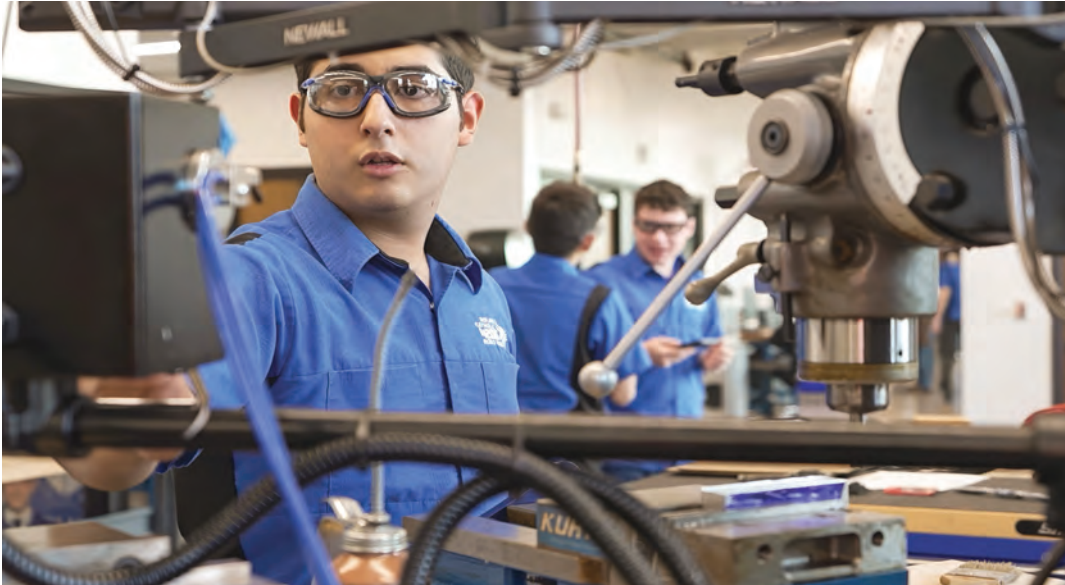
on display at Holy Redeemer Parish in Aledo May 30 through June 2, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

According to Lauren Walsh, Holy Redeemer’s director of religious education and youth ministry, more than 1,200 people visited the exhibition,

including youth groups from several parishes.

In his homily at the Mass which opened the exhibition, Monsignor Publius Xuereb said Blessed Carlo was present. “The Eucharist unites us with Carlo and the saints from all ages, all locations.”

Robo Vikes conquer world championship



Robo Vike Miguel Gutierrez practices his manufacturing skills at Nolan Catholic High School. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FORT WORTH — Nolan Catholic High School’s award-winning robotics team, Robo Vikes, returned to the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition World

Championship in Houston. This was the team’s fourth time competing at the championship and marks their first win. The Robo Vikes and the three teams in their alliance won the 2024 Archimedes Division, which comprised

75 teams. After earning the division award, the Robo Vikes proceeded to participate in “The Einstein Playoffs,” a feat only the top eight alliances achieved.

“Our goal as a team was always to be on that Einstein

Field. It’s taken years, leadership, working together, problem solving — but we got there. We met that goal,” said Julia Ermish, team mentor and mother of a Robo Vikes alumnus.


“We start the year analyzing the game and the perfect robot to play,” explained Brad Billeaudeau, director of engineering and head robotics coach. The students work in small teams sketching designs then move to computer-aided design before construction.

“These kids are running \$75,000 machines — running lathes, manufacturing parts. A mentor supervises and helps, but the kids are making these parts,” Billeaudeau said. “A lot of our alumni come back and say, ‘Wow, our shop is better than at college.’”

Billeaudeau and Ermish laud the Robo Vikes’ volunteer mentors, many of whom are engineers, for their help.

— Lisa Moore

The gift of time

 Eighth-grade students spend day at cathedral contemplating religious vocations

FORT WORTH — The morning of April 25, St. Patrick Cathedral quietly hummed with youthful hope, excitement, and fellowship.

Bishop Michael Olson opened the annual Eighth Grade Vocations Mass, warmly welcoming the hundreds of students filling the pews.

He reminded the junior high students they had been brought together “because God has given you the precious gift of time, time to listen to those who are a little older than you, and time to hear what invitation Christ is offering you to share your gift of time — the gift of a vocation.”

After Mass, students attended

vocations talks in the parish hall.

“It is the most important thing in your life, to give concrete time to God every day, and second is saying yes, to be the courageous man that works hard,” Nolan Catholic High School Chaplain Father Brett Metzler said as he talked to the eighth-grade boys.

Consecrated virgin Mary Del Olmo discussed with eighth-grade girls how one may live a life of holiness: “We have this universal call, this universal vocation of holiness, being faithful to being in community, to being of Jesus, to being reverent and sacred.”

— Christina Benavides



St. Rita student Isabella Escutia prays during Mass.

NTC/Juan Guajardo

A special occasion



St. Francis of Assisi Parish begins 75th anniversary with a Eucharistic procession

GRAPEVINE — On Saturday, June 1, St. Francis of Assisi Parish observed the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ with a Eucharistic procession after Mass and their annual cookout picnic.

“The sacrament of the Eucharist is the greatest of sacraments,” Father Sojan George said in his homily. “The Eucharist is not just a symbol of Christ’s presence with us. It is not just a reminder of Christ’s self-offering in the past. No, Jesus Christ is truly present in the sacrament.”

He patiently emphasized the importance of bowing or kneeling before receiving the Blessed Sacrament. A firm

reminder for the group of communicants about to receive the Eucharist for the first time, yes, but also for the congregation, who Fr. George said may sometimes forget to venerate the gift they receive each Sunday.

The prayer hints at the community’s progress in developing a love for the Eucharist, a focus they adopted in celebration of the Grapevine parish’s 75th anniversary this year.

The anniversary commemorations will culminate with Bishop Michael Olson celebrating Mass at St. Francis of Assisi on October 5, a day after the feast day of their patron saint.

— Christina Benavides



Father Sojan George elevates the monstrance. (NTC/Scott Wagner)

Sandy Steves from St. Michael Parish. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Reaching a ‘forgotten population’



Diocesan Special Needs Workshop inspires, ignites ideas to welcome those with disabilities into the faith

FORT WORTH — God’s Own Children ministry at St. Michael Parish in Bedford was featured at the diocesan Special Needs Workshop at the Catholic Center on May 16 to provide a “concrete model and to inspire you and

to ignite ideas as to how you at your parish can foster a culture open to ministering to those with special needs,” said Diocesan Director of

Evangelization and Catechesis Jason Whitehead.

Sandy Steves from God’s Own Children explained and gave examples of the Bedford parish’s ministry.

The Church, Whitehead affirmed, has been working to address how kids and adults with disabilities get initiated into the sacraments and welcomed into the faith.

As Whitehead walked the DREs through the beginning pages of the USCCB’s 2017 revised “Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities,” he pointed

out the document “mentions explicitly that our outreach as the Church to those with special needs goes beyond the sacraments and to the entirety of parish life.”

The Bedford ministry, which Whitehead said addresses a “forgotten population” — those with disabilities who are too old for early intervention but still need support — goes “far beyond merely teaching; it is about fully initiating all people of all ages with all special needs into parish life.”

— Christina Benavides

Sealed by the Spirit



Bishop Michael Olson is scheduled to celebrate 65 Masses of Confirmation across the diocese this year. Classes of confirmation candidates range in size from as few as two to more than 125.

In the photo at left, Bishop Olson confirms a young man at St. George Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

IN MEMORIAM

DEACON JOSEPH MILLIGAN

A holy man. A humble servant. An exceptional listener whose compassion and gentle presence helped heal struggling souls.

That is how friends, family, and the many people he served at Holy Family Parish remember Deacon Joseph Milligan, who passed away May 27 at the age of 85.

A member of the first class of permanent deacons in the diocese, the longtime Fort Worth resident was ordained on August 19, 1989, with 12 other men.

For a number of years, the late deacon worked as diocesan director of deacons and helped in the formation process for men ordained in 1995 and 2003.

“He was a father figure for me and others,” said Deacon Don Warner, who succeeded Milligan as director of deacons. “Dcn. Joe was committed to his ministry and was a great example of a deacon as a servant of the people.”



Dcn. Joseph Milligan

SISTER MARY FULBRIGHT, SSMN

Sister Mary Venard Fulbright, SSMN, an educator, diocesan school superintendent, and social worker, died on May 23, at age 94.

After graduating from high school in Waco, Sr. Mary entered the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur on September 21, 1947.

She taught in Catholic schools in Wichita Falls, Fort Worth, Arlington, Beaumont, and Houston as well as California. She served as principal at three schools.

She was appointed superintendent of Catholic Schools for the diocese from 1973 until 1982. In 1974, Sr. Mary and Sister Mary Bonaventure, SHSp, established Cassata Catholic High School.

With a master's in social work, she worked for University of Texas at Arlington for 15 years, serving as director of the UTA School of Social Work Community Services Development Center until her retirement in 1997.



Sr. Mary Fulbright, SSMN



Read the full obituaries at NorthTexasCatholic.org.

ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

REV. JAMES AMASI, SAC

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Mary Parish in Dublin, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in De Leon, and Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche, effective July 1.

REV. LUIS GERARDO ARRAIZA, OFM CAP

Previously Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, has been **reassigned** by his religious order, effective July 1.

REV. MEL BESSELLIEU

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine, has been appointed **Sacramental Minister** of St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Roanoke, effective July 1.

REV. JOSE FELICIANO TORRES CASTRO, OFM CAP

Previously Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Pastor** of the parish, effective July 1.

REV. MARIANNA FRANCIS CHINTHAMALLA, HGN

Previously Pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Rhineland and Santa Rosa Parish in Knox City, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Jude Parish in Mansfield, effective July 1.

REV. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS TUYEN QUANG DINH, CRM

New to the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Christ the King Parish in Fort Worth, effective June 8.

REV. ERIC FLORES

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

REV. JAMES GIGLIOTTI, TOR

Previously Pastor of St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, has been **reassigned** by his religious order, effective July 1.

REV. BENJAMIN GROTHOUSE

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

REV. KEITH HATHAWAY

Previously Pastoral Administrator of St. Rita Parish in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Pastor** of the parish, effective May 18.

REV. AUSTIN HOODENPYLE

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, has been appointed **Pastoral Administrator** of Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster, effective July 1.

REV. ED HOPKINS

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Jude the Apostle Parish in Mansfield, has been appointed **Pastoral Administrator** of St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville, effective July 1.

REV. THOMAS JONES

Previously Pastoral Administrator of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Abbott and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Penelope, has been appointed **Pastor** of the parishes, effective May 18.

REV. BOSE JUJUVARAPU, HGN

Previously Sacramental Priest of Sacred Heart Parish in Seymour and St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Megargel, has been appointed **Pastor** of the parishes, effective July 1.

REV. JOSEPH KEATING

Previously Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster, has been appointed **Pastor** of Holy Redeemer Parish in Aledo, effective Aug. 1.

REV. BINOY KURIAN, TOR

Previously Hospital Chaplain and resident of St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Pastor** of Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in Arlington, effective July 1.

BROTHER PIO PIETRELCINA M. TO THIEN LAM, CRM

Previously residing at Holy Family Religious and Retreat Center in Fort Worth, has been **reassigned** by his religious order, effective June 1.

REV. BRIJIL LAWRENCE, SAC

Previously Pastor of St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Roanoke, will remain **Director of the Propagation of the Faith and Chair of the Mission Council** and will reside at St. Ann Parish in Burseson, effective July 1.

REV. BRANDON LeCLAIR

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills, has been appointed **Pastoral Administrator** of St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Granbury and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Glen Rose, effective July 1.

REV. FEDERICO ORTIZ MADRIGAL, OFM CAP

Previously Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, has been **reassigned** by his religious order, effective July 1.

REV. MARIYA JAMES SUSAI MANICKAM, SAC

Previously Pastor of Holy Angels Parish in Clifton and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Morgan, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, effective July 1.

REV. VIJAYA MAREEDU, SAC

Previously Pastor of St. Michael Parish in Bedford, has been appointed **Hospital Chaplain** with residence at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth, effective July 1.

REV. SAMUEL MAUL

Previously Pastoral Administrator of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, has been appointed **Pastor** of the parish, effective May 18.

REV. CLAUDIUS STEPHEN MNDOLWA, SAC

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville, St. Mary Parish in Dublin, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in De Leon, and Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche, has been appointed **Pastor** of Holy Angels Parish in Clifton and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Morgan, effective July 1.

REV. JOHN DAMASCE VUONG DUC NGO, CRM

From outside the diocese, now residing at Holy Family Religious and Retreat Center in Fort Worth, effective June 1.

REV. LINH NGUYEN

Previously Pastoral Administrator of St. George Parish in Fort Worth, was appointed **Pastor** of the parish, effective May 18.

REV. EMMET O'HARA, SAC

Previously Pastor of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, has been **reassigned** by his religious order, effective July 1.



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REV. DANIEL PATTEE, TOR

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Pastor** of the parish, effective July 1.

REV. FRANCIS DE SALES M. TU THUAN PHAM, CRM

Previously residing at Holy Family Retreat Center in Fort Worth, has been **reassigned** by his religious order, effective June 1.

REV. JIMMY PHAM, CRM

From outside the diocese, now residing at Holy Family Religious and Retreat Center in Fort Worth, effective June 1.

REV. FERNANDO PRECIADO

Previously Pastor of St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Granbury and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Glen Rose, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Bartholomew the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, effective Sept. 1.

REV. ROBERTO VIVERO ROSALES, OFM CAP

From outside the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, effective July 1.

REV. MATTHEW SANKA, SAC

Previously Pastor of St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville, St. Mary Parish in Dublin, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in De Leon, and Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche, will remain as **Pastor** of St. Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Sacred Heart but resign as Pastor of St. Brendan, effective July 1.

REV. MATTHEW SIMONS, TOR

New to the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, effective August 1.

REV. FRANCIS TAN TIEN TA, CRM

Previously Parochial Vicar of Christ the King Parish in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington, effective June 15.

REV. ANH Q. TRAN

Retired, effective April 1.

REV. ALPHONSE TRI VU, CRM

Previously Parochial Vicar of Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington, has been **reassigned** by his religious order, effective June 15.

DEACON ASSIGNMENTS

DEACON KEVIN BAGLEY

Previously at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, has been assigned to St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington, effective July 1.

DEACON BRUCE CORBETT

Previously at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington, has retired, effective May 17.

DEACON JIM ROBERT NOVAK

Previously Parish Life Coordinator at Sacred Heart Parish in Seymour and St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Megargel, has been appointed deacon at the parishes, effective July 1.

DEACON JOE RAMOS

Previously at Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in Arlington, has been assigned to St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, effective July 1.

S u c c e s s in the first degree

CCFW's Stay the Course program helps struggling college students graduate

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

The first time Samantha Alford enrolled in college, the high school graduate was married and pregnant with her first child. Despite having a scholarship to pay for tuition, the young mother's time as an undergraduate in 2000 was short-lived.

"I was in a domestic violence marriage and all the things that come with that, so I stopped going," the 44-year-old remembered.

Twenty-one years later, Alford, now divorced with grown children, resurrected her dream of earning a degree with the help of Stay the Course (STC).

"Going back to school was challenging, but they showed me how to stay focused on my goal," admitted Alford, a class of 2024 graduate with a degree in substance abuse and mental health counseling.

The Fort Worth resident is one of 64 Stay the Course clients graduating in May and August with an associate's degree from Tarrant County College.

