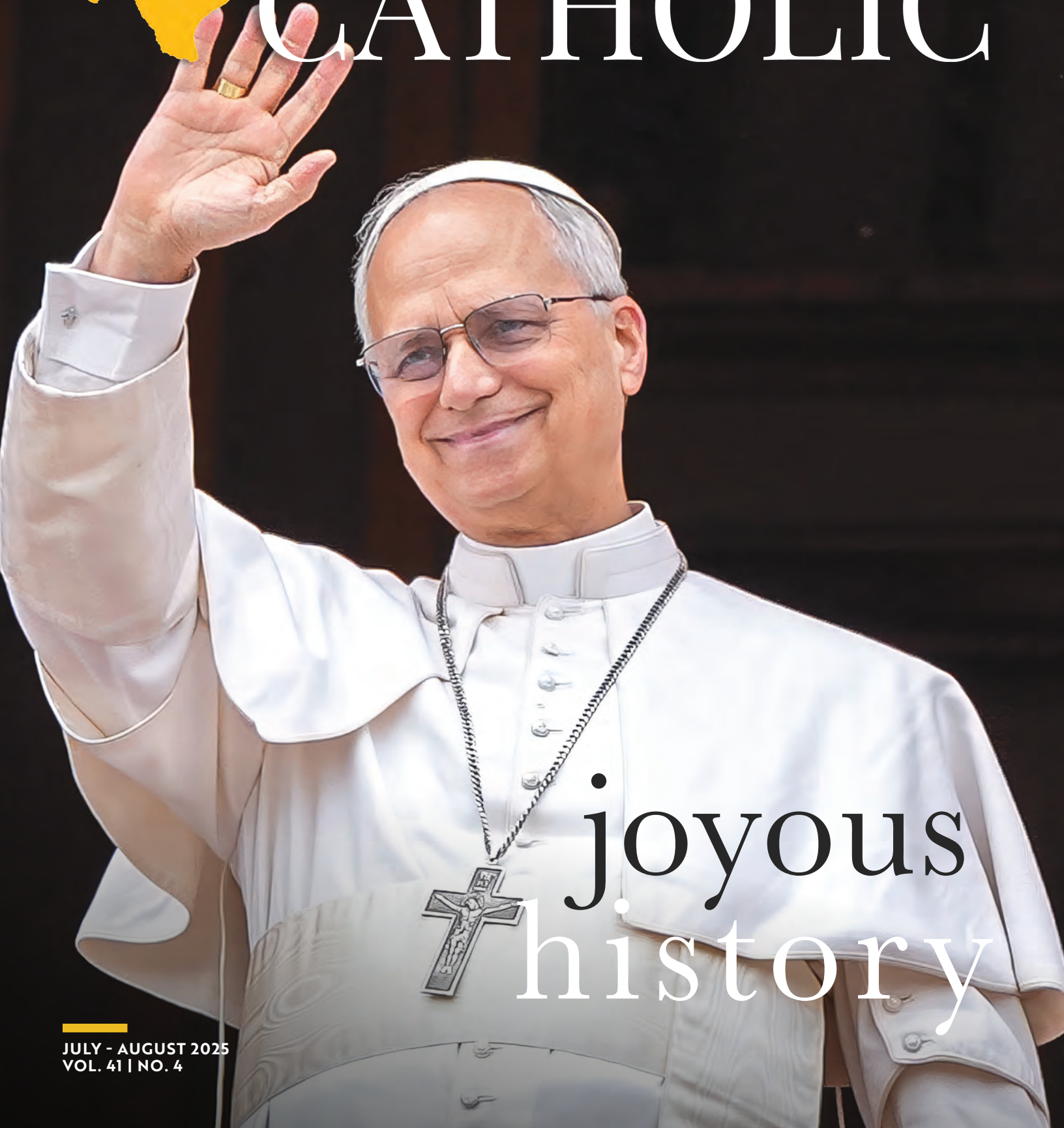


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NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



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JULY - AUGUST 2025
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A missing mark?

Author Robert Fulghum wrote “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.” Apparently he had it figured out by age 5, but it is taking me longer.

One subject took me until third grade to learn — and if truth be told, I wasn’t a third-grade student — I was teaching third grade religious education.

I had recited the phrase “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church” countless times in the Nicene Creed, and I was familiar with each of those concepts, but I’d never heard them referred to collectively as the Four Marks of the Church until the term popped up in the teacher’s manual of third-grade religious education.

There’s nothing like teaching to improve one’s understanding of a subject. Since instructing those third graders on the Four Marks of the Church, I’ve given the subject a fair amount of contemplation.

I appreciate the Church’s unity; our call to holiness, which is facilitated by the sacraments; the universality of the Church; and the hierarchy of the Church that began with the Apostles and continues until today.

In the last two months, I’ve been tempted to suggest a fifth mark: enduring.

Three “p”s brought to mind the enduring nature of the Church: a new pope, a new priest, and a pilgrimage that traversed the diocese.

The Church endured as we prayed through the 266th transition from one pope to another.

We celebrated the endurance of sacramental ministry as Father Isaac McCracken was ordained to the priesthood.

Both of those events demonstrate the enduring nature of the Church, and the third — the pilgrimage — explains the why.

Jesus is with us in the Blessed Sacrament. The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage provided opportunities to adore and honor Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. His Real Presence remains with us at every Mass, proving His enduring love for His Church.

A new pope, a new priest, and a pilgrimage. All three remind and comfort me that the Church was founded by Jesus Christ on the first Pentecost, almost 2,000 years ago, and it will endure well past my remaining time on Earth.

Susan Moses

EDITOR

Views from the Pews

The Church is filled with traditions, some ancient and universal, and others specific to the Diocese of Fort Worth. *North Texas Catholic* photographers recently visited some beloved activities and faith-filled events.

Full of spirit. The annual Spirit Games gives families an outlet for faith-centered fun while raising money for the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation, which provides tuition assistance at local Catholic schools.

Honoring Mary. Nearly 100 young adult members of Pastoral Juvenil Hispana participated in a Rosary for Hope on May 17 in Trinity Park in Fort Worth, honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary with singing, a procession, and the Rosary.

Time to discern. The Serra Clubs of Fort Worth and Dallas organized their annual Vocation Awareness Program on June 13-15. The discernment weekend, launched in 1990, gives men and women the opportunity for prayer, forums, and one-on-one conversations.



NTC/Scott Wagner



NTC/Christina Benavides



NTC/Juan Guajardo

THERE'S MORE



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A faithful promise

Arlington native takes permanent vows with Franciscans of the Eucharist of Chicago

CHICAGO — Sister Macey Angadicheril spends her days in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Chicago, serving in many ways, from helping stock and staff a busy food pantry to supporting young mothers with free diapers, and in prayer and worship.

On May 31, she took her final vows in the order of the Franciscans of the Eucharist of Chicago.

For Sr. Macey, the path from growing up in Arlington to religious life in Chicago has taken time to develop as she matured in her faith and discerned God's call in her life.

"Ultimately it was God," she said. "It wasn't always a clear path for me."

Her parents immigrated from Kerala, India, and she attended a Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in Grand Prairie when she was young. Later she attended St. Matthew, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Maria Goretti Parishes in Arlington.

Growing up, she didn't think about religious life. After tagging along to speech therapy sessions with a cousin, Sr. Macey decided she wanted to become a speech therapist.

As a high school sophomore, she felt the first tug toward religious life at a Catholic youth retreat focused on the Eucharist



Sister Macey Angadicheril hugs a fellow member of the Franciscans of the Eucharist of Chicago after professing final vows. (courtesy photo/Mark Jacks)

and Divine Mercy. She began to think what it might be like to devote her life to God.

At the University of North Texas, she studied speech and language pathology and began to question aspects of faith.

She found great encouragement at St. John Paul II Parish and Campus Ministry in Denton that strengthened her faith, and she began to think again about possibly becoming a nun.

Meanwhile she completed her bachelor's degree at UNT, then a master's degree in communication disorders from University of Texas at Dallas. Then she began working as a speech therapist and "dated some great guys" along the way but still felt unsettled about her future.

She began to attend Adoration and Mass every day at St. Maria Goretti as she asked God for guidance on whether she should marry or pursue religious life.

Sr. Macey said she felt drawn to the life of St. Francis after reading some of his works.

"I just remember being captivated by his life, seeing this man who really believed in the Gospel and totally gave himself to the Lord, and the Lord gave Himself to St. Francis," she said.

She started to look for communities associated with St. Francis as she focused on discerning her path.

A phone call to a sister with the Franciscans of the Eucharist of Chicago sparked her interest and also gave her "this peace and calm."

Located in a neglected Chicago neighborhood, the order helps the area's poor and shares the Gospel. "We focus on the Eucharist in everything we do," she said. "We try to bring others to Jesus through the Eucharist."

As a teen and young adult, Sr. Macey had trouble deciding whether to pursue religious life.

Now she can't imagine doing anything else. She said, "My relationship with Christ is so deep and beautiful and rich. I wouldn't have that if I didn't enter into this religious life."

IN MEMORIAM

FATHER RONALD MOHNICKEY, TOR

Father Ronald Mohnickey, TOR, who celebrated his 50th anniversary of priesthood in 2021 while serving at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, died on June 11 in Altoona, Penn. He was 82.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, he entered the TOR novitiate in 1966 and was ordained a priest on May 15, 1971.

He taught history and theology at Franciscan



Fr. Ronald Mohnickey

University of Steubenville in Ohio for six years, then he served in various ministerial roles in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Texas, and Gaming, Austria.

He retired from active ministry in 2023 after celebrating more than 50,000 Masses.

Fr. Mohnickey will be remembered for his love of travel and music, especially singing and playing the organ.



Crosstown pilgrims

A walk to a Jubilee church in Wichita Falls



A walking pilgrimage to Immaculate Conception Parish.

WICHITA FALLS — On a sunny day in May, after many days of rain and flooding in Wichita Falls, a group of 30 people walked 2.7 miles from Our Lady Queen of Peace Church to Immaculate Conception of Mary Church in Wichita Falls. The group included 14 Midwestern State University Catholic Campus Center students along with several Immaculate Conception youth, some Our Lady Queen of Peace parishioners, one Sacred Heart parishioner, the Catholic campus minister, and two priests.