Their achievements were recognized at a June 3 ceremony at the college's downtown river campus. A Catholic Charities Fort Worth program offered in partnership with TCC, Stay the Course helps low-income students overcome personal, non academic barriers that often prevent them from completing their education. Helping individuals achieve careers with a living wage is one of the ways CCFW hopes to end systemic poverty.

"We know the key to moving out of poverty is securing a job that pays a living wage, and to get that job, you need an education, degree, or

certificate," Cindy Casey, head of CCFW client services, told graduates and guests at the graduation ceremony. "Our education pathway programs like Stay the Course are designed to help students from all walks of life navigate non academic barriers to complete their educational goals and increase earnings."

The STC program pairs participants with a navigator who encourages setting goals and guides them through money or family situations that could impact success in college. In addition to case management, financial assistance is available up to \$1,500 for unexpected expenses.

"The biggest obstacle for our students is transportation and childcare," explained Shannon Leonard, the Stay the Course CCFW program manager. "Many times, they have to decide can I afford childcare or school? Do I have reliable transportation? We try to mitigate some of those obstacles."

Stay the Course case managers can refer clients to employment providers or assist with other challenges like gaining U.S. citizenship, a driver's license, or housing.

"We really try to address the whole student and not just their academic needs," Leonard asserted.

Launched in 2013 at the downtown campus, enrollment in STC is now available at all five TCC locations plus Connect Campus — an option that offers flexible learning through online and weekend classes.

"We meet those students entirely online," the administrator added. "We had to shift our thinking

during the pandemic and that really opened the doors for us to reach more students.”

Since its inception at TCC, Stay the Course has served more than 2,000 clients and boasts an exceptional success rate.

“Eighty-six percent of our students passed all their classes last semester,” the program director said proudly. “We often hear from our graduates years later. They are thankful for the support and listening ear of the navigator who helped them achieve an education and gainful living-wage employment.”

Although most STC students pursue degrees related to health professions, Victoria Cardona chose a different path. The 21-year-old is transferring to Texas Christian University where she will study accounting on a full tuition scholarship.

“I want to be educated about finances so I can help my family and community,” said Cardona, whose parents immigrated from Mexico. “Money issues have always been a source of fear in my family. My

mother and father work hard but still struggle. That scared me into knowing I needed something different.”

After graduating from Castleberry High School, the straight-A student received no guidance when it came to filling out college applications or financial aid forms.

“My obstacle was money,” she said. “A scholarship would cover my education, but there was no help with household expenses and groceries.”

Cardona joined Stay the Course a year ago and quickly advanced through the program.

“My navigator helped me set goals and checked on my progress,” said the first-generation graduate, explaining how she learned to pay off debt by tackling one bill at a time. “She motivated and pushed me. Stay the Course showed me an education and financial stability are attainable.”

Cardona’s story underscores how education pathway programs, sponsored by

Catholic Charities, play a role in ending poverty.

Community colleges are affordable and exemplary places of higher learning that help students accomplish goals, Casey pointed out.

“But so many who start community college never finish,” she continued. “So we partnered with the University of Notre Dame and created a program that pairs students with navigators to help them overcome the institutional and personal obstacles that frequently prevent them from completing their education.”

Casey called earning a degree “a life-altering accomplishment.” Michael Iglie, CEO and president of Catholic Charities Fort Worth, echoed the sentiment.

“I’m in awe of each one of you,” he said, addressing the graduates. “You’ve taken such a difficult path and achieved something truly remarkable. Tonight, we celebrate your accomplishments and dedication to education.” 🇺🇸

Kay Carroll, a Stay the Course navigator, smiles with emotion as she hands an award to a TCC graduate during the 2024 Stay the Course graduation on June 3 at Tarrant County College Trinity River campus. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



FOUNDED IN CHARITY

For nearly 20 years, Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation has provided aid for Catholic school tuition, families affected by childhood cancer

By Lance Murray

It's been nearly 20 years since 15-year-old Stephen Breen died from bone cancer, and the foundation he envisioned, which his family worked to make a reality continues to offer tuition assistance to Catholic school students and to assist families with children battling cancer.

After battling Ewing sarcoma, for 16 months, a rare and aggressive form of bone cancer, the sophomore at Nolan Catholic High School died on Oct. 4, 2004. But his legacy of philanthropy, selfless dedication, and wholehearted devotion to the Catholic faith continues to live in the good works of the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation.

Stephen's father, Jim Breen, recalls how his son's vision came to be and the impact it has had on the Catholic community.

"When Stephen relapsed with cancer, he knew he was going to die. We knew he was going to die, and we talked about creating a foundation," Breen said. "We had a whiteboard in our kitchen, and he wrote on it: 'If you're going to create a foundation in my memory' and 'Here's two things I want to do.'"

Those two things? Tuition assistance for Catholic school students and aid for patients and families affected by

childhood cancer.

"Not everybody who wants a Catholic school education for their children can afford it," Breen recalled his son, a St. Andrew Catholic School graduate, saying. "So, help those people make that affordable."

Stephen also said, "A lot of folks did a lot of nice things for me when I had cancer. I've got to pay that back, you know, help other kids who are being treated for cancer."

Breen said his son's wishes were clear.

"He specified the two missions, and so we're just trying to honor his wishes since then," Breen affirmed.

A VISION REALIZED

Now, almost 20 years since the foundation's founding, Breen reflected on what it has accomplished.

"We're still at it, and every year we're hoping to be able to provide a little bit more assistance so it keeps trending in the right direction," he said. "The bottom line is there's over 3,000 kids who have benefited in some way, shape, or form from Stephen's Foundation, and that's the achievement."

The foundation raises money with its sponsored events, including the Spirit Games, which took place April



Nolan student volunteers cheer on youth as they compete in a cake walk during the Spirit Games at Nolan Catholic High School on April 28. The games are an annual event put on for the youth of the Diocese of Fort Worth by the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

28 at Nolan Catholic High School. Other events include the Giving Wings Dinner, Wildcat Challenge Basketball Tournament, Swing “Fore” Stephen Golf Tournament, and the Rahr Brewery Party.

Volunteers staff the foundation, and more than 95 percent of the income is distributed to children in need.

The largest recipients of the foundation’s funds are children in the 17 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Fort Worth. Other recipients include: cancer patients at Cook Children’s Hospital, through a cancer patient room dedicated to Stephen’s memory; Ronald McDonald House in Fort Worth, where the foundation sponsored a room for families of patients at Cook Children’s; and the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Since 2004, the foundation has donated a total of \$2,044,278 in tuition assistance to 3,083 pupils, making it the second largest source of financial aid to diocesan Catholic school students.

The nonprofit has provided financial assistance totaling \$324,855 for 241 children battling cancer.

Last year, \$10,000 in college scholarships was awarded to three students, and, cumulatively, 35 students have received a

total of \$105,000 in scholarship funding.

In all, Stephen’s wish has amounted to providing \$2,469,133 in assistance to 3,324 children, the foundation said.

Breen set a goal for the foundation to reach \$10 million to aid with its mission.

A LEGACY OF GOOD

Renée Underwood, the chief development officer of the Advancement Foundation of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth, said the work done by the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation is inspirational and truly grassroots in nature.

“They host this dinner at St. Patrick Parish Hall, and you want to talk about an event that inspires and uplifts and makes those who attend become better people,” she said. “You become an advocate; you become a champion for their work.”

Shannon Irwin, current diocesan athletic director and former gym teacher at St. Andrew, said the Spirit Games has become a popular event that not only raises funds for the foundation but also gives families in the diocese an outlet to enjoy a variety of faith-centered entertainment.

The event is like a fall festival in format, with games, events, activities, and music, Irwin said.

“Lately, we’ve been averaging anywhere from 800 to 1,000 [people],” Irwin observed.

“It’s just a very fun-filled time,” she continued. “We always start with Mass first, and we always end with an inspirational message to the youth to ‘Go forth and choose the way of God.’”

Rose Hall Welborn, longtime director of development of St. Andrew, said she has known Breen for about 30 years.

She said Stephen’s Foundation and the work of his family has been an amazing support system for many families in the diocese.

“He has always had that servant’s heart,” she said of Breen. “I feel very strongly that Stephen was mimicking his father. His father and his mother showed him that example.”

Welborn said Stephen’s example is moving.

She explained, “Most children, especially at that age, they really only think about themselves — and he was in a lot of misery. This young man actually was really thinking about others even on his deathbed. That alone is just absolutely amazing to me that he was always one of those kids that really put others first. He really had a servant’s heart.” 🇹🇽



tenacious teacher

Sister Rita Claire Davis, SSMN, a 96-year-old ‘bundle of unstoppable energy,’ continues to love and inspire others in ESL ministry

By Sandra Engelland

Sister Rita Claire Davis, SSMN, is all smiles as she shows a visitor the rooms at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Fort Worth where English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are wrapping up for the day and for the semester.

The 96-year-old has directed the ESL program there for more than a decade, organizing classes for up to 100 students, getting materials, and tracking enrollment and student progress.

Until getting her third bout of COVID

in December, she taught a class, too, in addition to her administrative duties.

“After I got sick, the doctor said to dial back my activities, so I stopped teaching,” Sr. Rita Claire said.

Paul Park, a first-year ESL teacher, described the administrator as “a complete bundle of unstoppable energy.”

“I think about the effort it takes to organize this, organizing seven classes, getting the materials, and running it,” he said, shaking his head in wonder. “To be 96 years old and doing that.”

Classes meet for three hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the school year, taking breaks with school holidays and holy days.

Spring semester had four levels of instruction, and Sr. Rita Claire said the year was a bit of an anomaly as they had more students in the middle levels than at the beginning level.

In one Level 2 class, students read paragraphs they wrote on the whiteboard, recounting what they did over Mother’s Day weekend.

◀ Sister Rita Claire Davis, SSMN, poses with some students and volunteer instructors in her ESL program at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Fort Worth on May 7. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Elaine Sluiter, now in her sixth year of teaching ESL, helps students add missing words and use the correct verb tense, all the while praising their efforts.

Sluiter said Sr. Rita Claire is “the heart of the program, and she’s always ready to help everyone.”

Jody Puente retired from teaching several years ago because of issues with mobility. She said Sr. Rita Claire encouraged her to come teach ESL and told her she would have help and mobility challenges wouldn’t be an obstacle.

Puente works with assistant teacher Idalia Zapata, who can write lessons on the whiteboard and move around the classroom when needed.

Every teacher works with an assistant teacher, and at least one of the pair speaks Spanish, Sr. Rita Claire said.

Puente said Sr. Rita Claire exudes love and inspiration. “She cares about her students, and she cares about her teachers.”

They take attendance and Sr. Rita Claire is quick to ask about missing students and follow up with them.

Zapata said, “She’s an inspiration. I wish I could be like that at her age and have that energy and strength.”

‘I WANT TO DO THAT SOMEDAY’

Sr. Rita Claire joined the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur 77 years ago.

Her parents, neither of whom had more than a sixth-grade education, lived outside Dallas.

Her mother converted to Catholicism because of the kindness of a Catholic neighbor who also was a young mother.

Sr. Rita Claire’s mother highly valued education and wanted to send her daughter to Catholic school.

After being turned down at Ursuline Academy because Sr. Rita Claire was too young, her mother approached St. Edwards Catholic School in Dallas.

They also said the 5-year-old girl was too young, but when Sr. Rita Claire wouldn’t stop crying because she desperately wanted to go to school, first-grade teacher Sister Jeanne Marie relented and even agreed to take care of her after school until her father got off work.



Sister Rita Claire Davis, SSMN, laughs with an ESL student during class. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Her tuition was paid in fresh eggs, the only way the family could afford it.

Sr. Rita Claire vividly remembers going to downtown Dallas with her mother one Christmas and seeing a nun followed by a group of little boys. When she asked her mother about it, her mother told her the boys were orphans, and the sisters took care of them.

“I thought, ‘I want to do that someday,’” she said.

She worked her way through Our Lady of Victory College in Fort Worth and grew to love the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, who ran the school, even more.

“I just admired people who were so giving, and I wanted to be like them,” she said.

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH ESL

After college, she taught science and math at Bishop Dunne High School in Dallas and at Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth after it opened.

She also spent time in predominantly black parishes in South Carolina, helping people who were impoverished and in need.

She always wanted to go on missions to Africa and went to Canada for a while to learn French but decided, “I was too old to pick it up.”

After getting transferred back to the Diocese of Fort Worth, she began working

at Santa Rosa Parish in Knox City and St. Joseph Parish in Rhineland.

Santa Rosa had a largely Hispanic congregation, and she and another sister started teaching English in 1986. Many new immigrants were in the area, and learning English helped them settle into their communities, find jobs, and interact with schools.

Then she worked at parishes in Vernon, Quanah, and Crowell, continuing to teach ESL.

In 2008, she had another transfer and began teaching ESL in Mansfield where they had big classes. After getting transferred to Fort Worth in 2013, she wanted to start an ESL program and found a willing parish partner in Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Most of her teachers are retired, and both they and the students enjoy the classes.

“Some of the teachers say, ‘There’s something going on here, do you experience it?’” Sr. Rita Claire said. “We get so close to students, and it becomes a community. It’s something life-giving to each group.”

Sr. Rita Claire wants others to find that special joy of the Lord and issues a challenge: “Would you like to do something to help change people’s lives? You can by volunteering here.” 🇺🇸

A SCHOOL OF second chances

Alumni recount the life-changing impact of attending Cassata Catholic High School

By Alice Varela Murray

In 1974, Sister Mary Bonaventure, SHSp, and Sister Mary Fulbright, SSMN, envisioned a school for students who might be at risk of not finishing their secondary education.

Just a year later, Cassata Catholic High School opened in Fort Worth. This May, 49 years later, 18 more graduates joined the school's alumni ranks.

"Cassata is a very unique school," President Maggie Harrison, Ph.D. said. "It was meant to be a mission to reach out to those who really needed help, students who dropped out of high school or were rejected for whatever reason."

The school's success is a reminder of what the sisters dreamed all those years ago.

"Our founders were educators inspired by Mother Teresa to do something good in the community," Dr. Harrison said. "It was a mission of the Catholic Church, driven by their faith and love for God."

Located at 1400 Hemphill St., the school was named in honor of Bishop John Cassata, the first bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Cassata provides individualized education for high school students or older with issues such as poverty; physical or mental health issues; and academic, behavioral, or social challenges, including teenage pregnancy, abuse, and a host of family circumstances.

Students willing to learn are welcomed and given a second chance.

Among its alumni are Nicole McDaniel, support service manager for the Crowley Police Department; entrepreneur Jeremy Spann; and dentist Amanda Elling. All grabbed Cassata's lifeline to propel themselves onto successful journeys.

THEY BELIEVED IN ME

"I was your straight-A student taking pre-AP classes," McDaniel said, until she became pregnant.

Confronted with limited options,

Nicole McDaniel, support service manager for the Crowley Police Department, poses for a photo outside the Crowley police station. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

she chose to have the child, which was difficult for her family but supported by her parents.

By attending Cassata, McDaniel was able to finish the classes she needed to graduate, and it allowed her time to work. Most importantly, it gave her the ability to go to school and finish in a safe environment.

“They supported me and believed in me when I would get down,” McDaniel said. “I had sex out of wedlock, which was against the Catholic faith, and I was conflicted spiritually.”

McDaniel said Sister Bonaventure encouraged her not to give up.

“She was such a force of nature and tenacious, with such a heart. I wanted to be like that,” McDaniel said. “She truly inspired me. Cassata invested in me and taught me service, investment, and worth, and I am so grateful that they believed in me until I could believe in me.”

She still feels close bonds to her alma mater.

“I am part of that legacy. If I can make it, anyone can,” McDaniel said.

A support service manager for the Crowley Police Department, McDaniel has received numerous awards and certifications throughout her career and is an adjunct instructor at the Tarrant County College Law Enforcement Academy.

ACTIVE IN SERVICE

Jeremy Spann is an entrepreneur who owns multiple businesses.

A former U.S. Marine and law enforcement officer, Spann helps others launch their own businesses, passing forward business knowledge to help them succeed.

Spann’s journey to Cassata began when he dropped out of school and wanted to join the military. But when he tried to enlist, a recruiter told him because he lacked a high school diploma, he didn’t



qualify.

The recruiter pointed him toward Cassata to finish the credits he needed to graduate.

That led Spann to a successful military career.

“I thought, ‘Hey, you got a second chance here. Don’t screw this up. You’re not getting another one.’ So, when I went in the Marine Corps, I took it very seriously,” Spann said.

“When I graduated out of boot camp, I was the shortest, and I graduated number one at boot camp,” Spann said. “I went on to the school of infantry, and then I had a pretty interesting career,” including military intelligence.

After leaving the Marines, Spann joined the Fort Worth Police Department. His time in law enforcement included undercover work that put him in contact with people from all walks of life.

After 18 years, Spann retired from the police department, and he started his entrepreneurial journey, creating multiple real-estate-related companies.

INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

Raised in Fort Worth, Amanda Elling now practices as a general dentist in East Texas.

She credits Cassata with building the

foundation to begin a successful life.

Elling said, “Traditional high school was too distracting for me on the social level, and I was academically and behaviorally declining.”

She quit high school, then her father and stepmother “made an executive decision to enroll me into Cassata to ensure I completed high school.”

It took time for the school to grow on Elling.

“At first, I did not want to be there since I had been put there against my will. Once I settled in, I found the faculty to be amazing,” she said. “I felt like they truly cared about me and wanted me to succeed.”

She said Cassata customized the curriculum when she struggled.

“I had not experienced that care from a teacher since elementary school,” Elling said.

The faculty and staff always made her feel at home, and the hours accommodated her life.

“The half-day schedule allowed me to work in the afternoons and helped me focus on academics when I was at school.”

That individualized attention helped

Continued on Page 20

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Elling succeed and showed her not everyone is alike.

“Doing something a different way is not a bad thing,” she said. “What works for one person will not work for everyone.”

She appreciates how Cassata saw her as an individual.

“Not everyone fits in the same box. We all have struggles and being able to find what works for you to overcome those can make a difference,” Elling said. “I needed a different option for high school and Cassata filled that and, as a result, I learned how capable I am as a person.”

The school helped her find her life’s calling.

“If it was not for Cassata, I would not be in dentistry,” Elling said. “One day at school, we had a trade school who came and spoke to us. Apparently, I filled out a questionnaire form for them and marked I was interested in the medical and dental fields. I did not remember filling it out.

“My father told me that I had to do something after high school, so I ended up attending school for dental assisting,” Elling continued. “From there, I learned I loved dentistry and ended up going back to school to become a dentist.”

She graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington and later received her DDS degree from Texas A&M University School of Dentistry.

TRUE TO ITS ROOTS

The core of Cassata hasn’t changed, said Dr. Harrison, president of Cassata. “We have the same mindset, mission, and goals of the founding sisters.”

Just as in 1975, the school welcomes students of all backgrounds and all faiths, offering an education “to give students a good start in life. It comes from Christ’s love for them,” she said.

However, she added, in recent years the school has included more structured spiritual support, including theology instruction and opportunities to pray and attend Mass.

Dr. Harrison said Cassata faculty and staff are mindful that “We are the face of Christ for many of these kiddos. We always have been.” 🇺🇸



Entrepreneur and retired Marine Jeremy Spann poses for a photo inside Cassata Catholic High School on June 4. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Dr. Maggie Harrison, president and principal of Cassata Catholic High School, is shown at the school on June 4. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Images of the new parish hall for St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish on display after a Sunday Mass in Roanoke on June 2. (NTC/Ben Torres)

HOME IS WHERE we are

St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish moves forward on permanent home plans

By Matthew Smith

St. Teresa of Calcutta parishioners attend Mass among the hardwood floors, basketball goals, and team spirit banners of Roanoke’s Hughes Elementary School gymnasium for now, but that is about to change.

Excitement buzzed following June 2’s Sunday Mass for the “Big Reveal” of Phase 1 plans for St. Teresa’s soon-to-be new home. Deacon Daniel Zavala and others provided specifics accompanied by renderings of the parish buildings and campus to be built near TX-170.

The Diocese of Fort Worth’s 92nd and newest parish, St. Teresa celebrated its first Mass on Sept. 4, 2022, in a portable building where the new parish will soon sit. Parishioners soon overwhelmed that building’s 100-seat capacity, necessitating relocation first to a nearby middle school

and subsequently to Hughes Elementary. Growth, both within the parish and surrounding area, has greatly benefited the new parish.

Dcn. Zavala said, “We’ve already seen growth and a lot of new members in the nearly two years we’ve been around. There’s a lot of new home-building around here, so people who already lived here are finding us as well as people moving to North Texas from other areas.

“We’re hoping to get construction on the parish hall going in 30 to 40 days,” Dcn. Zavala said. “We have to pay that off before we can move to the next level of the church building. For now, the parish hall will seat 1,000 with plans to seat 2,500 in the eventual church.”

Parish Advancement Committee member Shelby Cobb admitted that church in a gym was not to her initial liking.

“As Catholics, we’re told we go to

church for the Mass, but we are the Church,” Cobb said. “That’s easier said than done when you’re used to the comforts of big, beautiful churches and sacred, reverent places. It wasn’t until I came here a few times that I realized the building isn’t what makes that — it’s us.”

Welcome Committee member Jennifer Wood said she and her husband began attending St. Teresa about a year ago.

“From our first visit, it was clear it was all about the people, the friendliness, the music,” Wood said. “And that’s what we as a welcoming committee want to exude, that love of Christ and invitation to come here and check us out.”

It’s heartening, Wood added, to witness the creation of a new parish.

“That’s what I like most,” Wood said. “I’ve seen churches close. So to see one built from the ground up, that is very exciting.” 🇺🇸



Altar servers lead the procession at the start of the Mass of Dedication and Blessing of St. Vincent de Paul Church on May 7. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

BUILT TO LAST

The dedication and blessing of
St. Vincent de Paul Church in Arlington

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Prudence and Ray Brett, charter members of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, have witnessed a lot of growth and change during the past 48 years. But, walking into the church building for the first time in 10 months, nothing prepared the couple for the transformation before them.

“It’s stunning,” said the mother of five adult children viewing the striking wall of Austin stone that is now home to niches for a tabernacle and statues of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. “I love the light and beauty of the added cupola on the roof. It makes a huge difference.”

The improvements are part of a \$3.2-million renovation started inside St. Vincent de Paul Church last July. A new altar, baptismal font, lectern, pews, sound system, and choir section helped turn the once plain, minimally decorated sanctuary into a more traditional-looking place of worship.

Parishioners had the opportunity to see the upgraded narthex, nave, and altar space during a Mass of Dedication and Blessing concelebrated by Bishop Michael Olson and pastor Father Philip Brembah on May 7.

“We have gathered today to bless this new font and to dedicate a new altar by celebrating the Lord’s sacrifice. Let us join

in these sacred rites with fervent hearts, listening to God’s word with faith and sharing joyfully at the Lord’s table,” the bishop prayed at the start of the liturgy.

“I’m thrilled to be here. It’s gorgeous,” Eliza Hatton, a longtime parishioner, said from one of the newly installed dark wood pews. “It definitely looks like a church now instead of an auditorium.”

Moving the baptismal font from the narthex to the sanctuary and installing a tabernacle in an elevated niche behind the altar are two major departures from the church’s original design. When St. Vincent de Paul Church was completed in 1984, baptisms were held in a gathering space near the doors of the church, and people

stepped over a glass-enclosed stream of water that fed into the font.

In keeping with the U.S. Catholic bishops' guidelines that "the rites of baptism, the first of the sacraments of initiation, require a prominent place for celebration" and to address infrastructure issues the parish had with its "river of water," a new baptismal font was constructed and placed near the altar. Inlaid river rocks now fill the path where water once flowed as a sentimental reminder of the many baptisms celebrated in the narthex.

In front of the new addition of a gold-toned tabernacle in the main church, a new altar is made of white marble but fashioned in the simple style of its wooden predecessor.

"Following Father Philip's instructions, I took the original design of the altar and recreated it to make it nice and bright," said Arlington cabinet maker and SVdP parishioner John Anton who also made the candle holders, baptismal font, and lectern to complement the altar. "It's nice to be part of a Church for 30 years and finally be able to contribute and build something. It was a blessing to be involved in this."

In his homily, Bishop Olson asked the congregation to pray for all those baptized, married, buried, who made their first Communion, or who had a religious vocation nurtured in the parish since its founding.

"Besides my intentions


for all of you, I'm offering this Mass for the repose of the souls of Monsignor Philip Johnson, founding pastor of St. Vincent de Paul, and Father Tom Craig. Both dedicated their lives to Christ and served with their whole hearts and souls here," he added.

Following a prayer of dedication, Bishop Olson anointed the new altar with holy chrism consecrating it as a symbol of Christ, "The Anointed One." Chrism — a perfumed oil used for Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders — is a powerful symbol of the Holy Spirit. Just as people are anointed with chrism to signify a particular sacrament, anointing an altar with chrism sets it apart for sacred use.

When the anointing was complete, incense was burned on the altar to indicate prayers rising to the throne of God. Parishioners then wiped the altar clean with towels before covering it in white linen to prepare for the sacrifice of the Mass. Candles were lit and placed next to the altar to remind worshippers that Christ is the light of the world.

Addressing the crowd of 800 attending the Dedication Mass, Fr. Brembah expressed gratitude to the parish for supporting the renovation project.

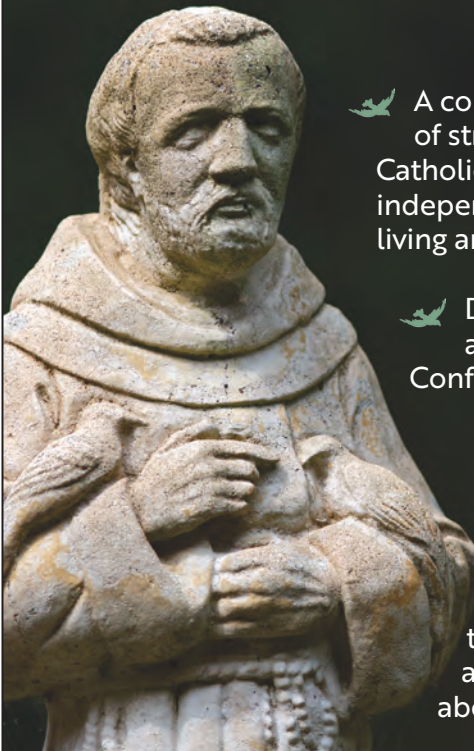
"The prayers, gifts, and talent you have contributed will help our parish grow in love and strength," he said. "I thank you for all you have done to make our dream become a reality." 🇺🇸



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a fond FAREWELL

The end to an era of Irish Pallottine priests in the diocese

By Matthew Smith

As Father Emmet O'Hara, SAC, readies for his upcoming departure from St. Stephen Church back to his homeland of Dublin, Ireland, so too approaches the end of an era for the Weatherford parish.

"I don't know what in the world we're going to do once we're no longer hearing an Irish accent during Mass and the homilies," St. Stephen parishioner Bobbi Westendorf said. "We won't know how to act. We've never known anything else."

Fr. O'Hara represents the last in an unbroken line of Irish Pallottine priests to have served St. Stephen since 1953. St. Stephen, established in 1882, is one of seven churches in the diocese that predates not only the Fort Worth but also the 1890 establishment of the Diocese of Dallas.

After the success of the Pallottines in Weatherford, in 1954 Diocese of Dallas-Fort Worth Bishop Thomas Gorman sought the help of the religious order to staff churches and develop faith communities elsewhere in the diocese. That tradition continued as the Diocese of Fort Worth was created in 1969, with Irish Pallottines serving for decades at eight

parishes in the western sections of the diocese.

Two late Irish Pallottines who continue to have an impact in the diocese include Father Philip McNamara, SAC, and Father Aidan Donlon, SAC.

Parishioners at St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville, St. Mary Parish in Dublin, Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche, Our Lady of Guadalupe in De Leon, St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Granbury, and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Glen Rose fondly remember Fr. McNamara, who served the diocese for 37 years and led the parishes during periods of significant growth.

Father Aidan Donlon, SAC, while working as a hospital chaplain in Wichita Falls for 31 years, inspired the Knights of Columbus Council 1473 to help priestly vocations. They have since raised \$3.5 million for seminarian education.

"I'm the last Irish Pallottine here and in [the Diocese of Fort Worth]," Fr. O'Hara said. "We can no longer staff it and regret that we're pulling out of Texas after all these years. It's just lack of vocations in the Irish provinces and our commitment to other locations."

A number of Pallottine priests from

Africa and India will continue to serve the diocese.

"The parish is grieving that they're going away," parishioner Emily Bosley said of the Irish Pallottines' longtime Weatherford presence. "They have been a true blessing to our parish and community."

Bosley, 98, well remembers the arrival of the parish's first Irish Pallottine priest.

"At that time, 1953, we'd been without a priest for three weeks," Bosley said. "My husband and I were one of the first parishioners he met."

While on the way to visit friends east of town, Bosley said she noticed a car in the rectory driveway.

"I said, 'Oh, I think our new priests have come,'" Bosley said. "So we stopped and I knocked on the door."

The first priest, Father Alphonsus Hayes, said he was just passing through when Bosley asked if he was the new priest, as did Father James Mullins, the second priest Bosley encountered.

Father James Maher then stepped out to introduce himself as the new pastor.

"We talked a bit, and I told him that since tomorrow was Thanksgiving, should I call all the people I know to come to



Father Emmet O'Hara, SAC, celebrates first Communion at St. Stephen Church in Weatherford on May 13, 2023. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

morning Mass?" Bosley said. "So we had our morning Thanksgiving Mass and that was our introduction to the Pallottine fathers."

Bosley, who joined the parish in 1947, said Irish Pallottine priests baptized all but her oldest child.

Bosley added that Fr. Mullins, who took over once Fr. Maher left, no doubt found Weatherford more hospitable than his previous assignment.

"He had been a missionary in Africa before, and he was attacked by a lion," Bosley said. "It nearly killed him. They thought he was going to die he was so badly mauled. He lost the use of his left arm and could only raise the Host with one hand when he was here."

Formerly known as the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, the Pallottines' society dates to 1835, and the Irish Pallottines, the Mother of Divine Love Province, was established in 1909. Members follow the charism of St. Vincent Pallotti through promoting collaboration between lay

people, priests, and religious to increase awareness of all peoples' callings, gifts, and vocations.

The Irish priests have promoted collaboration and more, several St. Stephen parishioners said.

"We were a very small parish when they first came," Bosley said. "Now you should see us. Our Masses are full, jam-packed full."

Ron Westendorf, who served for 20 years as business manager of St. Stephen, commended an earlier Irish Pallottine priest for having instituted the parish's first Spanish Mass in the 1980s, and he noted about a third of the parish currently speaks Spanish.

Parishioner and former parish council member Murielle Wright commended the stability and continuity Fr. O'Hara and the fathers before him brought to the parish.