Debbie Veitenheimer, Catholic campus minister at MSU, said when she found out Immaculate Conception was a diocesan jubilee site, she thought of walking with her students to that parish for Mass.

“So many other countries are comfortable doing walking pilgrimages, but you don’t see that very often here [in the U.S.]. I thought that would be really cool. And I wanted to do it at the end of the

semester before finals, so students could really take those intentions with them in prayer,” she said.

Veitenheimer also asked Father Kyle Walterscheid, pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace, if the students could walk from his parish, since she thought the walk to Immaculate Conception would be too far from the Catholic Campus Center.

He agreed and also suggested they invite some young adults from the parishes. Both he and Father Bartholomew Nanduri, SAC, accompanied the pilgrims on their journey.

Father Michael Trac Pham, CRM, thanked the pilgrims for visiting his parish.

“We are living in the Jubilee Year,” said Fr. Pham. “And we are on the journey, and with every step we walk, we have come closer in relationship with Jesus, and our goal is to be united with our loving God.”

— Jenara Kocks Burgess



Call to priesthood includes service to Deaf community

Michael Marincel shadows Deaf priest for summer assignment

WALTHAM, MASS. — During the school year, seminarian Michael Marincel studies at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio, and with a nod to the influence of his sister, Julia Marincel, he is also learning American Sign Language to be able to serve Deaf people.

ASL is not part of the seminary’s curriculum, so Marincel was excited to pursue his pastoral studies as an intern at St. Francis of Assisi Deaf Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

In June, Marincel traveled to St. Jude Parish in Waltham, Mass., for the opportunity to shadow Father Shawn Carey, who is one of eight Deaf priests in the country.

Since the start of his assignment, Marincel has had the opportunity to join Fr. Carey on calls to visit a Deaf parishioner in hospice as well as to a retirement

community to celebrate Mass for about 25 residents who are Deaf.

Housed with three priests and a fellow seminarian from the Chicago archdiocese, Marincel finds himself signing nearly all the time. “Most of the daily conversation is signed, and morning and evening prayers are in sign language,” he shared.

Marincel is improving sign language skills and learning other lessons. “Seeing people in that community push through their difficulties with joy is to witness how Deaf ministry can be more than just ministry to the Deaf but part of the wider ministry to the whole Church.”

— Brenda Raney



Seminarian
Michael Marincel
(NTC/Juan
Guajardo)

A pivotal step



At St. Peter Parish in Lindsay, Bishop Michael Olson accepted four seminarians as candidates for Holy Orders: from left, Evan Lang, Carson Kitaif, Alex Jansen, and Eric Hernandez. (NTC/Thomas Otto)

LINDSAY — On June 10, Bishop Michael Olson celebrated the Rite of Candidacy Mass at St. Peter Parish in Lindsay. Four seminarians — Carson Kitaif, Eric Hernandez, Alex Jansen, and Evan Lang — were formally accepted as candidates for Holy Orders.

This sacred liturgy marks the Church’s formal recognition of the candidates’ readiness and intention to continue discerning the call to the priesthood.

The four men rose and stood before the altar, stating “I do” to public resolutions to complete their preparation to assume ministry within the Church and to prepare themselves to give faithful service to Christ and His Church.

The Rite of Acceptance for Candidacy marks a pivotal stage in priestly formation, denoting the completion of the first two stages and the formal entrance into the third stage.

The first stage a seminarian passes through is called the propaedeutic, or introductory, stage.

The second stage, discipleship, is a period of encountering and being conformed to Jesus through prayer, study, ministry, and growth in self-awareness.

Wearing the Roman collar is a visible sign of the third stage, known as the configuration stage. The focus of the seminarians’ studies changes from philosophy to theology.

Surrender to Christ and prayerful perseverance characterize this third stage, explained Bishop Olson, “The configuration stage of formation is a time in the life of a seminarian when he is called to empty himself of egotism, more than to fill himself with knowledge of skills. This self-emptying on the part of the seminarian is in itself the graced process of configuration to Christ.

“As your bishop, along with the priests of the Diocese of Fort Worth, we pray for you that we might one day welcome you into our presbyterate when your seminary formation is completed and I call you to Holy Orders,” Bishop Olson concluded.

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PHOTOS



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Volunteers help the elderly and veterans with landscaping, among other projects. (NTC/Bertha Salazar)

Serving seniors, veterans

WICHITA FALLS — Catholic Charities Northwest Third Annual Day of Service on May 31 began with breakfast and prayer at the Wichita Falls Vernon College campus for 27 volunteers. Some remained at the college for the pantry and inspirational card projects, while others headed to their locations for lawn cleanup projects and ramp construction.

CCFW Director of Client Services Rita Gauthier worked with volunteers to build a 20-foot wooden ramp for a disabled woman in Archer City with Texas Ramp Project, which provided the supplies, tools, and instruction.

She said, “The homeowner was amazed that we got it together so quickly, and also very impressed that it’s so sturdy, and she can get out of her house and be more mobile now.”

Across the tracks at the

Eastside Community Cleanup in Wichita Falls, volunteers worked hard alongside City Councilor Robert Brooks and the Wichita Falls Fire Department at a disabled senior’s home.

Across town, Korean War veteran Kenneth Schnick watched his own garden transform as volunteers did an intensive lawn cleanup.

Now, Schnick can again enjoy sitting in the pergola he built with his late wife, which includes a statue of Mary. Volunteers also completed a minor roofing repair on his home needed after recent storms.

Catholic Charities plans its next Day of Service this fall. “There’s always more to do,” Gauthier said. “Everybody I’ve gotten feedback from said that it was a feel-good day.”

– Lisa Moore

A building blessed

St. Stephen Parish opens new Pallottine Multipurpose Building

WEATHERFORD — Parishioners at St. Stephen Church in Weatherford welcomed Bishop Michael Olson on June 1 to celebrate Mass and also commemorate a major milestone in a nearly two-year-long process.

The recently completed Pallottine Multipurpose Building was blessed by Bishop Olson following the 8 a.m. Mass.

In a nod to Pallottine priests, who have served at St. Stephen Parish since 1953, the new building was named after St. Vincent Pallotti, the community’s founder.

Annette Calderon, parish director of youth ministry, anticipates using the Pallottine building for youth ministry meetings and Masses as well as other young adult and campus ministry social events held throughout the year.

Although the youth will regularly use the building, Calderon hopes the center will also



St. Stephen parishioners explore the Pallottine Multipurpose Building.

NTC/Juan Guajardo

serve as a gathering place for parishioners of all backgrounds to meet in fellowship.

Father Mariya James, SAC, said the Pallottine building reflects the faith of the parishioners of St.

Stephen. He explained, “Nothing comes into existence when you don’t have faith and belief. It is the visible sign of their deep faith in action.”

– John English

CLERGY ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

REV. ISAAC McCracken

Newly ordained, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth, effective July 1.

REV. PETER WIAFE AKENTENG

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, has been appointed **Pastor** of Our Mother of Mercy Parish in Fort Worth, effective July 1.

REV. SAM FERIX ANTONY JESU ANTONY, SAC

Previously Parochial Vicar of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Decatur, St. Mary Parish in Jacksboro, and St. John the Baptizer Parish in Bridgeport, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett, St. Paul Parish in Electra, and Christ the King Parish in Iowa Park, effective June 1.

REV. MARIANNA FRANCIS CHINTHAMALLA, HGN

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Jude Parish in Mansfield, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Mary Parish in Henrietta, St. Jerome Parish in Bowie, and St. William Parish in Nocona, effective July 16.

REV. BENJAMIN GROTHOUSE

Has been appointed **Associate Director of Liturgy** without prejudice to his current assignment as Parochial Vicar of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, effective April 1.

REV. JESURAJ, SAC

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Michael Parish in Bedford, has been appointed **Hospital Chaplain** and resident of St. Patrick Cathedral, effective June 1.

REV. ALBERT FRANCIS KANJIRATHUMKAL, HGN

Previously Pastor of St. Mary Parish in Henrietta, St. Jerome Parish in Bowie, and St. William Parish in Nocona, has been **reassigned** by his order, effective July 16.

REV. SANDEEP LAKRA, HGN

Previously Hospital Chaplain and resident of St. Patrick Cathedral, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Joseph Parish in Rhineland and Santa Rosa Parish in Knox City, effective June 1.

REV. BRIJIL LAWRENCE, SAC

Director of the Propagation of the Faith, previously with residence at St. Ann Parish in Burleson, now **resides** at St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, effective July 1.

REV. VIJAYA RAJU MAREEDU, SAC

Previously Pastoral Administrator of St. Michael Parish in Bedford, has been **reassigned** by his order, effective June 1.

REV. DAVID AMAL RAJ MARIA, SAC

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Decatur, St. Mary Parish in Jacksboro, and St. John the Baptizer Parish in Bridgeport, effective July 1.

REV. JOSEPH MORENO

Previously Pastor of St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett, St. Paul Parish in Electra, and Christ the King Parish in Iowa Park, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Michael Parish in Bedford, effective June 1.

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FOLLOWING CHRIST, ONE DAY AT A TIME

Isaac McCracken during his ordination on May 24 at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

Isaac Joseph McCracken ordained to the priesthood

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

There's a compelling reason why Andres Hernandez, Lucas Hernandez, and Jacob Smith climbed out of bed early on the morning of May 24, traveled to downtown Fort Worth, and then stood outside St. Patrick Cathedral waiting for the doors of the historic church to open. A young man they look up to was about to dedicate his life to God and the Church.

Isaac Joseph McCracken spent his pastoral year working at their parish, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller. Now the teenagers were eager to watch Bishop Michael Olson ordain the 27-year-old transitional deacon to the priesthood during a solemn Mass steeped in centuries-old rituals.

"I'm an altar server, so I spent a lot of time with Deacon Isaac around the church," explained Lucas Hernandez, a 17-year-old high school graduate bound for Ave Maria University. "He was always very reverent and stepped in when needed. I remember one time the priest was sick, and he ended up giving the homily. It was pretty good."

Attending the ordination Mass was a first-time experience for all three boys.

"Deacon Isaac set a good example for us," Hernandez continued. "That definitely makes you think about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life."