"They've been so much," Wright said of the Pallottines. "We can't even think of them leaving. Fr. O'Hara and [Father

Mike O'Sullivan] before him, they've done so much to increase our members and attendance. They've reached out to younger people to keep this a vibrant, growing parish."

"Fr. Emmet and Fr. Mike always made sure everyone knew they belonged, that it's their Church, not just a church for a select few," Wright added. "A Church where everybody belongs and is part of the community, which has made the faith, membership, and community amazing."

Fr. O'Hara, who came to St. Stephen in 2019, joked that he's glad he arrived in March rather than Texas summer.

"Just a great state, great people," Fr. O'Hara said of his initial impressions of Texas. "I've found St. Stephen a fantastic parish of welcoming, warm, faith-filled people who are encouraging and supporting. I can't say enough good things about the people of St. Stephen. They've certainly helped me in my vocation as a priest. I'm certainly going to miss the great friends I've made here." 🇺🇸



TWO SONS IN SEMINARY

Segura family shares how they have discerned God's will

By Christina Benavides

When Monica Segura looks back, God's plan for her family is so clear.

"We're told not to complete our will, but God's will," her husband, Cruz, agreed.

Parents to Jesus and Jose, both of

whom are discerning their vocation in seminary for the Diocese of Fort Worth, Monica and Cruz Segura reflected on how the family has worked to open themselves to God's will.

Previous parishioners of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, the family moved

to Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Mineral Wells shortly after their eldest son Jesus received his first Communion.

At St. Stephen "the seed of faith was planted," Monica said. At Our Lady of Lourdes, the seed took root and flowered.

"We hadn't engaged in prayer or

anything other than attending Mass before,” Monica explained. “It wasn’t until we arrived here at [Our Lady of Lourdes] that we got involved with ministries and they began teaching us [to live an active life of faith]. They would teach us, and we would put the lessons into practice at home, all equally benefiting from it.”

HEART OF SERVICE

Monica remembers feeling surprised the day her eldest told her he wanted to enter seminary.

“What I saw, as his mother, was that at a young age, he liked to participate in activities with our priest, accompanying him in the Stations of the Cross or helping with the liturgy. Looking back, I think that’s when he started becoming more serious about his faith, but there was never a clear moment that I thought he was considering entering the seminary,” Monica said.

Growing up with parents who were open to embracing a life of faith and who welcomed that same openness in him was a great help, said Jesus.

“It was a matter of being encouraged to go and look for things that I was comfortable with in participating in the liturgy,” Jesus said. “So when I was little, it was first altar serving, and as I grew up, I had the desire to be a lector, but there’s always a lot of fears that come with trying something new.

“Little by little, I learned what I did well and what I did poorly, and what I did poorly, I wanted to do better because I found the desire to serve there and to serve well,” he continued. “I saw that there were times a job needed to be done, and I could

do it. I just had to be confident that I could do it.”

His parents supported his going to events around the diocese that allowed him to explore the faith, the seminarian of five years said. Immersed in the traditions, theology, and wisdom of the Church, he gained a sense of wonder and love.

“Coupled with the desire to serve, my love for the Church eased the decision to want to enter the seminary and consider priesthood,” Jesus said.

COME AND SEE

With 18-year-old Jose, his interest in entering the seminary was a similar but distinct experience. Having struggled finding a passion in sports or other active hobbies, the teenager received a scolding from his loving mother that changed his mindset.

“She told me, ‘OK, you don’t have to go [play sports], but tell me something that you are going to do that is going to be beneficial to you,’” said Jose, who completed his first year in seminary in May. He recognized then that staying at home and spending his time carelessly wasn’t going to cut it.

“I just needed to figure out how to find balance and not waste my time,” Jose said. “And that was [through] prayer, and that helped me a lot.”

Not long after that realization, he jumped on the opportunity to go visit his brother who was enjoying his first couple years at seminary by attending a Come and See vocational retreat.

“Once I was there, and I finally got to witness what it was all about, it changed my view. Something I had no thought

of — becoming a priest — was now on my mind,” he said.

When Monica picked Jose up from the retreat, she remembered how he “arrived with a face filled with emotion, saying ‘This is what I want.’”

“Many of us believe that the life of a seminarian is to be locked away in prayer. That’s what we think, those who aren’t familiar,” Cruz said. However, after Jose attended the Come and See weekend, he was able to understand how similar entering the seminary is to entering university, “but with more commitment and responsibility to the Church.”

Since entering the seminary, Jose has continued to find joy in prayer and cultivating a stronger relationship with Christ.

“It’s not really following my brother’s path, it’s carving my own path, the path that God wants me to go to,” Jose said.

PLACE OF LIGHT, COMFORT

Whether their sons went to school or seminary, Cruz and Monica had already started preparing for a change as their kids grew older.

With one son at St. Joseph Seminary in Louisiana and the other in San Antonio studying theology, the two parents are often asked if they struggle with the distance from their sons.

“I think that it’s not difficult because while it’s not easy that they’ve gone, I’m happy for where they are. At seminary, I’m at peace with the knowledge that they’re learning something about the Lord, which is the best,” Cruz said. “I don’t have them here with me, but they are in a good place learning what will help them for the rest of their lives.” 🇺🇸

SHINING

LIGHT OF CHRIST RECIPIENTS
SHARE THOUGHTS ON STEWARDSHIP

Each year, the Advancement Foundation presents Light of Christ awards to individuals or couples selected by their pastor who show exemplary stewardship and leadership at their parishes.

At the June 6 ceremony at St. Frances Cabrini in Granbury, which honored recipients from the south deanery, Vicar General Father Jonathan Wallis said, “For all of us, one of the things that the Catholic Church teaches us, and how God in His generosity shows us, is the importance of recognizing that all things come from Him.”

Three of the many recipients of this year’s Light of Christ Award shared their thoughts on stewardship with the *North Texas Catholic*.



Berta Herrera

HOLY ANGELS, CLIFTON

The parishioner of 22 years serves as a catechist and lector and assists with hospitality and sacramental preparation.

*“If the Church asks,
don’t say no – just do your best.”*

Photos by Juan Guajardo

HIS LIGHT

Vernon Markwardt

OUR LADY OF MERCY, HILLSBORO

The parishioner of 39 years serves as a catechist, lector, RCIA instructor, and an extraordinary minister of holy Communion.

“I’ve been extremely blessed in a lot of different ways. This is just a small measure of thanksgiving.”

Jose Arturo and Emma Chavez

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, MORGAN

The parishioners of 4 years serve as lectors and catechists and assist with sacramental preparation.

“The love of God calls us to serve. He came to serve. We want to serve too.”



MILESTONES IN sanctification

The function and significance of sacramental recordkeeping

By Brenda Raney

An infant swaddled in heirloom baptismal garb or a bride resplendent in her white dress — the pomp and circumstance of these traditions are ancillary to their significance in the Catholic Church. After all, the sanctification a child of God receives in the sacraments is sacred and fundamental to one's eternal life of faith.

As such, sacraments must be carefully recorded by the church administrator; and if the bride was baptized in another parish, the recorder must notify that parish of her marriage. Neither baptismal nor marriage certificates can be distributed until they have been documented by the sacramental recordkeeper.

To Jason Whitehead, diocesan director of evangelization and catechesis, keeping a detailed record of an individual's completion of the sacraments is a responsibility that goes far beyond tracking the data.

"The Church takes as an important responsibility the tracking of the sacraments because they are interrelated and work holistically toward our sanctification. When we miss recording [the sacraments], we miss part of that person's story, part of that person's journey in their faith," he said.

Overseeing the process and policies around sacramental recordkeeping isn't Whitehead's primary job, but it has become a passion. In recent years, the diocese has seen an increase in calls from Catholics trying to locate sacramental records in preparation for a marriage or confirmation.

To improve and unify the recordkeeping process, Whitehead held a one-day orientation for diocesan sacramental recordkeeping. Cintia Ventura, the sacramental records and baptism coordinator at St. Patrick Cathedral



Jason Whitehead, diocesan director of faith formation and catechesis, leads a class on sacramental recordkeeping for parish staff at the Catholic Center in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

in Fort Worth, attended the class.

Ventura, who has a degree in anthropology, shares Whitehead's passion for accurate recordkeeping. Like Whitehead, Ventura has seen an increase in calls for sacramental records. A typical call may be from a prospective bride or groom who needs their sacramental record as part of the Pre-Cana process.

It is Ventura's job to look up the record and provide a copy of the baptismal certificate with handwritten notations on the back that show the dates of additional sacraments. She averages about 10 calls a day with seasonal increases, such as the Easter season when youngsters make their first holy Communion and adults prepare to become godparents. As a recordkeeper, Ventura

sends notifications or sacramental records to parishes in faraway places like Mexico, Italy, the Middle East, India, and the Netherlands.

"Sacramental records remain at the baptismal parish for life," Ventura said. "There are registers at St. Patrick's that date back to the late 1800s.

"When it comes to historical documents, and these documents are already part of history, I'm fascinated. I want to make sure the little part I do is done properly and serves as an example for those who come later," she explained.

Whitehead, too, explained the importance of Ventura and her diocesan counterparts' responsibilities: "recordkeeping is not just about the records per se, it is about how the Church serves the faithful." 🇺🇸



Catholic Charities Fort Worth volunteer driver Steve Zerbe gives John Williams a ride to a physical therapy appointment. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Driven with compassion

By Kiki Hayden

In 2023, Catholic Charities Fort Worth provided more than 63,000 affordable rides to folks in Tarrant County. They continue to run about 250 trips a day.

As the director of transportation, Matt Jacobs coordinates CCFW's transportation programs.

"Our impact on the community is making sure people have the freedom to do what they want to do," Jacobs said. Most importantly, CCFW's drivers "are so compassionate."

CCFW operates two programs for transit agency Trinity Metro: Northeast Transportation Service (NETS) and Tarrant County Transportation Service. Both programs, which are funded using federal and state dollars, provide rides to individuals with disabilities or seniors 65 or older for medical appointments, work, social activities, or shopping in various areas of Tarrant County. With support from Hurst, Euless, Bedford, and several Christian organizations, CCFW also runs HEB Transit, which provides rides for work and work-related activities to

qualifying adults over 18. Each of these services charges \$3.25 or less per ride.

John Williams has been riding with NETS for many years.

"I needed a ride; I'm blind," he shared. "It helps me get around independently."

Williams travels with NETS "about four times a week" going to doctor's appointments, to the American Legion, occasional grocery shopping, and "pretty much everywhere I need to go."

Williams pointed out that NETS is limited to participating cities and areas. Jacobs explained that CCFW coordinates with other public transportation services such as Trinity Metro's ZipZone as well as the Arlington Via app and that he is "advocating for seamless transportation."

Courtney Bennett, a parishioner at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller, learned about NETS through a colleague working in special education transitional services. Bennett's adult sons with differing abilities use NETS to get to and from work and classes.

"They have gained a lot of independent skills and self-confidence being able to

work on their own," Bennett said.

Beyond providing convenient service, CCFW drivers care about their clients.

"If [clients] come out of dialysis and aren't looking well, we'll bring them right back and say, 'Hey, they're not ready to go,'" said Jacobs.

Father Zachary Burns, TOR, has been volunteering as a driver for NETS since Lent 2023, when he felt convicted by his own homily to "go out and serve."

The parochial vicar of Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville enjoys hearing about his clients' lives. He has learned about rolling chair volleyball at senior centers and about books he hasn't read. By listening to his clients' stories, he keeps his "finger on the pulse of the community, not just the immediate Catholic community."

He wears his habit with his Catholic Charities hat when in the driver's seat. ✚

More information about CCFW's transportation services at [CcfwTransportation.com](https://www.ccfwtransportation.com).

Volunteer, contribute to, or learn more about Catholic Charities Fort Worth by visiting [CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org](https://www.CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org).



SERVANT

SHEPHERD

PRIEST

Eric Homero Flores and Benjamin Hunt Grothouse are ordained to the priesthood

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen



Eric Flores and Benjamin Grothouse lay prostrate before the altar during the Litany of the Saints during the Mass of Ordination on May 18. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



SIERVO, PASTOR, SACERDOTE

Eric Homero Flores y Benjamin Hunt Grothouse son ordenados al sacerdocio

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen



“**R**elying on the help of the Lord God and our savior, Jesus Christ, we choose these, our brothers, to the order of the priesthood.”

With that declaration from Bishop Michael Olson, and a burst of consenting applause from the congregation, two 28-year-old transitional deacons took a final step in their vocation journey.

Moments later, the bishop conferred the sacrament of holy orders on Eric Homero Flores and Benjamin Hunt Grothouse in front of a gathering of 500 guests who filled St. Patrick Cathedral on May 18 to witness an Ordination Mass steeped in symbolism and tradition. The Catholic priesthood shares in the priesthood of Christ and traces its origins to the Twelve Apostles.

Welcoming friends and family to the morning liturgy, Bishop Olson expressed gratitude to the parents of

the ordinands.

“Thank you for the support you have given your son throughout this journey, not only in the seminary but earlier in life,” he said, addressing Benjamin Grothouse’s father, Tom and his wife, Michelle, and mother, La Dawn Everette and her husband, Nelson. “Through your example, he was able to hear the Gospel and recognize his call.”

Speaking to Homero Flores and his wife, Claudia, and Mary Regina Moore and her husband, John, the bishop recognized the parents’ efforts in “teaching Eric [Flores] right from wrong and guiding and supporting him throughout his life, especially in supporting his discernment of a vocation to the priesthood. Your contribution has been invaluable to the glory of God.”

OFFERING SUPPORT, PRAYERS

Members of a young adult group from St. Joseph Parish in Arlington attended the Mass to show their

support for clergy and experience a solemn rite that has profound meaning for the life of the Church.

“Most of us have never been to an ordination before,” said Ronnie Ayala, one of the ministry’s leaders. “We wanted to be part of the celebration and show our support. I firmly believe we need to pray more for our priests. Their job is getting harder and harder.”

Fellow St. Joseph parishioner Aracely Rodriguez voiced a similar view.

“These men are going to be priests in our diocese, and we should welcome them with open arms and be ready to support them with prayer or anything else they need,” she commented.

Parishioners at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound began praying for Grothouse when he joined the seminary in 2015 and never stopped. He became endeared

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◀ Deacons Eric Flores (left) and Benjamin Grothouse stand before the altar during their Mass of Ordination to the presbyterate on May 18 at St. Patrick Cathedral. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Father Jonathan Wallis lays hands on ▶
Father Eric Flores during the Mass of Ordination. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

“**C**on nuestra confianza puesta en la ayuda del Señor Dios y nuestro Salvador Jesucristo, elegimos a éstos, nuestros hermanos, para el Orden Sagrado del sacerdocio”.

El Obispo Michael Olson pronunció estas palabras y tras un estallido de aplausos de alegría por parte de la congregación, dos diáconos transitorios de 28 años dieron el último paso en su jornada vocacional.

Momentos más tarde, el Obispo confirió el Sacramento del Orden Sagrado a Eric Homero Flores y Benjamin Hunt Grothouse el 18 de mayo ante una asamblea de quinientos invitados que llenaron la Catedral de St. Patrick para presenciar la misa de ordenación rica en simbolismo y tradición. El sacerdocio católico participa del sacerdocio de Cristo y remonta sus orígenes a los doce apóstoles.

Al dar la bienvenida a los amigos y familiares presentes en la liturgia matutina, el Obispo Olson expresó su gratitud a los padres de los ordenandos.

“Gracias por el apoyo que han brindado a su hijo a lo largo de esta jornada, no sólo en el seminario sino también durante su niñez”, dijo, dirigiéndose al padre de Benjamin Grothouse, Tom, y su esposa Michelle, y a la madre, La Dawn Everette, y su esposo Nelson. “A través del ejemplo de ustedes, él pudo escuchar el Evangelio y reconocer su llamado”.



Al dirigirse a Homero Flores y su esposa Claudia, y a Mary Regina Moore y su esposo John, el Obispo reconoció los esfuerzos que los padres realizaron para “enseñar a Eric Flores a distinguir lo correcto de lo incorrecto; y guiarlo y apoyarlo a lo largo de su vida, especialmente al apoyarlo en el discernimiento de su vocación al sacerdocio. Su valiosa contribución no tiene precio para la gloria de Dios”.

APOYO Y ORACIONES

Miembros del grupo de jóvenes adultos de la Parroquia de St. Joseph de Arlington asistieron a la misa para mostrar su apoyo al clero y vivir un rito solemne que tiene un profundo significado para la vida de la Iglesia.

“La mayoría de nosotros nunca habíamos asistido a una ordenación

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Bishop Michael Olson presents the paten and chalice to newly ordained Father Benjamin Grothouse during the Mass of Ordination to the presbyterate at St. Patrick Cathedral. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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to them even more after spending his pastoral year at the parish.

“He was such a blessing to St. Philip’s. Everybody just loves him so much,” Pat Bianca said, remembering how the seminarian helped the parish move into a new church building. “Now, it’s so exciting to see him become a priest.”

Jonelle Masty recalled watching the theology student serve at Mass at the parish with the pastor, Father Ray McDaniel.

“Seeing him on the altar as a seminarian — he was so reverent,” she observed. “We’ve seen his growth and development and the way he’s matured. Ben is going to radiate as a priest.”

NURTURING THE CALL

When priests visited Our Lady of Victory School to say Mass, they always asked the elementary-age students if anyone thought about a religious vocation.

“Eric would stand up and say, ‘I want to be a priest.’ He knew from the time he was very little,” said Cathy Driscoll, the now closed school’s former librarian who attended the Mass with other OLV teachers.

Attending a Catholic school aided his decision to enter the seminary in 2015 after a year

of college.

“God plants that seed and you have to really listen, and Eric did,” suggested Linda Kuntz, former OLV principal. “The Sisters [of St. Mary of Namur] were present in the school on a regular basis. Being in a religious atmosphere helped Eric hear that call.”

The candidate for the priesthood graduated from Nolan Catholic High School, where Mark Von Rosenberg was his sophomore geometry teacher.

“Eric is the second of my students to become a priest,” said the retired educator who served at the Mass with the Knights of Columbus honor guard. “We’ve remained close since his time at Nolan, and I’m here to show my support.”

CARRYING OUT GOD’S MISSION

During his homily, Bishop Olson praised the ordinands as examples of a youth well spent.

“They have persevered in their vocations, discerned with the Church, and done what is necessary so they would be adequately prepared for the next step — priestly ordination and priestly ministry,” he said. “This next step requires a renewed fidelity and personal growth

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Eric Flores is vested by Father Philip Brembah and Father Karl Schilken. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



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antes”, comentó Ronnie Ayala, uno de los líderes del ministerio. “Queríamos ser parte de la celebración y mostrar nuestro apoyo. Creo firmemente que necesitamos orar más por nuestros sacerdotes. Su trabajo se está volviendo cada vez más difícil”.

La feligresa de St. Joseph, Aracely Rodríguez, expresó una opinión similar.

“Estos hombres van a ser sacerdotes en nuestra diócesis, y debemos recibirlos con los brazos abiertos y estar listos para apoyarlos con oración o cualquier otra cosa que necesiten”, comentó.

Los feligreses de la Parroquia de St. Philip the Apostle de Flower Mound comenzaron a orar por Ben Grothouse cuando ingresó al seminario en el 2015 y nunca dejaron de hacerlo. Su apoyo y cariño hacia él aumentó después que pasara su año pastoral en la parroquia.

“Fue una gran bendición para St.

Philip. Todos lo queremos mucho”, afirmó Pat Bianca, y recuerda cómo el seminarista ayudó a la parroquia a mudarse a un nuevo edificio. “Es muy emocionante verlo convertirse en sacerdote”.

Jonelle Masty recordó haber visto al estudiante de teología servir en misa junto al párroco, el Padre Ray McDaniel.

“Cuando lo vi en el altar como seminarista, fue siempre muy reverente”, ella señaló. “Hemos visto su crecimiento y desarrollo y la forma en que ha madurado. Ben va a brillar como sacerdote”.

CULTIVO DEL LLAMADO

Cuando los sacerdotes visitaban Our Lady of Victory School para celebrar la Misa preguntaban siempre a los estudiantes de primaria si alguien pensaba en una vocación religiosa.

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Father Benjamin Grothouse (left) and Father Eric Flores join Bishop Michael Olson at the altar for the consecration of the holy Eucharist at the Mass of Ordination. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



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in being configured to Christ, head and shepherd of the Church. It also requires God's grace and our prayers."

Father Grothouse and Father Flores begin their lives as priests in a world that increasingly acts as if God does not exist, "let alone care for anybody," Bishop Olson pointed out. "God has called each of these men to the priesthood at the precise moment required for their happiness and salvation that they might conduct the Lord's mission, entrusted to the Church, to

proclaim and carry out the work of salvation throughout the world."

After the bishop's homily, the Rite of Ordination continued with the deacons expressing their willingness to perform the duties of the priesthood, followed by promises to respect and obey the bishop and his successors. In a visually powerful moment, the ordinands prostrated themselves before the altar in a gesture of submission to God's will as the congregation chanted the Litany of the Saints. The ancient Christian prayer is a reminder of the universal call to holiness, especially the call to holiness that

marks the life of a priest.

Years of study and formation for the candidates culminated in the most solemn, essential moment of the ordination rite — the laying on of hands. With an ancient sign used by the Apostles in the election of the first deacons for the Church, the bishop imposed his hands on the head of each man as he prayed for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The prayer of consecration completed the actual ordination.

Vested in the outward signs of the

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“Eric se levantaba y decía, ‘Quiero ser sacerdote’. Lo sabía desde muy pequeño”, dijo Cathy Driscoll, la ex bibliotecaria de la escuela que fue cerrada hace unos años, y que asistió a la Misa de ordenación junto a otros maestros de Our Lady of Victory.

Asistir a una escuela católica le ayudó en su decisión de ingresar al seminario en el 2015, luego de cursar su primer año de universidad.

“Dios planta esa semilla y tienes que escuchar atentamente; y Eric lo hizo”, sugirió Linda Kuntz, ex directora de Our Lady of Victory “Las Hermanas de Santa María de Namur estaban presentes en la escuela con frecuencia. Estar en un ambiente religioso ayudó a Eric a escuchar ese llamado”.

El candidato al sacerdocio se graduó de Nolan Catholic High School, en donde Mark Von Rosenberg fue su profesor de geometría en segundo año.

“Eric es el segundo de mis estudiantes en convertirse en sacerdote,” dijo el educador jubilado que sirvió en la Misa con la guardia de honor de los Caballeros de Colón. “Nos hemos mantenidos cercanos uno del otro desde que estudió en Nolan, y estoy aquí para mostrar mi apoyo.

REALIZAR LA MISIÓN DE DIOS

El Obispo Olson elogió a los ordenandos durante su homilía como ejemplos de una juventud bien vivida.

“Han perseverado en sus vocaciones; discernido acompañados de la Iglesia; hecho todo lo necesario para estar preparados adecuadamente para dar el próximo paso — la ordenación y el ministerio sacerdotal”, afirmó el Obispo. “Este paso exige una fidelidad renovada y un crecimiento personal para configurarse con Cristo, cabeza y pastor de la Iglesia. Requiere también la gracia de Dios y nuestras oraciones”.

El Padre Grothouse y el Padre Flores comienzan su vida como sacerdotes en un mundo que actúa cada vez más como si Dios no existiera, “y en el que nadie se preocupa por nadie”, señaló. “Dios ha llamado a cada uno de estos hombres al sacerdocio en el momento preciso requerido para su felicidad y salvación, para que puedan llevar a cabo la misión del Señor, confiada a la Iglesia, de proclamar y llevar a cabo la obra de salvación por todo el mundo”.

La homilía del Obispo el Rito de Ordenación fue seguida de la declaración de los diáconos para expresar su disposición a desempeñar los deberes del sacerdocio, cumplir su promesa de respetar y obedecer al Obispo

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Newly ordained Father Benjamin Grothouse gives a blessing to his family members after his Ordination Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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SO MUCH MORE!

Scan the QR code or visit NorthTexasCatholic.org to see:



ORDINATION VIDEO



ORDINATION PHOTO GALLERY



FR. FLORES FIRST MASS PHOTOS



FR. GROTHOUSE FIRST MASS PHOTOS

priesthood — the stole and chasuble — the newly ordained approached the bishop again to have their hands anointed with holy chrism. Bishop Olson then presented a chalice and paten to each new priest with the words, “Receive the oblation of the holy people being offered to God. Understand what you will do. Imitate what you will celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord’s promise.”

AN INSPIRING, JOYFUL OCCASION

Seminarians in the diocese participated in the Ordination Mass as altar servers and ushers. Young men discerning a vocation are encouraged to witness the rite, according to Father Maurice Moon, director of collegian seminarian formation.

“This is what they are aspiring to — giving their life to God, the Church, and others,” explained the St. Joseph Seminary faculty member. “They need to experience what an ordination is like. It’s inspiring.”

Bishop Olson called the ordination of two new priests a joyful occasion for the diocese.

“Today is a joyful day not only in the lives of Fr. Ben and Fr. Eric, but also in the life of the Church here,” he told the *North Texas Catholic*. “It’s a sign of our attentiveness to the Holy Spirit and a growing disposition to praise God, serve His people, and bring the Gospel to the world.” 🇺🇸

Father Eric Flores offers blessings after his Ordination Mass. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

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y sus sucesores. En un momento muy significativo de la ceremonia los ordenandos se postraron en el piso ante el altar para demostrar su sumisión a la voluntad de Dios mientras los feligreses cantaban la Letanía de los Santos. La antigua oración cristiana es un recordatorio del llamado universal a la santidad, especialmente el llamado a la santidad que marca la vida de un sacerdote.

Los muchos años de estudio y formación de los ordenandos culminaron en el momento más solemne y esencial del Rito de Ordenación, la imposición de manos. Utilizando un signo antiguo que data del tiempo de los Apóstoles al elegir los primeros diáconos de la Iglesia, el Obispo impuso las manos sobre la cabeza de cada ordenando mientras oraba por los dones del Espíritu Santo. La ordenación termina con la oración de consagración.

Ya vestidos con los signos externos del sacerdocio, la estola y la casulla, los recién ordenados se acercaron nuevamente al Obispo para que les ungiera las manos con el Santo Crisma. El Obispo Olson le presentó entonces el cáliz y la patena a cada nuevo sacerdote mientras decía las palabras, “Recibe la ofrenda del pueblo santo que se ofrece a Dios. Entiende lo que harás. Imita lo que celebrarás y conforma tu vida al misterio de la promesa del Señor.

UNA OCASIÓN INSPIRADORA Y GOZOSA

Los seminaristas de la Diócesis participaron en la Misa de Ordenación y sirvieron como monaguillos y ujieres. El Padre Maurice Moon, Director de la



formación de los seminaristas colegiales, anima a los jóvenes que disciernen su vocación a asistir al Rito de Ordenación.

“Esto es a lo que aspiran: dar su vida a Dios, a la Iglesia y al prójimo”, explica el miembro de la facultad del Seminario de St. Joseph. “Ellos deben vivir lo que es una ordenación. Es un rito verdaderamente inspirador”.

El Obispo Olson calificó la ordenación de dos nuevos sacerdotes

como una ocasión gozosa para toda la Diócesis.

“Hoy es un día lleno de alegría, no sólo en las vidas del Padre Ben y el Padre Eric, sino también en la vida de toda la Iglesia reunida aquí”, señaló el prelado a *North Texas Catholic*. Es un signo de nuestra atención al Espíritu Santo y una disposición creciente de alabar a Dios, servir a Su pueblo y llevar el Evangelio a todo el mundo”. 🇺🇸



Father Eric Flores incenses the altar during his first Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Meet FATHER ERIC FLORES

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Father Jonathan Wallis remembers greeting Eric Flores when he arrived at St. Joseph Seminary College in 2015.

“I’ve known of the tears, the struggles, the joys, the successes, and the failures,” said the vicar general and director of theologian seminarian formation. He was dean of students at the Louisiana seminary at the time. “All of those small steps are part of this journey.”

Almost nine years later, the journey culminated with Flores ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Michael Olson on May 18 in Fort Worth’s St. Patrick Cathedral. The following day the Fort Worth native celebrated his first Mass on Pentecost Sunday in Arlington’s St. Vincent de Paul Church.

Wearing a red vestment to symbolize the fiery descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, the newly ordained priest was joined on the altar by the parish’s pastor, Father Philip Brembah; Father Jim Myers, rector of Assumption Seminary; and Fr. Wallis, who delivered the homily. Calling a first Mass on Pentecost “blessing and providential,” he reminded the 28-year-old

that living a priestly life as a witness to others “can only be done through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.”

Every single day of the priesthood is a tremendous gift, Fr. Wallis assured.

“It’s very hard some days and very joyful other days, but Christ is always present and that is the great joy,” he continued. “Your joyful witness is what will proclaim Jesus Christ so profoundly.”

As Fr. Flores begins the ministry of hearing confessions, preaching, and celebrating the Eucharist, “know of our tremendous love and support,” the homilist said. “We all need each other. We’re all in this together. It’s the same with faith. Each of us has a profound role to play.”

A graduate of Our Lady of Victory School and Nolan Catholic High School, the new priest was heavily influenced by people involved in his education, according to his mother, Mary Regina Moore.

“They encouraged him to become involved in his faith and that helped solidify his path,” she said. “OLV really instilled the Beatitudes in all their students.”

After witnessing the ordination the previous day, Homero Flores said the gravity of knowing his son “is actually a priest” is finally setting in. The final years of formation were spent at Assumption Seminary

Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio where Fr. Flores earned a master’s degree in divinity.

“It’s been a long road, and he studied hard for all of this,” the proud father remarked. “I believe he’s ready and will make a good priest.”

Prior to the Mass, Fr. Flores blessed an array of vestments purchased for him by his parents. At the close of the Pentecost liturgy, the new priest reciprocated by presenting them with symbols of his ordination.

“It’s a tradition that when a priest celebrates his first Mass, he gives his parents a gift as a sign of thanks for raising him in the faith and helping his vocation,” he told the congregation.

Fathers are given the stole worn when the newly ordained man hears his first confession. Mothers receive the manutergium — a cloth used to soak up the chrism oil after the bishop anoints a new priest’s hands. The items are cherished throughout a lifetime, and when the parents die, they are buried holding the cloth.

“Tradition holds that when they meet St. Peter at the gates of heaven and he asks, ‘What have you given Christ in your life?’ they can hold out the gifts and say, ‘I gave the Lord my son so he could share in the divine priesthood,’” Fr. Flores explained.

The new priest will serve as parochial vicar at St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills beginning July 1. ♣

Meet FATHER BENJAMIN GROTHOUSE

By Christina Benavides

A triumphant symphony of trumpets and prayer filled St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington as newly ordained Father Benjamin Grothouse processed to the altar on May 19.