A NEW BEGINNING

The ordination of Isaac McCracken to the Sacred Order of the Priesthood is the culmination of seven years of study, discernment, and prayer for the Arlington native who once thought of becoming an economics professor.

McCracken is a recent graduate of the Theological College at Catholic University of America, where he earned a master's of divinity, sacred theology baccalaureate, and graduate certificate in Latin. The former St. Vincent de Paul parishioner is beginning his new ministry at the same time the universal Church welcomes a new pope, Leo XIV, the former American Cardinal Robert Prevost.

"I'm really hopeful — getting a new pope for the Church and, at the same time, entering the priesthood," said McCracken, assigned to serve Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth. "I'm feeling pretty excited about it."

Before pursuing his vocation, the son of Joann and Gary McCracken spent two years at the University of Texas at Arlington and became active in the University Catholic Community on campus. His decision to enter the seminary in 2018 is a commitment he continued to make, "one day at a time, one year at a time."

Continued on Page 12



“He listens. He’s kind and very, very smart. But most of all, he cares and wants people to do well.” — Joann McCracken



Isaac McCracken hugs his mother, Joann, before he is ordained on May 24 at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

From Page 11

AN OVERWHELMING EXPERIENCE

Sharing that journey were his parents who raised Isaac and his older brother, Liam, in a typical Catholic home. Educated in public schools, their sons attended religious education classes, participated in vacation Bible school, and went to Mass with the family.

McCracken’s determination to study for the priesthood surprised the couple.

“It’s a sacrifice, but we’re so proud of him,” his mother said, listing the traits that will make her offspring a good priest. “He listens. He’s kind and very, very smart. But most of all, he cares and wants people to do well.”

Witnessing her son’s hands consecrated with holy chrism after years in the seminary was overwhelming.

“It’s been a long journey, but we’re ready for it, and I know Isaac is ready for

it,” his mother enthused. “In order for the Church to move forward, it needs good, young priests who have courage and compassion. It needs that to make the world a better place.”

BRIMMING WITH JOY

In his homily, Bishop Olson said the hearts of the local Church are “brimming with joy and hope” because of the ordination of a new presbyter.

“Christ has given us priests to the Church as shepherds after His own heart,” he told the 625 worshipers who filled the cathedral. “Priests are called to protect His flock by outflanking and undercutting the devious wolves of today not through

greater cunning, but through guileless simplicity and the selfless love of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The leader of North Texas Catholics explained a priest’s ministry is to establish, maintain, and repair the bond between Christ and His people through eucharistic prayer, preaching, and a merciful presence in the confessional.

“We as priests, even as fragile and earthen vessels, are called to lead by setting an example of discipleship, selfless service, and the mercy required of all the baptized,” he added.

AN ANCIENT RITUAL

The Rite of Ordination continued with the elect expressing

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Bishop Michael Olson hugs Isaac McCracken during his ordination Mass. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

his willingness to accept the responsibilities that come with ordination. Promises of respect and obedience to the bishop and his successors were then made by the soon-to-be priest.

In a visually striking moment that symbolizes a man's dependence on God and unworthiness for ministry, Dcn. McCracken prostrated himself before the altar as the congregation chanted the intercessory Litany of the Saints.

The most solemn part of the ordination ceremony followed with the Laying on of Hands. With a gesture first used by the Apostles in the election of the first deacons in the Church (*Acts 6:6*), Bishop Olson placed his hands on the head of the ordinand and silently prayed to invoke the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Other priests then approached the newly ordained presbyter with the same gesture to signify they all belong to one priesthood with Jesus Christ.

With help from Father Philip Brembah and Father James Flynn, Fr. McCracken was vested with a stole (a sign of his priestly office) and chasuble (the vestment worn for the celebration of the Mass). Kneeling before the bishop again, his hands were anointed with sacred chrism to symbolize new authority to consecrate the Eucharist and administer sacraments.

A chalice and paten, carried to the altar by his parents, were presented to the new priest by the bishop with the words, "Receive the oblation of holy people to be offered to God. Understand what you will do. Imitate what you will celebrate and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's cross."

The Liturgy of the Eucharist was then celebrated by the bishop with Fr.



McCracken taking a prominent role.

HAVE COURAGE

Seminarian Nicholas Hoelscher, who will begin his second year of theology studies in August, was happy to see his friend and mentor become a priest in the diocese.

"It gives me hope for my own future," said the 30-year-old who attended the Theological College in Washington, D.C., along with Fr. McCracken. "He

really took on a leadership role there and made sure the other seminarians were okay."

His advice to other young men considering a vocation is succinct: have courage.

"Fear is the death of love," the St. Joseph parishioner stressed. "You have to have courage to give of yourself in this way. You can't love if you're afraid." 🇺🇸

First Mass on Page 14

"He really took on a leadership role there and made sure the other seminarians were okay." — Nicholas Hoelscher

A SYMBOLIC FIRST



Father Isaac McCracken celebrates his first Mass on May 25 at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Gifts, tears, and prayers accompany Father Isaac McCracken's first Mass

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

During Father Isaac McCracken's first Mass, celebrated May 25 at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Arlington, the new priest acknowledged his parents' love, guidance, and Christian example with gifts.

"The Church values the importance of family, particularly parents, in the life and formation of priests," said Fr. McCracken, addressing worshippers at the end of the liturgy. "They raise them in the faith, form their conscience, and accompany them on the journey of priestly formation."

Recognizing the importance of that role, the 27-year-old priest gave his father, Gary McCracken, the purple stole worn when he administered the sacrament of reconciliation for the first time.

"It's given to the father symbolizing his role in shaping the priest's character and understanding of mercy and justice," the grateful son explained.

According to tradition, a priest's father is buried holding the purple stole so he can present it to Christ with the words, "My son, too, shared in Your priesthood."

A BEAUTIFUL TRADITION

Fr. McCracken's attention then turned to his mother, Joann, who was presented with the manutergium. Used to wipe blessed chrism from a priest's hands after being ordained, "that cloth is not to be discarded," Fr. McCracken informed the congregation.

In a narrative both beautiful and consoling, when the mother arrives at the gates of heaven with the sacred item in her hands, she is escorted to the Lord who asks, "I have given you life. What have you given me?"

"She hands our Lord the manutergium and responds, 'I have given you my son as a priest,'" Fr. McCracken said before embracing his mother.

The touching ceremony drew applause and a few tears from parishioners.

A SIGN OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

Concelebrating the Mass with the newly ordained priest were Vicar General Father Jonathan Wallis; Father Maurice Moon, director of Collegian Seminarian Formation; Father Brett Metzler, director of vocations; Father Philip Brembah, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish; and Father Kenneth Nauert of the Diocese of Louisville, Kentucky.

"It's a great honor to preach at your first Mass," said Fr. Wallis, who is also director of theologian seminarian formation.

"It's an amazing thing to give our lives to Jesus Christ. To be humble enough to say He knows better than I do what I need," the vicar general pointed out. "Father [McCracken] is now called and is a living sign and witness of the love our Lord Jesus Christ has for us. Christ has not abandoned us, and a sign of His presence is a new priest for our diocese.

"Know that you're in our prayers every single day," the homilist said to the new priest. "You are now the instrument of Christ's love and peace in a very particular way. Let your light shine before others so they may see the glory and good works of God the Father."

The pastor of St. Vincent de Paul asked people to pray for the former seminarian who grew up in the Arlington parish. Fr. McCracken is just beginning the long journey of living out his vocation, Fr. Brembah told them.

"He'll need your prayers every day," he urged. "Pray for him like you did when he was in formation. He needs you more than ever. You are his family. He came from us." 🇺🇸

Faith Rooted At Home

By Lisa Moore

Newly ordained Father Titus Mary Sanchez, OP, celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at his home parish of St. Andrew Church in Fort Worth on June 15.

The young man, then known as Adam Sanchez, graduated from St. Andrew Catholic School and began feeling called to preach the Gospel while attending Southern Methodist University.

He said, “The first time I ever thought about being a priest, I was 18. The desire to be a priest has grown through these 11 years. You get used to looking at [priesthood] in the future tense and don’t even know how to form the present tense of the word.”

He was ordained to the priesthood June 5 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., then he will complete his final year of his licentiate in sacred theology (STL) at Dominican House of Studies.

Speaking with the *North Texas Catholic* just days before his ordination, Fr. Sanchez anticipated it would be strange to hear his voice with Christ consecrating the Eucharist: “Jesus said those words, then I said them and Jesus said them. We both said them. There’re two speakers in one voice at Mass. What the priest causes with our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, is humbling.”

A recent retreat had Fr. Sanchez focused on the prophetic aspect of the priesthood: “The Lord chooses the prophet before the prophet knew about God,” he said. “In the *Gospel of John*, Jesus says, ‘I chose you. You did not choose me.’ That’s startling and humbling because in my case, He chose me to be a priest.”

“What follows God’s call to the priesthood,” Fr. Sanchez explained, “is His enduring fidelity accompanying us in His call.”

“God is quite persistent, and His persistency comes in the form of, ‘I’ll be with



Father Titus Mary Sanchez, OP, celebrates a Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Andrew Parish, where he grew up in Fort Worth, on June 15. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

you,” Fr. Sanchez said. “Moses said, ‘I’m afraid; I don’t want to do it.’ And God’s response is, ‘I’ll be with you,’” he continued. “That is a load-bearing phrase. The last phrase of our Lord Jesus in the *Gospel of Matthew* is, ‘and I will be with you until the end of the age.’ There’s a continuity here: God speaks in all times and places through His prophets, and in the case of the priest, Jesus promises to be with me until the end of my age.”

Fr. Sanchez asks for prayers of continual renewal for himself and his fellow priests.

“The bishop prays, ‘May the Lord renew deep within you the spirit of holiness.’ The bishop prays for that as he’s ordaining us. The readers of the *North Texas Catholic* can pray that the Lord would renew within me and my brothers and in all priests the spirit of holiness today and for the rest of our lives.” 🇺🇸

To Love Like Him

Father Vinh Van Vu, CRM, celebrates silver ordination anniversary to the priesthood

By Christina Benavides

On Pentecost Sunday in Fort Worth, Father Vinh Van Vu, CRM, was joined by the faithful of Our Lady of Fatima Parish as well as his youngest brother, Father Khanh Vu, CRM, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with a special Mass on June 8.

“Today is a very solemn and joyful day, not only for our parish priest as he celebrates his 25th anniversary of priesthood, but also for our entire community, especially for the four parishes that he has served for 25 years,” said Thanh Bui, the parish’s pastoral assistant, extending a warm welcome to visitors. Parishioners from churches Fr. Vu served in Amarillo and Port Arthur, as well as from his former parish, Vietnamese Martyrs in Arlington, helped fill every pew.

Before the final blessing, Fr. Vu addressed the faithful, thanking them for their prayers. “I see this ceremony is really a very dear thing, a love that is

especially for me on this day. I am very grateful and very appreciative of the love you have for this priest.”

JOURNEY TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Fr. Vu was born in North Vietnam just as Catholics in the country were navigating a complex political situation, in the midst of the First Indochina War. Like many Catholics in the country at the time, his family relocated to the South to escape the communist-controlled North.

The oldest of nine, Fr. Vu always felt drawn to religious life even as he served his parish as a young altar boy. He joined the Congregation of the Mother of the Redeemer community at the age of 14 on May 31, 1966.

“I entered when I was in high school. After that, I was a novice, and I became a monk,” he said.

Fr. Vu escaped from Vietnam after his community was “confiscated by the Viet

Cong, so I fled from Vietnam to Thailand to come here [to the United States] to join with my order in October 1989.”

After being chosen to become a priest by his superior, the monk began his studies for ordination. Fr. Vu recalled how as a deacon he had the opportunity to meet Pope John Paul II in January 2000.

“It was great. There was a lot of excitement. I still have a picture,” Fr. Vu said with a laugh.

A few months later, Fr. Vu was ordained June 4, 2000, at the order’s monastery in Carthage, Missouri.

A SIMPLE, HOLY MAN

If searching for Fr. Vu, the first place to check is in the church, where he’ll be praying the Rosary.

“In my community, for a long time, we had to say about six rosaries a day.”

“That’s 300 Hail Marys,” Bui said with a laugh.

“I’ve tried to keep up with it,” Fr. Vu said. “In my

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Father Vinh Van Vu, CRM, celebrates a special Mass for his 25th anniversary of ordination. (NTC/Ben Torres)

community, we have a devotion to Mary.”

Fr. Vu is well known for his concise and powerful homilies, Bui said, as well as his reverence for the liturgy.

“I think we should serve people with our heart,” Fr. Vu said. “I feel God loves me so much, so I have to love people like He loves me. Serving with my homily or my service in Mass, I try to have people understand how God loves them so much.”

The father is a simple and holy man, Bui said.

For example, when he isn’t in the church praying the Rosary, he might be baking a cake.

“The sisters kept complaining that we could never bake it like Father,” Bui said. “The sisters advised that I ask Father, how long did you bake today’s cake? Father said three chains of joy. How long does peanut candy take, Father? Three and a half chains.”

DEDICATED TO THE EUCHARIST

Deacon Michael Hoang observed the priest’s impact on the parish is appreciated by many parishioners.

When Fr. Vu first came to Our Lady of Fatima, roughly 12 people attended daily Mass, and now there are about 40. “We also have Eucharistic Adoration the whole day of Saturday,” Dcn. Hoang added.

“I try to help people understand it is a very important thing, the sacrament of the Eucharist, a sacrament of love,” Fr. Vu said.

A strong advocate for nurturing a love for Christ among young people, Fr. Vu has also boosted youth involvement by organizing graduation Masses for high school and college students, cheering on the parish volleyball team, and supporting the growth of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement in his parish.

A FAMILY REUNITED

This anniversary year has been one of joy and reunion for the priest, who will soon turn 73.

Within the past month, the father attended a retreat with his order in Missouri, and he will return to Vietnam with Fr. Khanh to visit their mother.

Sharing his gratitude to God for the opportunity to celebrate the Thanksgiving Mass for his eldest brother, Fr. Khanh told the *North Texas Catholic*, “I feel that God’s love is not only for the eldest brother of the family, but also for the whole Church, and through that, I see God’s love through the priesthood. I also want everyone’s heart to feel God’s love and to pray for priests to live holy lives. ... On this occasion of his silver jubilee, may he always be at peace in his mission to always be a zealous and merciful shepherd as God has always desired.” 🇺🇸

LOOK AT JESUS, FOLLOW HIM

The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage travels through the Diocese of Fort Worth, emphasizing the Real Presence of Jesus

“It’s been a tremendous time of grace.” That’s how Father Malachy Napier, CFR, described his experience traveling with the Holy Eucharist during the 2025 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage. Intended to draw attention to the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the 3,340-mile spiritual journey across 10 states arrived in the Diocese of Fort Worth

June 5 at Our Lady of Fatima Parish. “A lot of people are encountering Jesus in the Eucharist and are returning to the sacraments,” said the priest. “It’s a beautiful public witness to our Lord when we’re carrying Jesus during the procession in the streets.”

Led by eight perpetual pilgrims who traveled the entire distance (including Stephen Fuhrmann from the Diocese

of Fort Worth), the pilgrimage included stops at parishes, shrines, and Catholic sites in 20 dioceses where Catholics were encouraged to participate in Eucharistic Adoration. Launched in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis on May 18, the pilgrimage ended in Los Angeles where the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels hosted a Corpus Christi celebration with Mass and a downtown Eucharistic Procession.



At Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Fort Worth, Father Vinh Van Vu, CRM, carries the monstrance to begin Eucharistic Adoration. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish
hosts a Eucharistic Procession
June 6. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



After their first stop at Our Lady of Fatima, the pilgrims visited three more parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth: Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Fort Worth, St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, and St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Granbury.

About 2,500 faithful in the diocese participated in events including Masses, Eucharistic Processions, Eucharistic Adoration, and a talk with the pilgrims.

María Floran, a parishioner of Immaculate Heart of Mary, attended her parish's early morning Eucharistic pilgrimage.

Afterwards, she said, "I had never experienced anything like this; it was very beautiful and I feel very blessed

Continued on Page 20

Bishop Michael Olson celebrates
Mass at St. Joseph Parish June 6.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)



THERE'S
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Find more articles and photos by scanning the QR code or visiting NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news.

From Page 19

that Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish has been chosen for this pilgrimage to pass through here.”

The choir from Our Mother of Mercy Parish in Fort Worth led the music at the June 6 Mass at St. Joseph Parish. Donald Walker Jr., a saxophone player and assistant choir director, said, “It’s a real honor to be able to do this. It’s such a fundamental part of our faith — core to the Catholic faith to be here with Jesus in the form of the Eucharist.”

He continued, “At Adoration, at every Mass, we want to draw more attention to [the Real Presence] and remind people. It’s easy to forget the miracle of transubstantiation at every Mass.”

Father Brandon LeClair, pastoral administrator at St. Frances Cabrini Parish, said the visit generated a lot of excitement among parishioners.

The priest said, “It’s a way to reignite people’s faith and show them what it truly means to adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. We don’t just come to Mass to receive this Body and Blood, but we can offer up different worship and sacrifices through Adoration, through processions.”

Fr. LeClair, aware that the pilgrims would soon leave the diocese to continue their journey, encouraged the faithful in his homily, “Be the light of Christ to all that we encounter when we go back home. Be missionary disciples leading others to the same encounter with Christ.” ✦

NTC reporting by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen, Karla Silva, and Susan Moses



Father Brandon LeClair gazes at Jesus in the monstrance during a Eucharistic Procession at St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Granbury on June 7. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)



The Eucharistic Procession at St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Granbury on June 7 included five stops to pray a decade of the Rosary. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)



Rachel Levy, a pilgrim with the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, helps plant a garden at Catholic Charities Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Volunteers from near and far

By Jennifer Johnson

On June 6, a unique group of volunteers arrived at Catholic Charities Fort Worth to help the nonprofit. Perpetual pilgrims, those traveling on the 2025 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, completed two tasks: revitalizing the prayer garden and organizing the advancement storage closet.

“They did an amazing job. The volunteers got right to work and powered through all the tasks assigned,” said Kelly Smith, CCFW’s volunteer specialist. “We are so appreciative of this group’s help. What a wonderful opportunity for these young individuals to grow in their faith and serve others along the way.”

One of the pilgrims, Stephen Fuhrmann, is a parishioner at St. Peter Church in Lindsay. A senior at Texas A&M University, Fuhrmann has participated in several projects during the pilgrimage to serve the poor and marginalized.

“It’s a constant receiving and pouring out,” he said. “We can receive infinitely from our Lord and go back to Him to pour into all these different outlets in our life.”

Fuhrmann has observed a deepening of humility within himself through service. “It’s about getting on our hands and knees and getting dirty in places we wouldn’t want to be in *our* everyday lives, but people are there in *their* everyday lives.”

Father Malachy Napier, CFR, is one of two priests accompanying the pilgrims on their journey. “Love can only grow when it’s given away. We grow by sharing the gift we’ve received,” he said. “Service is our response to the free love God has given us. Loving them is giving back what has been given to me.”

THE GIFT OF SERVICE

The mission of CCFW is significantly facilitated by the generous outpouring of volunteers’ time and talent.

According to Smith, volunteer hours at CCFW average 1,600 per month. In 2024,

668 people served 26,211 hours. “Our volunteers consistently show up to make a difference in someone else’s life,” she said. “Being of service to others is a way to show God’s love for us all.”

“As followers of Christ, we are called to serve others,” Smith said. “Our volunteers are the hands and feet of Jesus and can serve others by being a listening ear for a community member going through a tough time or by walking alongside a pregnant mom in need.”

CCFW welcomes new volunteers and offers a variety of opportunities to help such as answering phone calls from community members in need; providing rides for clients to doctor’s appointments and work; mentoring moms with Gabriel Project; and assisting the front desk of its dental clinic. 🇹🇽

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



CLASS OF 2025

Sacred Heart Catholic High School

- 16 graduates in Class of 2025
- 3,068 service hours completed by Class of 2025
- 12.5 percent joining military / 56.3 percent attending college
31.3 percent entering workforce

“There’s a big, big focus placed on service at Sacred Heart. I’ve managed the football team since eighth grade. Five years. It’s not strenuous, but it takes commitment to get there at 2:45, go to six o’clock at night. Coming in on Saturdays to help Danny Walterscheid with laundry — that’s really been a formative experience for me at Sacred Heart.”