The young priest's radiant smile was reflected on fond and familiar faces that watched him celebrate his first Mass at his childhood parish.

Father Raymond McDaniel, pastor of St. Philip the Apostle Parish, served as the homilist at the Mass. He asked, "Isn't it a privilege and a blessing to see someone find their place in God's plan, to find their lane as it were, and to say yes to the Lord's will, and to find that place in life that makes it all come together for the meaning and purpose for which God called him?"

Fr. Grothouse's vocational journey began in 2015 when he entered St. Joseph Seminary upon completing high school. Nearly nine years later, Bishop Michael

Olson ordained the young man into the priesthood at St. Patrick Cathedral May 18.

"I'm sure all of us gathered here this morning want to pledge him our prayerful support, our love, and encouragement — not only for today, but throughout the years of his priesthood," Fr. McDaniel told the congregation at the Arlington parish. "The mission is not easy, but God's grace is always sufficient."

Fr. Grothouse's first Mass took place on Pentecost, which Fr. McDaniel remarked as significant because "soon, if he has not done so already, Fr. Grothouse will exercise what we heard about in the Gospel today, forgiving sins in the name of Christ, bringing that peace that comes with divine forgiveness."

Before the closing prayer, Fr. Grothouse turned to the attentive congregation to express his thanks to the community and his family, friends, and fellow clergy who supported and prayed for him, before bestowing traditional tokens of a priest's ordination to his father, Tom Grothouse,

and his mother, La Dawn Everette.

"The manutergium is given to the mother because she was the first protector of the newly ordained priest during his time growing up," Fr. Grothouse said.

He then presented his confessional stole to his father, "who taught him about justice and mercy."

In the same way his mother will be buried with the manutergium, Fr. Grothouse said, "when the father dies, he will be buried with the stole, and all in heaven and on Earth will know that he was the father of a priest."

A proud father, Grothouse expressed joy in seeing his son embrace God's call, completing his discernment journey.

"Perhaps our strongest feelings today were hope and optimism that enthusiastic young priests like Fr. Ben, and other young seminarians we have met that will soon become priests, will creatively reach and inspire current youth and future generations," Grothouse shared.

Tears were shed, Grothouse admitted, but they were tears of joy and hope for the future of vocations and their impact.

The new priest will serve as parochial vicar at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Keller beginning July 1. 🇺🇸

Father Benjamin Grothouse elevates the holy Eucharist as he celebrates his first Mass at St. Maria Goretti Church. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)





Road builders

Bill and Doreen Quinn invest time and expertise to benefit Catholic education and nonprofits

By Susan Moses

If Bill and Doreen Quinn built freeways, they would specialize in on-ramps and guardrails: on-ramps to help others get up to speed and guardrails to keep people moving in the right direction.

Although freeways are essential on

road trips, the Most Blessed Sacrament parishioners in Arlington assist in spiritual journeys instead. The Quinns' donations of time and resources to Catholic education and Bill's investment of financial expertise to the diocese and other nonprofits have propelled the lives of faith for their children as well as Catholics here and across the country.

The couple has arrived at an unlikely destination given where they started when they married 54 years ago. However, considering their upbringings, their commitment to stewardship was quite foreseeable.

Both are products of Catholic education in the New York City area and believe the schools molded them into the persons they have become.

Years of daily chapel and the “wonderful sisters” of the Ursuline School in New Rochelle formed her, Doreen explained. “It’s your core foundation, and the core is what carries and gets you through life somehow. If you go astray a little, it’s that foundation, that God foundation inside of you, that pulls you back.”

She graduated more than 50 years ago, but Doreen still visits the school regularly and helps fund scholarships and special projects.

Bill also attended Catholic elementary and high schools, and after graduation, he hoped to attend Fordham University, a Jesuit university in New York City. Family funds were tight for the oldest of six children of a police officer, so he earned tuition by selling Bibles door to door in the summer.

After early work as an accountant, he joined American Airlines, which brought the couple and their four children to Arlington. In 1986, he founded American Beacon Advisors to manage pension funds for the airline as well as other clients.

Bill reflected, “God has directed my life and my career in some very strange ways that I would have never predicted. Part of that was giving me the ability to have some expertise in investments in a corporate world. Given what I’ve been given, I feel I do need to give back to both the Church and other nonprofits.”

ON-RAMPS TO EDUCATION

Their four children grew up with their parents’ example of stewardship. Doreen, a schoolteacher, helped with religious education at the parish. The Quinns served as a sponsor couple for marriage prep. They remain extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, and Doreen brings the holy Eucharist to the sick and homebound.

They are now empty nesters, but when their children were home, attending Mass as a family was a must, despite busy schedules of sports, school activities, and business travel.

Their routine was to go out for breakfast after Sunday Mass — a distraction-free time to bond and communicate as a family.

It’s a practice they frequently enjoy with their 15 grandchildren now.

Because Catholic education was critical to their own lives, the Quinns have provided some financial support so that all their grandchildren could attend Catholic schools in the Metroplex.

But the couple didn’t stop there. They have funded scholarships at their alma maters and local Catholic schools and stepped in to assist with special projects.

Bill’s outlook is simple. “You just observe and see that there’s a need, and we can do it.”

A Catholic education was critical to their success, and they want others — family or not — to have similar opportunities.

GUARDRAILS TO PROTECT

After serving on the finance council of Most Blessed Sacrament, Bill was invited to join the diocesan finance council about 14 years ago. With his background, he was asked to oversee the management of the pension funds for priests and diocesan lay employees.

Don Wagner, who retired as diocesan chief financial officer in 2023, said “you couldn’t put a price” on the value of Bill’s oversight.

The retired priests of the diocese beg to differ.

In January 2023, Bishop Michael Olson was able to increase the monthly pension amount that retired priests receive because of the growth and stability of the retired priest pension fund.

Wagner emphasized, “Proper management is so important. There are real consequences for the pensions of priests and retired lay employees.”

For these funds, a successful investment portfolio is not defined only by the bottom line, but by how the corporations achieve those results.

Under the guidance of Bishop Olson,

Bill implemented an additional screening of companies to exclude those whose business does not align with Catholic values, plus those who make donations to nonprofits that do not align with Catholic values.

Wagner added that the Diocese of Fort Worth was one of the first to embrace Catholic values in investing and uses criteria even more stringent than the guidelines from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

After Bill retired in 2016, his volunteer service to the diocese, the Advancement Foundation, Catholic Charities Fort Worth, Southern Methodist University, United Way, the Dallas Police and Fire

Pension System, and others almost totaled full-time work.

He has scaled back. “I’m trying to find and mentor younger people who can take these on at some point.”

A CATHOLIC LEGACY

In February, Bill and Doreen were two of 15 Catholics in the diocese who received Benemerenti medals, an honor bestowed by Pope Francis in recognition of exceptional service to the Catholic Church.


Although the distinguished medal is precious to them, it isn’t the most important thing they hope to pass to the next generations, which include one great grandchild and another on the way.

According to the Quinns, the most valuable treasure is a life of dedication to family, to education, and to their Catholic faith.

Doreen laughed and said, “What do we say to our kids? ‘Pray together and stay together.’”

Bill hopes the next generations will remember their example and will “follow a path along the lines of us, being faithful and involved in their churches and communities.” 🇺🇸

THERE'S MORE!



Find a video featuring the Quinns by scanning the QR code or visiting NorthTexasCatholic.org/news/from-a-building-to-a-church.



A Practice in Priority

By Christina Benavides

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis expounds on “the exercise of responsible parenthood [which] requires that husband and wife, keeping a right order of priorities, recognize their own duties towards God, themselves, their families, and human society” (68).

John and Stella Kingodi of St. Mark Parish in Argyle have worked to raise their two sons, Clement and Eric, in the Catholic faith so they may love God as naturally and completely as their parents taught them to do.

The couple met while attending the same college in Midland. A good friend of Stella’s brother, John knew Stella for a while before she encountered some computer trouble and asked him for help. From there, it wasn’t long before the two fell in love.

BLESSED WITH CATHOLIC SCHOOL

About a year after their eldest son, Clement, was born, the couple moved from Midland to the Denton area. As soon as he was old enough, they enrolled Clement, and later Eric, into Immaculate Conception Catholic School in Denton. The Kingodis credit the school for helping them establish a foundation of faith, an education that continues to prove its worth, even as Clement finishes his sophomore year of college and Eric prepares for his first year at high school.

“We feel very, very blessed and very privileged to be able to afford Catholic school for them,” Stella said. “But when that’s not an option, just trying to keep them in church or formation classes as much as possible, volunteering, or just helping out. I think that would help.”

Eric, who graduated from eighth grade

◀ John and Stella Kingodi, with sons Clement and Eric and grandmother Juliana Mambona pose outside St. Mark Parish in Argyle on May 31. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

at Immaculate Conception this spring and will enter a charter high school in the fall, is excited to begin his summer volunteering at St. Mark's Vacation Bible School program.

"I was a kid going to Vacation Bible School before, but now I get to volunteer," Eric said.

MOTHER KNOWS BEST

John and Stella introduced praying the Rosary regularly when their boys were young, and the habit was reinforced in school.

"It was the same thing with us growing up. Our parents put us through formation classes, and it just became a habit," Stella said. "My mom, she used to always pray the Rosary and have the rosary beads around her hand. Watching that growing up, it's just like second nature for you to do that. So [Clement and Eric] picked it up themselves pretty much. We don't have to really remind them much."

The family prays together at 8 p.m. around the dinner table.

UNIVERSAL FAITH

Having both grown up in East Africa, John and Stella would hear their parents pray the Hail Mary in Kiswahili. In Tanzania, the prayer is known as *Salam Maria*.

The family goes to visit their extended family periodically, and while there, they attend Mass and delight that by "being Catholic, you can go to Rome or you can go to Africa, but it will all be the same. You can expect the same Mass and feel a sense of community, no matter where you go," Stella said.

"And the community is always so loving," John added.

FAITH CONFIDANT

"One important thing is to find someone you can always talk to about things like your faith. Someone who you know is strong in their faith that you can always go to when times are hard," said Eric.

The 15-year-old said he always counts on his parents to fill that role.

CONSISTENCY IN PRAYER

Clement advised, "For me, personally, it's really just about keeping things consistent, all about consistency," especially the practice of evening prayer.

KNOW YOU BELONG

Rejoice in the faith, Stella and John shared.

"Growing up Catholic, we've gone to places, visiting family and friends, who go to different churches, and it just doesn't quite feel the same. We know we pray to the same God and we all live in the same God, but I think just like my son said, that the consistency with Catholic [prayer and Mass], it's everything. ... It gives you a sense of belonging."

FINDING A BALANCE

John, who works in distribution at Walmart, and Stella, a nurse practitioner at a hospital, are no strangers to having to cover weekend work schedules.

While they have struggled at times to balance prioritizing faith, along with their responsibilities at home and at work, they endeavor to always put Mass first.

"We try going to Mass as much as we can, and while they were in Catholic school, we tried to never miss their morning school Mass," John said.

"It's a challenge," Stella conceded, "but you must try the best you can." ✦

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



A deeper devotion

I was recently on retreat, and the priest who was the retreat master gave a moving talk about how to pray more deeply during the Mass.

In this modern world of super short attention spans, it is so very easy to get distracted during the liturgy. A path forward is to be more intentional and to bring our needs to the foot of the Eucharistic Jesus during the sacrifice of the Mass.

What follows is a summary of his talk, outlining four distinct points that deserve special attention.

First, we have a beautiful opportunity to bring our prayers, concerns, and worries to Mass. It is helpful to prepare for this — maybe before we leave the house, on our way to the church, or as we sit in the pew, waiting for the liturgy to begin. This reflection prepares us for the “Collect,” the opening prayer in which the priest collects all the intentions of the faithful gathered and offers them to the Lord.

In this moment, call to mind your intentions and the people you know who need prayer. Imagine these same intentions being brought to the altar during the offertory and again during the prayers of the faithful after the homily.

The next powerful way to focus our prayer at Mass is during the Eucharistic Prayer. As we are kneeling, the host is

being consecrated on the paten and the wine in the chalice — these together are the elements of sacrifice in the Mass. The host is the Body of Christ being sacrificed for us all, and the wine is the healing Blood of Jesus.

As this happens, imagine placing your need or the area that needs healing on the paten, and in the chalice, placing yourself or the person who needs healing.

For example, if a friend has cancer: imagine the cancer on the paten, and the person in the chalice. Alternatively, you place

a sin you are struggling with on the paten and yourself in the chalice. In either case, you are bringing these needs to the sacrifice of the Mass, seeking healing from the crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

Thirdly, as the Body and Blood of Jesus are lifted, the priest intones: “Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever.”

Put all your heart into the Great Amen as you raise in your heart the intentions you have brought to this Mass. In this “so be it” acclamation, we surrender our needs to the glory and power of the Triune God.

Finally, as the priest breaks the consecrated host during the Lamb of God, recall the blood and water that flows from

the side of Jesus on the Cross. This is the great Divine Mercy flowing through humanity.

At every Mass, we have the opportunity to bring our personal intentions to this moment of the celebration and let the blood and water flow over our needs.

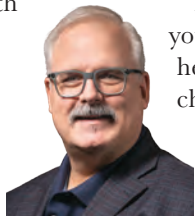
These simple yet profound insights into praying the Mass can simultaneously help hold our attention during the celebration and raise the level of our prayerful participation.

It is important to note these ways to pray at Mass are not the focus of our participation. The focus is worship of God the Father, in His Son Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In short, we do not come to Mass primarily to receive; rather we are there to give praise to God.

Yet I find that the deeper I enter into the prayers of the Mass, the more genuinely I can raise my heart and soul in worship of the God who came to Earth to heal us from our sin and open wide the gates of glory.

In God’s great wisdom and grace, as we pour out our worship, God fills us with all we need. ✚



Jeff Hedglen

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

A letter of welcome

NTC/Juan Guajardo

Easter Vigil this year was a big night, for you, who entered the Church, and the diocese.

To give you some historical context, the diocese averages somewhere in the eight-hundred range for the total number of souls baptized and making their Profession of Faith at the Vigil.

This year, we had 1,544 (629 baptisms and 915 Professions of Faith).

While some Catholics have never attended an Easter Vigil Mass, many of us have, becoming Catholic at vigils of the past. So, some of us know the exhilaration you are feeling.

Some of you are also familiar with the troubles you may have had to overcome; for some of you have had to endure loss along the way, giving up all to follow Christ. Some of you are struggling with how to handle relationships which have become complicated, as many of you come from backgrounds antithetical to the faith you now profess. Family, friends, work, and your overall social life may be in a state of upheaval.

It is important for you to know you are not alone. When you became Catholic, whether by baptism or Profession of Faith, you joined a supernatural family, one tied together in Christ by the three “Bonds of Unity,” which are visible bonds of communion: “profession of one faith received

from the Apostles; common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments; apostolic succession through the sacrament of holy orders” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 815*).

These ties are supernaturally constituted to hold the faithful together in Christ and thereby perpetually grant us unity and peace in the family of God.

Think back to the night of the Vigil. Let us recall the Profession of Faith, made by some, but heard

by all.

After the renunciation of sin and renewal of baptismal promises, the celebrant addressed those to be received, asking them to “profess the Catholic faith.” The candidates responded with: “I believe and profess all that the holy Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God” (*RCIA 585*).

Some of us, when we gave this profession, did not fully realize its significance. In part, it was because we were so overwhelmed with emotion that we barely knew what we were doing. It is easy to miss things in this state, which is unfortunate, for the wording possesses much meaning, the key to the profession being the word “all.”

When you professed your “all,” you confessed a fundamental change in yourself, one which will alter the course of your life: the fact that you have come into the

possession of divine and Catholic faith.

When the Church uses the word “faith,” what does it mean?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has more than one definition, but they amount to the same thing: believing in God and what He has taught us through His Church because we trust Him.

This is the beginning of the supernatural life, lived out in supernatural unity and communion with the rest of your new family.

Of course, a supernatural family does not replace our natural family, but the gifts we share with our new family help us become better members of our natural family, equipping us to love and serve them more perfectly.

The reason why this Easter Vigil was such a big night for the diocese is not because of an increase in numbers, as confirming and encouraging as that is for those of us directing ministry.

What makes this night significant, every year, is the fact that we get to welcome you into the family.

May we all labor together now, giving our all as the united family of God, for His eternal glory. God love you! 🇺🇸



Jason Whitehead

Jason Whitehead is the diocesan Director of Evangelization and Catechesis. He entered the Church in 2012 and subsequently received a master’s degree in theology.



Twice a Father

NTC/Juan Guajardo

HE IS: Father Joseph Moreno, pastor of St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett; St. Paul Parish in Electra; and Christ the King Parish in Iowa Park.

CALLED: Fr. Moreno was married with a daughter and worked as an IT security specialist. He initially discerned a call to the diaconate, but after the death of his wife, he entered seminary to study for the priesthood.

ORDAINED: May 22, 2021, at St. Patrick Cathedral.

FATHER FIGURE: Raising a daughter helped prepare him for spiritual fatherhood. “You know how to be a father: nurturing the family, leading the family, caring for the family, loving as a father does, being merciful, kind, and generous. But also being firm and correcting, when it’s necessary.”

BUSINESS MAN: Experience in the corporate world helps him lead parishes. “I can make a budget; I know organizational design and management; I know systems theory; I know conflict management.”

BEST PART OF PRIESTHOOD: “Getting to celebrate the Holy Mass every single day. Through that sacrament, more than any of the rest, the

graces of Christ enter into the world and spill out through the Church.”

WELCOME HOME: Fr. Moreno appreciates “being in the confessional, and anointing of the sick, especially those who have been away for so long. I couldn’t tell you how many people I’ve had in the confessional or anointing, either at home or at the hospital, who have been away from the Church for decades, and I realize that God is working through me through these sacraments to snatch them from the grasp of Satan.”

A IS FOR AUTHENTIC: “It’s important for priests to regard every single gesture, every single posture, every single word, every single rubric as a sacred duty, a duty to do it well. If we’re sloppy with the way we celebrate the liturgy, then we’re going to get sloppy beliefs, and we’re going to get sloppy Catholic living.

“It’s simply doing what the Church has asked us to do — authentically.”

THIS MIGHT HURT: “When I preach, I preach the entire Gospel and not just what’s comfortable. Some homilies, you’re going to say, ‘This is great.’ You’re going to have some homilies where you want to throw something at me, and that’s okay.

“I’m not here for your applause. I’m here to lead you to heaven, to lead you to

Christ, so I don’t hold back, and I always tell the truth, which is what a father does.”

PARISH PLANS: Being the pastor of three parishes “is like having three different children in the house. I do enjoy that because it gives me a greater variety of communities to interact with. The challenge is — it means my time and my attention is split between them.”

He has focused on developing the transcendental virtues of beauty, goodness, and truth by enhancing the aesthetics of the churches and grounds, building community within the parishes, and increasing formation opportunities.

GOOD KNIGHT: Fr. Moreno has grown the Knights of the Altar from three altar servers to more than 15, stating their focus on decorum and reverence “really helps elevate the liturgy.”

FULLY ENGAGED: “The more faithfully you live the Catholic faith, the more you discover that the totality of your being is engaged. Your heart, your soul, your mind, your body, all of it. It’s one of the beauties of the Catholic faith.”

THE TAKEAWAY: “If we just put God first, we will learn just how much richer, fuller, and easier navigating life will become.” 🇺🇸

Stay on the S.H.I.P.

NTC/Juan Guajardo

What is God's will for my life? How do I discover it? Remember two very important things about God and His will.

First, if by His will you mean what He desires for you to do, you already know that.

His will is that you know Him, love Him, and serve Him.

You know Him through prayer, listening, and study. You love Him by trying with all your might to follow His commandments, and repenting in confession when you fail to do so. You serve Him by going to Mass and by selflessly and generously serving those He has put in your life: siblings, children, spouses, co-workers, enemies, etc.

If you are doing these things, you are accomplishing God's will.

Second, if by His will, you mean His future plans for your life, He will not tell you this. Why? God is not a fortune teller. He is God. He doesn't tell you the future; He walks with you in the present.

What we are often seeking when we ask about God's will is "What is my purpose in life? What is the meaning of my life? Who am I and what am I supposed to do?"

The good news is we have also received the answers to these questions.

You are good, created in the image and likeness of God, and your task is to use this life to grow as much as you can in your

likeness to Him through prayer and good works.

Ephesians tells us, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (2:10).

Whatever work or service you are doing, if it is in balance with a life of knowing, loving, and serving the Lord, you can trust God is working through it.

For men discerning priesthood, the seminary system offers four pillars to help maintain this balance. These pillars are assessed during seminary to help one prepare for priesthood. However, they are also extremely helpful for sustaining oneself in a balanced relationship with God.

S.H.I.P. is a helpful acronym for the four pillars.

Spiritual: Do I pray, spend time with God, read spiritual books, and attend Mass? If not, my spiritual pillar is out of balance, and my soul will begin to lose touch with God. Deeper questions will arise, often only to be met with a frustrated search in the wrong direction.

The answer to the purpose of your life is not a secret God is waiting to reveal. The answer is God — spend time with Him.

Human: Do I eat healthily? Do I sleep enough? Do I exercise? Do I spend quality time with friends and family? Do I have a job where I work hard and sacrifice?



Fr. Brett Metzler

All are necessary for maintaining balance. If something seems constantly wrong in your life, and you don't know what it is, try looking at the human pillar for direction.

Intellectual: We have minds. Our minds are made to grow. Our input shapes how we interact with reality — whether or not we engage reality with gratitude, experience joy, think more deeply, maintain curiosity and interest in others and the world.

If we read good books, read and study the Bible, or even try to watch good movies, our minds will be much healthier than the alternative.

Pastoral: Do I have any concrete outlet for charity in my life? Am I serving anyone? Some of you may be serving lots of people. If so, serve with patience and generosity.

Stay on the S.H.I.P. Many of life's deeper questions and longings are met and wrestled with by simply trying to maintain balance with these four pillars. They do not cure suffering or fix all of our problems. But they do provide the growth necessary to have the greater virtues to face what life has in store and what God has planned. 🇺🇸

Father Brett Metzler serves as Chaplain at Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth and as the Vocations Director for the diocese.



Los campistas disfrutaron de compañerismo en el retiro matrimonial del Campamento de Kairós en Possum Kingdom Lake. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

vínculos FORTALECIDOS

El impacto del Campamento de Kairós
para matrimonios

Por Karla Silva

La necesidad de crecimiento de una comunidad, una larga planificación y una gran dedicación lograron que el Campamento de Kairós fuera todo un éxito recientemente e impactara a 24 matrimonios. El campamento se llevó a cabo del 3-5 de mayo en el Parque de Possum Kingdom.

El campamento fue organizado por el apostolado de Kairós de la Parroquia de Immaculate Conception de Denton. Este campamento en particular adoptó el

nombre de Sígueme, tomando como lema la cita bíblica de *Mateo 16, 24*: “Entonces dijo Jesús a sus discípulos, ‘el que quiera seguirme que renuncie a sí mismo, cargue con su cruz y me siga’”.

Cristina y Javier Mangel, matrimonio codirector del campamento, explicaron que la razón de este lema nació de la necesidad existente de que la comunidad de Kairós creciera.

“Rosy y Martin Ibarra, matrimonio director del campamento, vieron la necesidad de que la comunidad de matrimonios de Kairós creciera, ya que habían muy pocas personas en el

apostolado,” explicó Cristina. “Así que el lema es una invitación a seguir a Jesús y animar a los matrimonios a unirse a esta comunidad”.

Luego de seis meses de planificación, el apostolado decidió invitar a todos los matrimonios de la comunidad parroquial de Immaculate Conception. Posteriormente, extendió la invitación a las comunidades de North Richard Hills, White Settlement, Garland, Terrell, Fort Worth, Lancaster y varias más.

“Muchos piensan que el campamento es como un retiro espiritual, pero al llegar y participar de las dinámicas y escuchar



Parejas participan en el retiro matrimonial del Campamento de Kairós en Possum Kingdom Lake el 3 de mayo. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

las charlas, se dan cuenta de que no es un retiro convencional”, comentó Cristina. De hecho, el Campamento de Kairós es un campamento recreativo que comprende actividades al aire libre. Es también carismático, pues se ofrecen charlas y testimonios compartidos por los miembros del apostolado de Kairós.

Javier explicó que la secuencia de charlas tiene como objetivo trabajar primero a nivel personal y luego, a nivel de pareja. Otra meta es que los campistas tengan un encuentro personal con Jesús, pero también con sus parejas, mediante actividades que mejoren su comunicación y los acerquen más el uno al otro, especialmente cuando pasan por una crisis en su matrimonio.

Por su parte, Brenda Hernández admitió que vaciló un poco cuando se enteró que acamparían realmente al aire libre, pero que sus ganas de querer aprender y fortalecer su matrimonio la animaron a seguir adelante.

“Durante el campamento, vivimos experiencias en que aprendimos pequeñas cosas, pero que para nosotros resultaron muy importantes al momento de mejorar nuestra comunicación. Además, a través de las diferentes dinámicas, superamos ciertos traumas y miedos que llevábamos cargando por mucho tiempo”, Hernández añadió.

Tania Frías, feligrés de la

Parroquia de St. Peter the Apostle de White Settlement, compartió que el campamento la hizo reflexionar sobre su actitud frente a los problemas de su matrimonio. Como pareja, los ayudó a ambos a desarrollar diferentes herramientas para afrontar esos desafíos y mejorar su relación.

“Mi esposo estaba un poco indeciso de vivir la experiencia del campamento, pero lo consideró como un recurso que ayudaría a nuestro matrimonio. Decidió vivirlo y ahora desea que todos los matrimonios puedan experimentar también el campamento”, aseguró Frías. “Íbamos con incertidumbre porque no sabíamos qué esperar, pero salimos con nuestra fe renovada y dispuestos a cambiar varias cosas dentro de nuestro matrimonio”.

El apostolado de Kairós cuenta en la actualidad con tres comunidades en diferentes parroquias de la diócesis: St. John the Apostle de North Richard Hills, St. Peter the Apostle; e Inmaculate Conception, cuya comunidad lleva ya casi 11 años de existencia.

La comunidad de Kairós espera que más campistas se sigan uniendo a los diferentes grupos existentes. No descartan la posibilidad de organizar otro campamento para matrimonios en el futuro cercano. 🇹🇽

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





El Diácono Ricardo De León y su esposa, Estela, en la Parroquia de All Saints en Fort Worth el 28 de mayo. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Siempre apoyándonos

La oración y el servicio ayudan a las esposas de los
diáconos permanentes

Por Violeta Rocha

“**H**umildes”, “buenos esposos y padres” y “centinelas” capaces de reconocer a los pobres y alejados, así describió el Papa Francisco a los Diáconos Permanentes de la Diócesis de Roma en el 2021 durante una de sus audiencias en el Aula de las Bendiciones.

Según el Concilio Vaticano II, antes de ser ordenado, un candidato al diaconado permanente debe contar con el total consentimiento de su esposa e hijos, pero aún más, las esposas de

diáconos permanentes son aliadas y apoyo para estos “siervos de la Iglesia”.

Si le hubieran dicho hace unos años a Estela De León, 62, que su esposo Ricardo sería ordenado como diácono permanente, “lo hubiera creído sin dudarlo,” pues asegura que siempre ha sido “un hombre de gran fe, dispuesto a servir al prójimo”.

Ellos son originarios del Sur de Texas, llevan casi cuarenta años de casados y tienen tres hijos adultos. Son feligreses de la Parroquia de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton de Keller desde el 1992. De León ha visto cómo su esposo es parte de los

Caballeros de Colón, sirve como Ministro Extraordinario de la Eucaristía y acólito; y visita hogares de la tercera edad.

El Diácono De León, 62, fue ordenado en el 2020 por el Obispo Michael Olson en la Diócesis de Fort Worth y asignado a la Parroquia de All Saints de Fort Worth, en la que trabaja además como administrador de operaciones de la parroquia.

La esposa de un diácono ha de tener mucha paciencia y comprensión, ya que se reciben llamadas a medianoche, conlleva horas de espera después de Misa; y son muchas más horas que una pasa sola en la casa. No obstante, De León asegura que ha sido “un camino de bendiciones”, incluso desde el discernimiento y preparación de su esposo, pues dice, “aprendí mucho de lo que él estaba aprendiendo,” y recibió “luminosos” consejos. “Estamos en armonía, más cerca el uno del otro espiritualmente,” y enfatiza que “ver lo apasionado que es con su servicio, escuchar sus homilias y verlo crecer en fe, ha sido inspirador”. Se siente muy orgullosa de su esposo.

Como las cinco jóvenes prudentes que llevaban suficiente aceite y mantuvieron encendidas sus lámparas para recibir a sus novios (*Mateo 25, 1-13*), De León describe cómo su devoción al Santo Rosario la llena de paz cada mañana. Si lo deja pasar, “siento que no es un buen día,” asevera. Ella resalta además la importancia de mantenerse como familia fieles a la Santa Misa.

Cuando se jubile pronto como profesional de atención escolar a estudiantes con necesidades especiales, a De León le gustaría ayudar en la escuela o en el programa de educación religiosa de la Parroquia de All Saints. Sin embargo, el Diácono “le tiene listo un escritorio en su oficina”, apuntó De León en tono de broma.

Licia Vásquez, 52, se siente “benedicida y agradecida” de Dios por disfrutar de un matrimonio de treinta y cuatro años, tener tres hijos y once nietos; y siempre de la mano de la



El Diácono Manuel y su esposa, Licia Vásquez rezan dentro de la Parroquia de Sacred Heart en Wichita Falls. (NTC/Bertha Salazar)

vocación de su esposo, Manuel Vásquez, 53, que fue ordenado diácono hace casi cuatro años y asignado a la Parroquia de Sacred Heart de Wichita Falls. Llevan en esa comunidad parroquial más de dos décadas.

“Me regocijo y me da paz ver a mi esposo sirviendo en el Altar y esforzarse por ayudar a otros a florecer en su fe”. Vásquez recuerda cómo en el 2010 observó a su esposo ‘encenderse en la fe’ cuando formaba como catequista a un grupo de jóvenes para el Sacramento de Confirmación. Fue un tiempo crucial para su llamado al diaconado. “Buscaba en todo momento aprender cada vez más y más para ir enseguida a compartirlo en la clase,” Vásquez agregó.

Originaria de Odessa, Texas, y de raíces puertorriqueñas, Vásquez enfatiza que el amor al servicio y la armonía familiar son clave para apoyar a su esposo en su ministerio. “¿Cómo no podría querer que mi esposo sirviera a nuestra Iglesia si yo misma soy servidora!”, enfatizó ella, que lleva siendo catequista por más de veinte años.