- Ben Strabala



NTC/Thomas Otto

Ben Strabala

Strabala will attend University of Oklahoma to study chemical engineering in the Honors College to prepare for a career in renewable energy.



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Mili Espino

Espino, who graduated from Cassata in three years, is planning to work and save money for college to pursue a career in counseling.

Cassata Catholic High School

- 33 graduates in Class of 2025
- 3 percent joining military / 64 percent attending college
33 percent entering workforce
- 15 percent students with learning differences
- 4 percent former dropouts

“During this whole path that I’ve taken at Cassata, they have taught me that with God, everything is possible — not to give up. Since everything is at your own pace, I have time to put God in the middle of everything. It’s amazing.”

- Mili Espino

Nolan Catholic High School

- 139 graduates in Class of 2025
- 245 scholarships total more than \$16.5 million
- One student appointed to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy

“Coming from a public school to a Catholic school, I was kind of nervous at first. Nolan has not only helped me academically but also helped me grow my faith.”
- Sparky Kemmo

“We have excellent teachers, who are very Christ-centered. In the classes, they teach so well on their specific subject, but they also incorporate faith into everything.”
- Joanna McLean



Sparky Kemmo and Joanna McLean

Kemmo will attend University of Notre Dame and plans to be an orthodontist.

McLean will attend University of Dallas and hopes to teach elementary students in a Catholic school.



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Angela Lopez Castillo

Castillo has been offered a full-ride scholarship to Boston College, where she will study education.

Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep

- 39 graduates in Class of 2025
- 87 percent first-generation college
- 320 college acceptances
- \$28 million in scholarships, grants, and financial aid
- 19 students received full-ride college scholarships

“If I hadn’t come to Cristo Rey, I think my life would be very different otherwise. I don’t think I would have made it to Boston College. I would say it was God’s plan. It has had an overall really positive impact on my growth.”
- Angela Lopez Castillo

Congrats to all the 2025 grads!

Full profiles and more stats can be found at:

NorthTexasCatholic.org/feature-articles

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an issue of life-and-death

Priests in diocese assemble to study teachings on abolishing the death penalty and moving beyond punishment to restoration

By Sandra Engelland

Mobilizing Catholics in the diocese to help abolish the death penalty was the aim behind a recent two-day assembly of clergy.

The death penalty is inconsistent with pro-life values focused on the sanctity of all life and upholding human dignity, according to the Catholic Church.

Bishop Michael Olson said he brought the Catholic Mobilizing Network, a nonprofit focused on eliminating the death penalty in the U.S., to the diocese to educate priests and deacons to inform their congregations.

“Capital punishment is a very pressing issue concerning human dignity, justice, and the fostering of a pro-life culture,” Bishop Olson said.

“It’s very pressing because of the recent developments in doctrine concerning this issue over the last 50 years. It’s important that our priests and deacons be informed about the reality of capital punishment in Texas for the sake of their preaching in the formation of the conscience of our lay faithful,” he continued.

In 2018, under the leadership of Pope Francis, the Church revised the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to state,

“in the light of the Gospel, that ‘the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person’” and to call for the Church to work “with determination for its abolition worldwide” (2267).

PUNISHMENT VS. RESTORATION

Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of the Catholic Mobilizing Network, said priests play a key role in helping people understand the Church’s stance on capital punishment.

Capital punishment is incompatible with the Gospel and the teachings of Jesus and His desire to bring healing, she said.

The goal, according to Murphy and the nonprofit, is not just abolishing the death penalty but bringing about restorative justice.

The legal system asks what law was broken, who broke the law, and how should they be punished.

“Restorative justice asks, what was the harm, who was impacted and how, and what can be done to make it right,” Murphy said.

While nothing can replace a person whose life was taken, offenders who acknowledge their responsibility

and listen to those impacted by harm can experience restorative justice.

JESUS CHANGES HEARTS

Presentations to clergy highlighted compelling stories from people directly impacted by the death penalty, including a father who has become an outspoken advocate against the death penalty after his daughter was murdered; the sister of a man who was exonerated after spending five years on death row; the former jury foreman in a Tarrant County death penalty case who has since become opposed to the death penalty; and a priest who serves as a spiritual advisor to individuals on death row.

Father Tim Thompson, pastor of All Saints Parish in Fort Worth, said he was moved by the stories of the priest who ministered to prisoners on death row.

“We do need to have justice, but if that’s our only thinking we end up with a harsh society that no one can survive in,” he said. “Justice has been reduced in our mind to punishing, but in the end it doesn’t satisfy.”

The death penalty and the current state of the criminal justice system have a negative impact on communities.

“If someone seeks forgiveness,



that's good for the soul, but vengeance is bad for us, affects our hearts, and deepens resentment," Fr. Thompson said. "The death penalty is part of the issue, but how can we become a society of restorative justice and redemption?"

Father Richard Collins leads prison ministry in the diocese, and he and his team minister to hundreds of Catholics in more than a dozen federal, state, and local prisons and jails across the diocese.

The death penalty is the culmination of a punitive system that is largely broken.

He noted the tension between security and rehabilitation and how today's prisons focus more on punishment than rehabilitation.

"We have to have public safety, but the system has to encourage rehabilitation, not just lock people up for a long time and not help them," he said.

The Church and restorative justice point to a better way.

"For us coming with faith, we believe Jesus has the power to change people's hearts," Fr. Collins said. "The Church

has a mission to do that.

"We want people to have that experience with the Lord Jesus that brings about lifelong change, and to then be able to go back to their community and be a more positive person and live Christian values."

Texas is one of a handful of states actively pursuing capital punishment, and Tarrant County has many inmates on death row.

In addition to the sanctity of human life, several other concerns arise with the death penalty.

According to Catholic Mobilizing Network, one person has been exonerated for every eight people who were executed.

Also, capital punishment shows a strong racial bias. Men of color convicted of murdering a white victim make up the vast majority of people on death row.

WHAT CAN CATHOLICS DO?

Fr. Collins asked that they keep the diocesan prison ministry and the system as a whole in their prayers.

"A real sense of prayer for change in

criminal justice for more rehabilitation is important," he said.

Murphy echoed the need for prayer and a focus on the abolition of the death penalty as a pro-life issue.

She also said concerned Catholics can contact the governor's office, their state congressional delegates, and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles. Despite Gov. Greg Abbott's Catholic faith, he remains a staunch supporter of the death penalty, Murphy said.

The goal is to not just eliminate the death penalty but to transform the criminal justice system, Murphy said, by focusing on accountability, responsibility, mercy, forgiveness, and healing.

She mentioned *John 8*, where Jesus told a crowd ready to kill a woman caught in adultery, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." One by one, the crowd disappeared.

"We're on a journey of forgiveness," Murphy said. "We have a lot of work to do so we can experience healing through Jesus Christ and His model." 🇺🇸



BEYOND THE BOOKS

In addition to theology studies, permanent deacons are shaped by service to the homeless, infirm, and imprisoned

By Christina Benavides

To prepare to be ordained a permanent deacon, the men in formation volunteer with the unhoused; visit the infirm in the hospital or in hospice care; and when possible, serve the imprisoned, said Deacon Rodney Asebedo, diocesan director of the diaconate formation program.

“So often the sick, the unhoused, or the imprisoned feel like they’re invisible or no one notices them,” the deacon said. “Our goal is to not only notice them but learn how to minister to them.”

From an administrative point of view, men in formation serve a minimum of 10 hours a month. But from a ministry point of view, Dcn. Asebedo said, “We’re hoping that in the inner workings of the man as

they serve these people, that this is drawing them closer to the face of God ... that it continues to draw them closer to their call and continues to draw them closer to God in how they see people. Our goal is that they will be able to see God in every day, in every person they serve, not just the mountaintop experience.”

EXPECTATIONS SURPASSED

Before he began volunteering at True Worth Place in Fort Worth, deacon aspirant Steven Bartolotta of Holy Redeemer Parish in Aledo thought his service would mirror past experiences volunteering in homeless shelters.

“There was probably a little apprehension on my part, like, ‘Okay, I don’t know what I’m getting into here. What is it going to be?’” Bartolotta admitted.

Now three months into his service, the Holy Redeemer parishioner said he actively looks forward to returning each Friday, where he serves in the mail room and in the dining hall for about four hours.

It’s been an eye-opening experience to witness the gratitude in the community, Bartolotta said. “You’d think, ‘Oh gosh, we’re going to run into people at their lowest, who are in their most difficult circumstances, and that is the case for some. But you wouldn’t know that when you see them and interact with them. They actually uplift me.’”

The deacon aspirant said he’s been blown away by the vibrance of the community there and has gained a new understanding of human dignity and humility.

“We’re not down there being street preachers, having ecumenical debates or

Deacon aspirant Steven Bartolotta serves meals every Friday at True Worth Place. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

dialogues. It's being there for them, showing them that someone does care about you, someone does love you, and you might have had some difficult moments and times in the past, and you might have some more ahead, but we're still all one community together," he said. "The most important thing is to let them know that there are people here who do care for you, who do love you, and who are here and want to serve you."

Again, he recalled his initial hesitation with the assignment, when he worried about the time investment, balancing the service with family and work responsibilities. However, he's reflected that the work "isn't taxing at all. This is actually very much necessary, and for me, it's like I should have been doing this before the diaconate.

"It's an environment where, let's just be honest, 95 percent of the population has no interest in helping. 'Someone else will do it,' that's the mentality. Well, someone else has to be me now. And it has to be us as a community," Bartolotta said. "God's calling us to do this, and if we constantly say no, then we risk that work of God not being done and the Gospel message not being spread."

FREE IN GOD

Prison ministry has long been part of Deacon Gustavo Garcia's vocation. The deacon at St. Matthew Parish in Arlington began visiting inmates even before entering formation for the diaconate. Today, Dcn. Garcia continues his commitment by visiting Sanders Estes Prison in Venus to minister to the incarcerated every Monday, except the first Monday of the month, when Father Richard Collins, the diocesan chaplain for prison ministry, celebrates Mass and hears confessions.