El rezo del Santo Rosario y la

Divina Misericordia, así como visitar al Santísimo, son recursos que llenan de calma a Vásquez, que trabaja como la administradora de operaciones de la Parroquia de Our Lady Queen of Peace de Wichita Falls. Reza a Dios por más vocaciones sacerdotales, religiosas y al diaconado. Señala que “como esposas, no debemos tener miedo de dejar a nuestros esposos servir, incluso a nuestros hijos, animándolos a responder, si ellos sienten ese llamado”, apuntó.

LA GLORIA ES SÓLO PARA DIOS

“En el cuerpo eclesial nadie puede elevarse por encima de los demás”, dijo el Papa Francisco en la misma audiencia del 2021. Es con este servicio humilde que De León y Vásquez apoyan el apostolado de sus esposos que son diáconos.

De León, que es muy discreta, prefiere servir en silencio, pero atenta, siendo, como su nombre lo asemeja, una ‘estrella’ que ilumina y acompaña a su esposo. Vásquez cree que es importante no tener un trato especial “por ser esposa del diácono,” sino seguir “siendo la misma persona servidora”. 🇺🇸

DOS HIJOS

en el seminario

La familia Segura comparte cómo Dios les ha guiado en sus vidas

Por Christina Benavides

Mónica Segura se pone a pensar y ve con claridad cómo Dios ha acompañado a su familia desde un principio. “Dicen que ‘no pone, sino que Dios nos pone’”, afirma también su esposo Cruz Segura.

Mónica y Cruz, los padres de dos jóvenes que han entrado al seminario de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, recuerdan cómo ellos han trabajado juntos durante su vida para permanecer abiertos a la voluntad de Dios.

“Él nos fue guiando hacia donde Él nos quería”, apunta Mónica, mientras describe cómo su familia llegó en el 2014 a la Parroquia de Our Lady of Lourdes de Mineral Wells. “Dios fue el que nos dijo de movernos a Our Lady of Lourdes, pero yo no estaba muy convencida”.

Ellos fueron anteriormente feligreses de la Parroquia de St. Stephen de Weatherford, donde su hijo mayor, Jesús, recibió su Primera Comunión.

Fue en St. Stephen donde “nos pusieron la semilla de la fe,” asevera Mónica. Entonces, en Our Lady of Lourdes, la semilla echó raíz y floreció.

“No participábamos en nada, excepto ir a Misa”, explica Mónica. “No había

oración, nada. Fue cuando llegamos a Our Lady of Lourdes que empezamos a involucrarnos en el ministerio y nos fueron enseñando. Nos enseñaban y nosotros lo poníamos en práctica en casa. De ahí también nos fuimos alimentando nosotros espiritualmente”.

DESEO DE SERVIR

Mónica y Cruz no lo esperaban cuando Jesús les dijo que quería entrar al seminario.

“Yo, como mamá, lo que veía era que, a su edad, le gustaba a Jesús a participar en actividades de la fe. El padre le invitaba, ‘Acompáñeme a dirigir el vía crucis’. Él iba y ahí fue donde yo empecé a ver así como que algo ya estaba pasando, pero nunca como para decir que se iba ir al seminario”, dice Mónica.

Su hijo estaba bien activo en la Iglesia y empezó a expresar interés de entrar al seminario después de graduarse de la escuela secundaria, comentó Cruz.

Haber sido criado por padres que estaban curiosos de tener una vida de fe activa y que aceptaban esa misma curiosidad en su hijo le ayudó mucho a Jesús, asevera el seminarista, que lleva

cinco años en el seminario.

“Era cuestión de que me animaran a ir y buscar cosas con las que me sintiera cómodo al participar en la liturgia”, explica Jesús. “Entonces, cuando era pequeño, serví como monaguillo por primera vez en el altar; y, a medida que crecí, tenía el deseo inicial de ser lector, pero siempre hay muchos miedos que surgen al intentar algo nuevo”.

“Poco a poco, fui aprendiendo lo que hacía bien y lo que hacía mal, y lo que hacía mal lo quería hacer mejor porque ahí encontré las ganas de servir y de servir bien”, continúa diciendo Jesús. “Vi que había momentos en que se tenía que hacer un trabajo y yo podía hacerlo. Sólo tenía que tener confianza en que podía hacerlo”.

Sus padres lo apoyaron para asistir a clases impartidas en la diócesis que le permitieron explorar la fe, dijo Jesús.

Rodeado por las tradiciones, la teología y la sabiduría de la Iglesia, adquirió un sentimiento de maravilla y amor por sus estudios.

“Junto con el deseo de servir, mi amor por la Iglesia facilitó la decisión de querer entrar al seminario y considerar el sacerdocio”, señala Jesús.



Mónica, José, Jesús y Cruz Segura posan juntos en la Parroquia de Our Lady of Lourdes en Mineral Wells. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

VEN Y VERÁS

El interés de entrar al seminario fue una experiencia similar, pero distinta que la de su hermano, apunta José. Cuando se dio por vencido de buscar alguna pasión en los deportes u otros pasatiempos activos, el adolescente recibió un regaño de su madre que cambió su forma de pensar.

“Ella me dijo: ‘Está bien, no tienes que ir a practicar deportes, pero dime algo que sí vas a hacer y que sea beneficioso para ti’”, comenta José. Entonces reconoció que quedarse en casa y perder el tiempo no iba a ser suficiente ni para su mamá ni para él.

“Sólo necesitaba descubrir cómo encontrar un balance y no perder el tiempo”, añade José. “Y eso fue la oración; y eso me ayudó mucho”.

Eventualmente, José aprovechó la oportunidad para visitar a su hermano en el seminario por el retiro de Ven y Verás.

“Una vez que estuve allí, pude entender finalmente de qué se trataba, y mi punto de vista cambió. Me vino a la mente algo que no había pensado antes: convertirme en sacerdote”, asevera José.

Cuando Mónica lo recogió del retiro, se recuerda cómo él “llegó con cara de emoción, diciendo ‘Esto es lo que quiero’”.

Desde que entró al seminario, José ha seguido encontrando gozo en la oración y también sigue mejorando su relación con Cristo.

“En realidad no se trata de seguir el camino de mi hermano, sino de encontrar mi propio camino, el camino que Dios quiere que yo siga”, explica José.

LLENOS DE PAZ

Como tienen un hijo en el Seminario de St. Joseph en Louisiana y el otro en San Antonio, tomando cursos de teología, la

gente les pregunta a los dos padres si les molesta que sus hijos están lejos.

“Pienso que fue difícil porque no los tengo aquí, pero estoy contento porque sé dónde están”, asevera Cruz.

“Están aprendiendo algo del Señor, que es lo mejor, y eso es lo que me llena. Sé que están en un buen lugar aprendiendo, algo que les va a servir para su vida más adelante”, añade Cruz.

Desde entonces, Mónica y Cruz se han acercado más que nunca a su comunidad parroquial.

“Veía que estos niños pequeños se aburrían cuando rezaban el Rosario y que se les hacía tan pesado rezar, entonces decidimos enseñarles”, dijo Mónica.

“Me encanta porque ahora los niños son los que me están pidiendo y preguntando cuándo oraré con ellos”, ella concluyó. 🇺🇸



CON AMOR A MARÍA

Entre todas las celebraciones que existen alrededor del mundo, creo que la más acertada es la del Día de las Madres ... pues el amor de una madre es tan único y excepcional, que no hay nada que se pueda comparar con el mismo. Hasta el mismo Dios hecho hombre quiso tener una.

Sin lugar a duda, hablar de María, Madre de Dios, es hablar del amor incondicional y auténtico. Por esta razón, Dios eligió a María como la progenitora de Su Hijo.

Me encanta ver reflejada a mi madre en la imagen de la Madre de Dios, pues al igual que María, mi madre trata de que yo ayude al prójimo, aún en las ocasiones que yo no quisiera. Mi madre me recuerda con frecuencia el pasaje de las bodas de Caná y me empuja siempre a ser bueno y servir a los demás, incluso en los momentos que ésa no sea mi intención.

La pureza de corazón de una madre la lleva en todo momento a animar siempre a sus hijos a hacer el bien y lograr su autenticidad como persona.

Tengo la dicha de haber estado siempre empapado de un amor inmenso por María, Madre de Dios, gracias a la humildad, sencillez y bondad de mi madre.

Hace ocho años perdí a uno de mis hermanos, que era cuatro años menor que yo. Además de ser mi hermano, era mi mejor amigo.

Quiero resaltar que la Virgen María siempre ha sido sustento en todo este tiempo de duelo, y nos ha dado constantemente fortaleza a mi madre

y a mí. Mi madre y yo rezamos juntos el Rosario el día 19 de cada mes, por vía telefónica, y lo ofrecemos por el descanso eterno del alma de mi querido hermano, que falleció el 19 de junio del 2016. Ella está

en México y yo en Texas, pero esto no es impedimento para que nos unamos

en la fe, el amor y en comunión para interceder por el alma de mi hermano. Siento que así puedo apoyar a mi mamá y darle un poco de consuelo en medio de su dolor por la pérdida de su hijo.

La protagonista de esta oración compartida de amor y unidad es María; la siempre Virgen María; la Madre de Dios; María, la del Santo Rosario; la Señora de la historia que mi mamá me contaba cuando yo era niño; la que yo no quería hacer llorar; y la misma que ahora nos une a través de su consuelo y paz.

Es María, Madre de Dios, la que nos une a mi mamá (que, por cierto, se llama María) en Michoacán, México, y a mí en Texas.

Cada vez que entro a una iglesia, busco una imagen de la Madre del Creador; y *no lo hago solamente para poderla ver*. Lo hago para que Ella también me vea a mí; ahí bajo sus pies implorando



Luis Miguel Urrutia



su mirada y rogando que nunca deje de verme. Que Ella me conozca, y que siempre me reconozca en todo lugar como un hijo amante suyo que la respeta y la admira, pero que, sobre todo, la ama como su única madre.

Tener una amorosa mamá es como tener pan cuando tienes hambre, un paraguas cuando está lloviendo, una bebida refrescante cuando tienes calor y una cobija cálida cuando tienes frío. ✝

Luis Miguel Urrutia es feligrés de la Parroquia de Our Lady of Guadalupe en Fort Worth y ex coordinador de la Pastoral Juvenil.



NUESTRO PASTOR HABLA

Obispo Michael F. Olson, STD, MA

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



@BpOlsonFW

LA MORALIDAD DE LA FERTILIZACIÓN IN VITRO

Varios casos judiciales recientes en Alabama y Texas han vuelto a generar conversaciones en el foro público sobre la dignidad de los embriones humanos que han sido concebidos mediante fertilización in vitro (FIV), pero que permanecen congelados a la espera de ser implantados en el cuerpo de una mujer para su desarrollo durante el embarazo hasta la llegada del nacimiento del bebé. El Tribunal Supremo de Alabama dictaminó el 16 de febrero que los embriones congelados eran personas; lo que permitiría a los padres poder reclamar daños civiles por la muerte de sus hijos, si los embriones fueran destruidos en la clínica de fertilización in vitro. El tribunal también citó una enmienda constitucional aprobada por el estado de Alabama en el 2018 que declara: “Es la política pública de este estado reconocer y apoyar la santidad de la vida por nacer y los derechos de los niños por nacer, incluido el derecho a la vida”.

La ley que prohíbe casi todos los abortos en Texas, que entrara en vigor el pasado mes de septiembre tras la anulación del caso *Roe v. Wade* por la decisión *Dobbs* del Tribunal Supremo de los Estados Unidos, define al feto como “un miembro vivo individual de la especie *homo sapiens* desde la fecundación hasta el nacimiento, incluidas todas las etapas embrionarias y fetales del desarrollo”. Tanto las leyes de Alabama como las de Texas y los casos judiciales posteriores han suscitado consideraciones jurídicas y morales sobre el proceso de FIV; y en cuanto a si los embriones congelados deben ser tratados como personas o como propiedad.

Pese a que estas cuestiones podrían

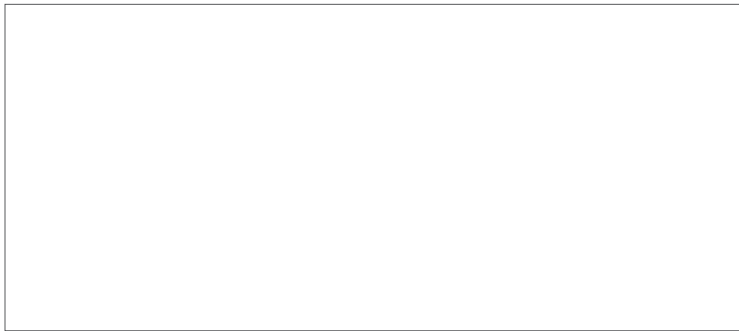
parecer nuevas para los tribunales y las legislaturas contemporáneas, la Iglesia Católica las ha abordado con una reflexión sensible y pastoral por muchos años. En el 1987, la Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe (hoy conocida como el Dicasterio para la Doctrina de la Fe — DDF) publicó la Instrucción *Donum Vitae*. Este documento analizó los diversos procedimientos relacionados con la fertilización in vitro teniendo en cuenta la enseñanza moral de la Iglesia sobre la dignidad de la persona humana y los principios del derecho natural. El documento analizó temas tan variados como la maternidad subrogada, la recolección de embriones con fines de experimentación y la moralidad de la propia fertilización in vitro. La doctrina presentada en *Donum Vitae* ha sido discutida más ampliamente en encíclicas papales y documentos de enseñanza posteriores, incluido el documento más reciente *Dignitas Infinita*, promulgado el 8 de abril del 2024 por el Dicasterio para la Doctrina de la Fe.

El razonamiento de la Iglesia en relación con la cuestión de la fertilización in vitro y los embriones humanos creados mediante ese tipo de fecundación es que la fertilización in vitro menoscaba la dignidad de la humanidad de los embriones concebidos. Los embriones son seres humanos y niños no nacidos. La fecundación in vitro también menoscaba la dignidad de las madres y los padres biológicos de estos niños no nacidos y la dignidad de las madres y los padres adoptivos porque la tecnología de la fertilización in vitro reemplaza la relación humana del acto marital entre un hombre y una mujer, tal como fuera diseñado por Dios para la procreación justa y respetuosa

de la vida humana. La fertilización in vitro invita a terceras personas a la relación marital íntima mientras explota las emociones de las parejas que desean naturalmente concebir y dar la bienvenida a los hijos en su familia.

Debido a su gran costo económico y la alta posibilidad de fracaso, la fertilización in vitro, que conlleva la implantación de un embrión congelado en el cuerpo de una mujer, requiere la concepción de más de un embrión más allá del número de embriones que una mujer podría llevar de manera segura en su embarazo. Esto establece una distinción injusta entre los embriones implantados y los embriones “de repuesto”, que se congelan en caso de que sean “necesarios” como reemplazos por si ocurre un aborto espontáneo.

La conversación y discusión sobre la moralidad, legalidad y conveniencia de la fertilización in vitro continúa en nuestros tribunales, legislaturas y el foro público. Por eso, es muy importante que los católicos estén conscientes de que la Iglesia enseña que los niños no nacidos creados mediante fertilización in vitro, congelados o implantados, son seres humanos a los que se les debe otorgar el mismo respeto y los mismos derechos que a cualquier otro niño nacido o no nacido; y nunca deben ser tratados como propiedad. Debemos recordar también que el deseo fuerte y natural de concebir y tener hijos que experimentan las parejas casadas cuando se sienten tristemente frustradas por la infertilidad no debe ser explotado emocional o económicamente por las falsas promesas de las clínicas de fertilización in vitro, que afirman de manera incorrecta, pero sincera, que una pareja tiene derecho a tener un hijo según sus propios términos. 🇺🇸



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