"As a deacon in service, I share the Gospel and the Eucharist, and I try to advise them to surrender and leave everything in God's hands, as He will ultimately deliver us true peace," Dcn. Garcia shared. "I mean, we aren't imprisoned just with

walls, or our bodies, but in our spiritual lives."

Presently, two men in formation have joined him in this ministry, helping lead Bible studies.

"You see the fruits of what we serve," the deacon said. He shared how one stern-faced inmate had joined the study only to leave his cell. He is now one of the most active participants in praying the Rosary.

"There are various cases like this where we can see the Holy Spirit working in the inmates," he shared.

Many of the imprisoned feel they are purposefully forgotten by their Catholic brethren, Dcn. Garcia said. "They feel as if they are disposable and unwanted by society."

JUST LISTEN

Nearly a year after his ordination to the diaconate, Deacon Scott Elder of Our Lady of Lourdes in Mineral Wells uses the lessons he learned during his volunteer

ministry every single day.

"My hospital training was very beneficial," Dcn. Elder said. "It taught me that I don't have to have all the answers for everybody, and to just really focus on being present for people. Christ is present for us always, in the Eucharist, and always at our side."

He recalled beginning his service expecting to always be on his toes, with a homily at the ready with every room he entered, but "honestly, it was a lot more listening and less talking than I was expecting. Most people want you to be there and just listen to them and hear where they are."

Serving faithful of all ages and walks of life and offering them love and support is one of Dcn. Elder's biggest takeaways from his time in the hospital setting. It remains relevant in his service as a deacon.

He said sometimes a deacon's role is "just being present for people, letting them know I am here for them, and trying to let them know God is present for them too." ✨

Permanent Diaconate Ordination

All are welcome as Bishop Michael Olson ordains seven candidates to the permanent diaconate.

- Kendall Coffey
- Alan Franklin
- Hoang Trinh
- Wilfried Lampka
- Jose Mateo
- Thang Nguyen
- Michael Waldon

Friday, August 8, 5 p.m.

St. Mark Parish

6500 Crawford Road, Argyle



Students at Immaculate Conception Catholic School in Denton. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

school choice, FAITH FIRST

Diocesan educators excited over Senate Bill 2's potential to increase Catholic education opportunities

By Matthew Smith

The recently passed Senate Bill 2, establishing an education savings account program, weathered a turbulent journey through two legislative sessions. Gov. Greg Abbott signed the bill into law May 3.

Diocese of Fort Worth officials remain hopeful that SB-2 will help increase enrollment within the diocese's

17 schools and make possible Catholic education for students previously unable to afford such.

"SB-2, the School Choice Bill, provides parents with meaningful choices in where and how their children receive education," said Dr. Melissa Kasmeier-Millard, diocesan superintendent of schools. "Parents are the primary educators of their children, and this is historic for them that the state of Texas places the

very important decision into the hands of parents."

Texas state lawmakers refer to the bill's benefits as an education savings account program rather than a voucher. The bill provides parents up to \$10,000 should they wish to enroll their children in a private rather than public school, although credit amounts vary for homeschool and disabled students.

Bishop Michael Olson — who

A NEW
UPDATE!



Read Bishop Michael Olson's latest statement celebrating new parental educational authority and the strategic realignment of the diocese's schools leadership by scanning the QR code or visiting: fwdioc.org/communications.

supported the bill along with other Texas bishops — spoke of the benefits for current and potential students in the diocese.

“It offers parents an opportunity to exercise their rights to see to the education of their children,” Bishop Olson said. “Parents who might otherwise be excluded from the opportunity to send their children to private schools or Catholic schools because of costs.”

IMPROVED ACCESS

The benefits of the bill, diocese officials argue, will help students whose families could not otherwise afford Catholic school education within the diocese.

Bishop Olson went on to tout the benefits of diocesan schools.

“Catholic schools offer an opportunity for safety and respect the responsibility of parents to be the primary educators of their children,” Bishop Olson said.

This opportunity represents a partnership of quality education and Catholic values, Bishop Olson added.

“Parents as primary but not exclusive educators,” Bishop Olson said. “Because it introduces students into a community and helps them extend their family, thereby strengthening their families while bringing opportunities to directly and intentionally see God’s role in education.”

Kasmeier-Millard agreed.

“We believe that Fort Worth diocesan schools embody the highest standard in faith formation, K-12 academic excellence, and character,” Kasmeier-Millard said. “Under the new law, a Catholic education, with its strong moral foundation, is more accessible than ever to families across Texas.”

A STRATEGIC ROLLOUT

Exactly how the process and implementation of the awards will play out

on the statewide and diocesan levels remains to be determined, Nolan Catholic Principal Oscar Ortiz said while adding that district officials are already in the planning stage.

“At the bishop’s direction, a small team and I are developing a strategic brief to clarify our outreach vision and priorities,” Ortiz said. “Our focus is on helping families — both those already enrolled and those still discerning — understand the opportunities available and prepare well for the upcoming application window. We’re working to reach up to 30,000 families across the diocese.”

Diocesan Associate Superintendent Frank Perez added that the Texas Comptroller’s Office will release official state rules and procedures by September.

Ortiz and others said that most schools within the diocese can comfortably accommodate additional students without adversely affecting low teacher/student ratios or current facilities.

Ortiz expounded on the strategic initiative.

“We’re putting together a playbook for pastors and principals to help them better understand how to promote this initiative and communicate that information to families in their parishes and schools,” Ortiz said. “We’re excited as it’s an opportunity not limited just to Nolan but to all the schools in the diocese.”

The hope, Ortiz said, is to have several hundred new students enrolled into diocesan schools by next year.

A challenge is that many private schools, including Nolan, cost more than \$10,000 per year.

“We’ve had tuition assistance for families in need, which can be up to 50 percent depending on circumstances,” Ortiz said. “That will still be available and could help bridge the gap for families still unable to

afford tuition. Plus, the ESAs should give us more funds for tuition assistance for other students in need.”

INTEREST IN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Andrea Gahler, principal of Denton’s Immaculate Conception Catholic School, which includes grades pre-K through 8, said the ESA grants will cover tuition at her school. Gahler added that her school has capacity for about 120 more students. Gahler said parents of children not currently enrolled at Immaculate Conception have expressed interest and requested school tours.

In addition to rigorous education and faith formation, Gahler highlighted her school’s numerous enrichment and extracurricular courses ranging from athletics to music to languages.

Fort Worth’s St. Peter the Apostle School Principal Ruthie Gomez spoke of her hopes for the bill.

“That it will benefit parish families already here and hopefully remove barriers for families whose children don’t go here but would like to both for excellent education and faith formation.”

A BILL TO SERVE

Ortiz and others spoke of the application, interview, and testing process involved in transferring to diocesan schools and stressed that it’s important not to seek enrollment growth for its own sake but rather in a way that best helps families and students seeking quality education fostering Catholic faith.

Bishop Olson shared his long-range hopes for SB-2.

“I hope through this that our Catholic schools continue to make an even better contribution to the broader society directed towards service to our community and the common good,” Bishop Olson said. 🇺🇸

seeking the NEXT STEP

Young adult Catholics find opportunities for spiritual growth

By Jennifer Johnson

Catholic adults in their 20s and 30s are in a unique season of life. Many face major transitions such as finding a job, a place to live, and a new parish while learning to navigate independent living. To deepen their faith alongside other like-minded adults in their age group, good resources and community opportunities exist for the young adult seeking more.

WHERE WORK MEETS FAITH

With 40-plus chapters nationwide, Young Catholic Professionals is designed to be a “next step” for working adults — those who have completed high school or college — who want to connect with one another.

Andrew Lamis, director of membership for YCP’s Fort Worth chapter, has observed finding a young working adult community with similar values is not easy. “It’s your choice to pursue God and find that community, but it’s harder to find and takes more of your own effort,” he said. “Not every parish has the resources for people in our age group.”

YCP strives to address the challenges young adults face when trying to live out

their Catholic faith in a secular workplace. Networking opportunities, speaker’s series, social gatherings, and spiritual retreats encourage and support its members.

Lamis emphasized that growing in faith, as well as one’s profession, is a choice. “You can’t just have a foundation and let it sit; you have to keep building upon it,” he said.

AT THE PARISH LEVEL

Biviana Esparza was involved with a vibrant Catholic campus ministry during her years at the University of North Texas. Upon returning to her home parish, St. Peter the Apostle in White Settlement, she looked in vain for a similar community.

St. Peter’s previous pastor, Father Pedro Martinez, invited her to establish a young adult group, where she served as volunteer coordinator for three years. “I knew it wasn’t just about my spiritual growth,” she said. “I wanted other people to meet Jesus like I met Jesus in college and have an encounter with the Lord that I had.”

The group participates in a variety of events, planned to attract both Hispanic and non-Hispanic Catholics. “It’s a big challenge — how to serve all young adults at the same time, both their spiritual and

social needs,” she said. “We don’t want people to feel excluded.”

Esparza sees young adult ministry as an important support system within a parish, offering accountability and friendship as individuals consider their vocation.

LOOKING FOR COMMUNITY

Father Brett Metzler, diocesan director of vocations and Nolan Catholic High School chaplain, believes young adults struggle with isolation, especially after they leave an engaging Catholic college experience.

“They go back home and wonder where their community is,” said Fr. Metzler. “It makes all other challenges a lot harder because it feels like they are doing life alone.”

What best prepares young adults for their next steps is taking spiritual and sacramental life seriously by studying, knowing, and living the faith, Fr. Metzler said. “If young adults want community and a more joyful and fulfilled life, they have to find the courage to be intentional about seeking it,” he said. “You can’t just float and expect to go upstream, you have to swim hard. We are trying to provide opportunities to do that,” such as the semi-annual diocesan Young Adult Mass.

Intentional efforts at the parish level

are just as necessary. “A parish group that’s run by people who know what young adults go through is great,” Fr. Metzler said.

HOMEGROWN FORMATION

Sissel Anderson started working at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound as the lead young adult coordinator in April 2024 after voluntarily co-leading the group for three years.

These years are critical for nurturing a daily prayer habit and spiritual enrichment, she said. “There is a lot of discernment happening in these young adult years — relationships, jobs, family, life. If we don’t have an established relationship with God, we’re not going to be guided by the Holy Spirit about the decisions we need to make. Discernment becomes that much harder.”

In addition to two spiritual formation events each month, young adults at St. Philip look for ways to serve the parish.

“We always try to integrate more into parish life,” explained Anderson. “There’s a temptation for young adults to be separated from parish life, but we try to partner with what the parish is doing — attend, volunteer, and help more. Be open and inspired to work with your parish and help it grow.”

Anderson and Esparza agree that the success of young adult ministries in the diocese relies on assistance, promotion, and budgetary support from individual parishes and their leadership. Anderson said, “This is a ministry that is valid; it is the up-and-coming Church.”

TAKE THE LEAD

Anderson said many resources in young adult ministry are focused on marriage and dating. However, for young adults discerning religious vocations, annual diocesan opportunities are designed to help.

For young men, Father Maurice Moon, director of Collegian Seminarian Formation at St. Joseph Seminary College in Louisiana, recommends the Vocation Awareness Weekend at the University of Dallas held each summer, as well as the fall and spring “Come and See” weekends at



Young adult parishioners of St. Philip the Apostle in Flower Mound gather for a prayer night potluck on May 30 in Corinth. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



Young adults Meadow Acuña and Ryan Krug of St. Philip the Apostle in Flower Mound enjoy some brisket during a prayer night potluck on May 30 in Corinth. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

his seminary. Young women, he said, are invited to a “Come and See” usually held in December at a convent.

These events can be life-changing for young adults, Fr. Moon asserted. “We have a skewed perspective of religious life until you see for yourself what it’s like, what they do, the ministries they are involved with, and how their life is being inspired by grace,” he said.

Whether a young adult’s future is

marriage, religious life, or single life, Fr. Moon emphasized that a strong prayer and sacramental life, coupled with parish involvement, is the key for young adults who want to see God’s providence and discern His will for their future.

“God will put people in your life, and He will open doors and show you where to go,” he said. “You will have the ability to say yes to these things when you have that foundation in your relationship with God.” 🇺🇸

PLAYING SPORTS, LIVING VIRTUE

Sports serve as a vehicle for teaching female athletes virtue, character, and growth in Catholic faith

By Jennifer Johnson

Sports can serve as both a training ground and a platform for Catholic athletes to live out their faith, cultivate virtues, and develop important character traits such as hard work, discipline, perseverance, and teamwork. Such qualities are valuable not only in athletic competition, but in a lifelong pursuit of holiness, healthy relationships, and moral excellence.

Coach Alex Mechalske, head women's soccer coach at Nolan Catholic High School, believes sports provide an excellent opportunity for young disciples to practice and grow in their faith. "Sports can teach you how to suffer, how to lead with humility, and how to love," she said. "When it all comes together, it prepares them for life."

Shannon Irwin, athletic director for the Diocese of Fort Worth, observed that some female athletes may misguidedly tie their self-worth to physical appearance, game performance, or comparisons with others. "This is what all coaches and sports mentors should strive to break," she said. "We do this by leaning on the Word and leaning on each other."

Irwin added that helping athletes understand the source of their abilities,

athletic or otherwise, can help shift negative self-perception. "When we recognize that our natural talents and our interests are gifts from God, we can use them to glorify Him and showcase His divine masterful creation," she said. "As St. Catherine of Siena said, 'Be who God created you to be, and you will set the world on fire!'"

FACING FEAR

"Christ is the center of all we do, so it's natural to have Him be a part of sports," said Mary-Ann Cannon, sports coordinator at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School in Keller.

At the middle school level, athletes are taught to lean on their faith for strength and confidence.

One of the biggest lessons she has shared with female athletes is how to handle stress before a competition and use it to build virtue within themselves. "I tell them to clear their mind and invite Christ in. When you are scared to death, there's no better time to ask Him to be with you," she said. "I remind them that what's so wonderful is He's already there."

FIERCE LADY VIKINGS

For girls and women in sports, secular society often creates a disconnect between

their God-given athletic abilities and their God-given femininity. To help bridge that gap, a new initiative was launched at Nolan Catholic High School to help female athletes understand — first and foremost — they are daughters of God whose identity is in Christ, not their athletic prowess.

This spring, all Nolan Catholic Lady Vikings were invited to attend FIERCE Night on campus, an event that is part of the FIERCE Athlete national campaign to encourage young women to blend sports with their Catholic identity. The movement strives to help female athletes see their strength through the lens of virtue and Scripture.

Nearly five dozen athletes, representing a variety of sports including tennis, soccer, cheer, softball, and swimming, attended the kickoff, and several events are planned for the next school year.

Assistant Soccer Coach Lauren Sajewich and Mechalske are leading this movement at Nolan because they are passionate about forming faithful, confident young women who understand their dignity and mission in Christ in addition to being strong athletes. Their vision is to build a supportive community to freely live out their faith with integrity, excellence,

A Nolan Catholic High School softball player stands on base during a game against Liberty Christian School. (courtesy photo/Alex Mechalske)

resilience, and courage — on and off the field or court.

“You’re all competitors. You’re all teammates. You’re all growing in leadership roles. But before all that, remember that you’re all daughters of God,” Mechalske said. “Remember that your worth doesn’t come from the stats or anything that you do through your sport. It’s all rooted in His purpose for you.”

Mechalske emphasized that being a FIERCE woman means embracing, celebrating, and reclaiming their feminine identity and living out who God made them to be, not what cultural norms insist they become.

“We are strong female athletes. We lift each other up and we are a culture that says it’s possible to be both competitive and compassionate, intense and encouraging, driven and deeply faithful,” she said.

The first FIERCE Night included a discussion panel with remarks from Erin Yenney, an American international professional soccer player and co-founder of a semi-professional indoor women’s soccer team, and Mary Del Olmo, a competitive equestrian and the first consecrated virgin from the diocese.

Coming from a family of brothers and competing in a male-dominated sport, Del Olmo shared that she had to discover and accept what true femininity was. “I learned to embrace my feminine qualities, like being receptive, open, and compassionate, and understand that was enough,” she said. “We can still be strong and nurturing, competitive and loving.”

STRENGTH AND LEADERSHIP

Mechalske recently learned that one of her Nolan soccer players led a confirmation class and shared her testimony with other young Catholics.

“I never knew she had that in her, but it reminded me how sports can build confidence and strength within these young women,” she said. “Competing, growing in leadership, learning perseverance, all of that carries into their faith lives. It pushes them to step into roles and moments they may have once thought they weren’t capable of.”

Sports and spirituality can intersect in a beautiful and meaningful way. By honoring their feminine dignity, female athletes learn to use their attributes and talents to glorify Jesus in their sport and in their daily lives. 🇺🇸





Pope Leo XIV waves to the crowd from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican as he leads, for the first time, the midday recitation of the *Regina Caeli* prayer May 11. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

HABEMUS PAPAM!

Local Catholics rejoice over
announcement of new pope

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

At the first sign of white smoke billowing from the Sistine Chapel chimney, Father Pedro Martinez rushed to St. Peter's Square, along with thousands of other pilgrims, to watch history being made.

The diocesan priest, who is in Rome pursuing a licentiate in canon law at Pontifical Gregorian University, was eager to learn who the conclave of 133 cardinals had chosen to lead the Catholic Church. When Cardinal Dominique François Joseph Mamberti emerged on the central loggia balcony May 8 to announce Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, a Chicago-born American, was the new pontiff, Fr. Martinez cheered the news.

"It was a profoundly moving experience to witness Church and world history unfold before my eyes," the priest explained enthusiastically. "Hearing the pope's first words in person in St. Peter's Square felt like hearing the heartbeat of the Church — a living witness to the presence of Christ among us."

Taking the name Leo XIV, the 69-year-old pope is a member of the Order of St. Augustine, joining the novitiate in 1977. He made his solemn vows in 1981 and was ordained to the priesthood the following year.

During the course of his ministry, Father Prevost spent 20 years at his religious community's missions in Peru working as parish priest, diocesan

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Leo P.P. XIV

An official Pope Leo XIV portrait. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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official, director of formation, seminary teacher, and judicial vicar. Returning to Chicago to serve the Augustinians as provincial prior and then general prior until 2013, Fr. Prevost traveled back to Peru for a final assignment when Pope Francis made him apostolic administrator

of the Diocese of Chiclayo and bishop of Chiclayo in 2015.

Most recently, the late Pope Francis appointed him prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops — a key position within the Roman Curia. On September 30, 2023, Bishop Prevost was elevated to the rank of cardinal. The career missionary holds dual citizenship in both the United States and Peru.

Pope Leo XIV is the first Holy Father born in the United States and the second consecutive pope from the Americas.

“This election serves as a powerful reminder that the Church, though diverse in cultures and languages, is united in Christ,” Fr. Martinez pointed out. “For me, [as] someone shaped by both Mexican and American cultures, it affirms that the Church’s universality is rooted in the truth of Christ, who unites us all in His love and mission.”

A SURPRISING RESULT

Bishop Michael Olson didn’t expect the election of an American pope.

“But I’m very grateful for it,” he told the *North Texas Catholic*, citing the new pontiff’s strong background in administration and his pastoral formation as a Peruvian missionary. “I think it’s a wonderful combination of what’s shaped him as a human being, Christian, and priest.”

His experiences in ministry make the new pope well-suited to moving the Church forward.

“First of all, there is a sense of the importance of mission in the life of the Church. Really, the whole Church is missionary,” the bishop pointed out during an interview on Guadalupe Radio Network.

He believes Pope Leo XIV’s work in both North and South America will foster greater solidarity.

“In his own life, we see a unity there,” Bishop Olson explained. “He understands the culture of the United States as someone born and raised in the United States, but he is also sensitive to the needs of Latin America — which we face every day as the Church here in Texas.”

The new pope shows a firm understanding of the importance of the papacy and its ministry, the bishop observed.



Father Pedro Martinez poses in front of the center balcony at St. Peter's Square on the day of Pope Leo XIV's election. (courtesy photo/Fr. Martinez)

“He’s a very self-confident and self-composed person who seems very much at heart with Christ,” he added. “He has a good sense of the moral teachings of the Church which includes the social teachings of the Church — all of which are needed especially here in the United States.”

By choosing Leo, an established papal name not used in 122 years, the former Cardinal Prevost honors two inspiring predecessors, Pope Leo XIII and Leo the Great.

“Leo XIII, is the pope who first dealt with the challenges of workers’ rights and the poor beset by the modern age,” he explained. “And Leo the Great was one of the doctors of the church who taught so much about the nature and centrality of Jesus Christ.”

The leader of North Texas Catholics never met the new Holy Father but is looking forward to a papal audience planned during a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi in June. Both men are natives of Chicago who entered different seminaries at age 14.

“I hope at least to greet the Holy

Father and ask his prayers for all of us in the Diocese of Fort Worth and throughout North Texas,” he said.

Bishop Olson asks Catholics in the diocese to pray for the new pope and not judge him by partisan standards.

“As a native Chicagoan and citizen of the United States, I’m proud to welcome the first American pope,” enthused the bishop who was told by his childhood pastor the bishop of Rome would always be Italian.

“As a brother born here, he will be able to speak to our hearts about what the Lord asks of us — not only as individuals but also as families and a nation,” the bishop said.

“I think he’s going to call us back to our better angels and I hope we will listen to him not just as the Church, but also as a nation.”

MORE GLOBAL THAN AMERICAN

Having the first American-born pope is a joy and blessing, but seminarian Paul Trinh believes the missionary’s time in Peru will influence him more than anything else.

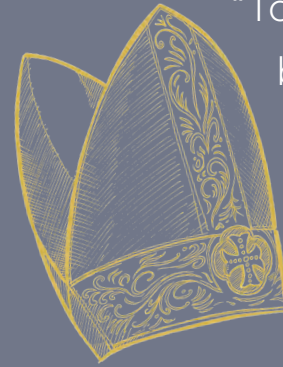
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LOCALS
REACT!



Watch how local Catholics received the news of a new pope at the Catholic Center.

Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost was elected the 267th pope.



“To all of you, brothers and sisters in Rome, in Italy,

throughout the world: We want to be a synodal Church, a Church that moves forward, a Church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close above all to those who are suffering.”



— From the first blessing, “*Urbi et orbi*,” of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, May 8



Pope Leo XIV's coat of arms with his episcopal motto, "*In illo uno unum*," literally "In the One [Christ], we are one," features a fleur-de-lis representing Mary and a flaming heart pierced by an arrow, symbolizing the words of St. Augustine in "Confessions."

From Page 37

"He's more global and not centered on one country," said the seminarian who is spending his pastoral year at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound. "Pope Leo XIV doesn't seem to have strong political ties in the U.S. so he can promote Catholic teaching without any Americanization."

Trinh said his family and friends are eager to learn more about the Holy Father who seems young for his age.

"There's a lot going on in the world, and I pray for him to be a good shepherd," added the Christ the King in Fort Worth parishioner.

Fellow seminarian Trent Barton monitored news coming from the conclave on his computer while working at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington. The former football coach from Seymour is completing his pastoral year in the diocese before returning to the Theological College at Catholic University of America.

"I pray Pope Leo

follows the will of God as every successor of Peter has tried to do," Barton said.

The excitement generated over electing a new pope is something many non-Catholics don't understand.

"We see the papacy as an incredible gift that Christ gives His Church on Earth," the seminarian explained. "He blesses us with a leader after His own heart — a descendant of the Apostle Peter whom we can turn to in times of need."

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

If the election of the first American pope signals anything, it's this: "God is in control and expect the unexpected," according to Kiana Krahulik, who grew up outside Chicago and now lives in Flower Mound. "My favorite Bible quote is 'With God, all things are possible,' so I was pleasantly surprised the first American pope was elected."

Many people considered Pope Francis the people's pope, and the former St. Thomas the Apostle Parish catechist said the new pontiff seems to project a similar humility and approachability.

"I think Pope Leo very much cares about people and will keep working for the poor while engaging in modern day challenges," Krahulik added. "Knowing he was a missionary, caring for the less fortunate, is something that may attract young people to the faith."

The parishioner at St. Philip the Apostle is excited to see what the new pope does for the Church.

"I think he will bring us closer as a community and unite Christians around the world. I hope for peace."



A class at the Catholic Center on May 8 became an opportunity to watch the election of Pope Leo XIV. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

MEETING A FUTURE POPE

Christine Messner-Fleishman can brag she not only met a future pope but also received a blessing from him. The former member of the national women’s soccer team was in Arequipa, Peru, eight years ago for a wedding when the bridal party decided to tour the historic Monasterio de Santa Catalina.

“The nuns became very excited because missionaries and two priests had arrived giving out food and blessings,” remembered the North Texas Catholic who followed the sisters to the Plaza de Armas.

One of the visitors, a soft-spoken American wearing regular clothes with a Roman collar, was the bishop of Chiclayo, now known as Pope Leo XIV.

“One family brought a sick child with a deformed leg up to him and he gave a blessing,” Messner-Fleishman continued. “Other villagers were thanking him. There was nothing structured about it. He

didn’t draw attention to himself, but it was obvious he was the leader.”

Before leaving, Bishop Prevost offered a blessing to the group of tourists.

“Speaking in Spanish, he hoped we would do well in the future and asked us to help those in need,” she said. “Evil is out there so he told us to be the light in someone’s life.”

A WARM, KIND SMILE

There was a mix of nervousness and excitement as Beatrice Ellison waited for white smoke to rise from a distant chimney. The University of Dallas undergraduate spent 14 hours in St. Peter’s Square with friends — their eyes fixed on the antics of seagulls landing on the Sistine Chapel roof.

“When the white smoke finally came out on Thursday [May 8], the crowd began to clap and sing hymns like the *Regina Caeli*,” she said. “We were giddy.”

Ellison’s patience was rewarded an hour later when newly elected Pope Leo

XIV appeared to the applause of 150,000 well-wishers.

“I’ll never forget how emotional Pope Leo looked when he stepped onto the balcony,” said the Irving resident. “His smile and wave were so warm and kind we could really feel that all the way down in the square.”

The English major is pleased an American now sits in the chair of St. Peter.

“It’s a wonderful thing for the American Catholic Church to have produced a pope, since America has been a mostly Protestant nation since its founding,” Ellison explained. “I can only hope for good things to come from the relationship between the Vatican and our country. I see unity and good foreign policy coming from this.” 🇺🇸

Missionary from the diocese serving in Peru reacts to new pope on Page 40



Pope Leo XIV greets people as he rides in the popemobile before celebrating Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican June 1 as part of the Jubilee of Families, Children, Grandparents and the Elderly. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

A MISSIONARY POPE

Reflections on the new pope from a local missionary serving in Peru

By Karen Del Castillo

I would like to begin by saying I do not know Pope Leo XIV personally, although we served only six hours away from each other in Peru and we are both from the U.S.

My son and I attended Mass many times in the Basilica of Chiclayo, the city of his last assignment in Peru, because Chiclayo is the nearest airport to our mission post six hours away. The closest I have ever been to him was in 2022, when then-Bishop Prevost was present at the installation Mass of our new bishop for the Diocese of Chachapoyas.

NTC: What were your initial thoughts when you learned Pope Leo XIV is an American who spent many years as a missionary in Peru?

My initial thoughts were to praise God; we have a pope who understands the true meaning of living in solidarity with the

poor. A man who not only left his native land, but his customs, his native language, and all the material comforts of the U.S. to serve the poor.

I was truly delighted, and I said to myself, "This man knows the reality and hardships of the poor, not only in a material way, but spiritually as well."

NTC: What has been the response of Peruvian Catholics to the new pope?

Within my diocese and my small community here in the Pueblo of Santa Clara, the news has been received as a true blessing. It has given the community hope and renewed faith that they are not forgotten; that Jesus has not forgotten them.

Jesus clearly teaches in the *Gospel of Matthew 26:11* that the poor will always be with us, but that He will not always be with us, reiterating the teaching found in the *Book of Deuteronomy* where the Israelites are commanded to open their hands to one's brother and to the poor (*Deuteronomy*

15:11). However, sadly, we must admit this is not always the case, and the poor are more often forgotten.

As those in First World countries deal with First World issues, the poor of Third World countries struggle in ways that many would find unbearable for even a short time. Many find if the poor are out of sight, they are out of mind. So, with Pope Leo XIV, despite being born in the U.S., the poor consider him one of their own, and they feel they are no longer out of sight and out of mind and are delighted to share the excitement and joy of our new pope with the world.

As lay Catholic missionaries, my son and I are full of joy and feel renewed with a new zeal and feel a sense of a connection with the pope.

Many often ask why I serve in Peru, and why I do not just serve in the U.S. Sometimes, I feel we are forgotten and are very much out of sight and mind of our parishes back home, our diocese, our



Karen Del Castillo (right) takes a picture with some local faithful in Peru. (courtesy photo/Karen Del Castillo)

families. To hear the pope was a missionary pope serving in Peru, and American, affirmed to me in a large way that all the hardships we bear, as we strive to live in solidarity with the poor, as advocates for the poor, meets exactly what we baptized members have been asked to do.

NTC: How might his years in Peru have shaped him or provided understanding?

Anyone who dares to follow Jesus to the ends of the world to serve the poorest of the poor, who has had the opportunity day in and day out, to see the face of Jesus in the eyes of the poor, as Pope Leo XIV has, will forever bear a mark on them.


Perhaps Pope Leo XIV is incredibly blessed to have seen how the poor go without — without jobs, food, homes, health care, justice, and even access to a priest or the sacraments. Yet they remain faithful to the Catholic faith despite the fact many only see a priest once a year. I am sure the pope can testify of the love and mercy Jesus has for the poor and of the incredible endless opportunities there are for baptized members to serve them.

NTC: What are your hopes for the new pope?

My prayer for the pope is that he remains true to his missionary vocation and at the center of God's will. And that he will lead with a radical love for the poor. Lastly, that perhaps his life in foreign missions and all he encountered while on mission will shine through as an example to all and create a new zeal among all baptized members of our Church to answer the call to love like Christ and proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the Earth!

During his first Mass, my heart was overjoyed to hear him speak of the call to self-sacrificing love. To hear him reflect on the “infinite and unconditional love of God” that propelled Peter to embark on his mission was powerful. Because for me, experiencing God's unconditional love, mercy, and forgiveness was what propelled me to go tell the world of what I myself had experienced.

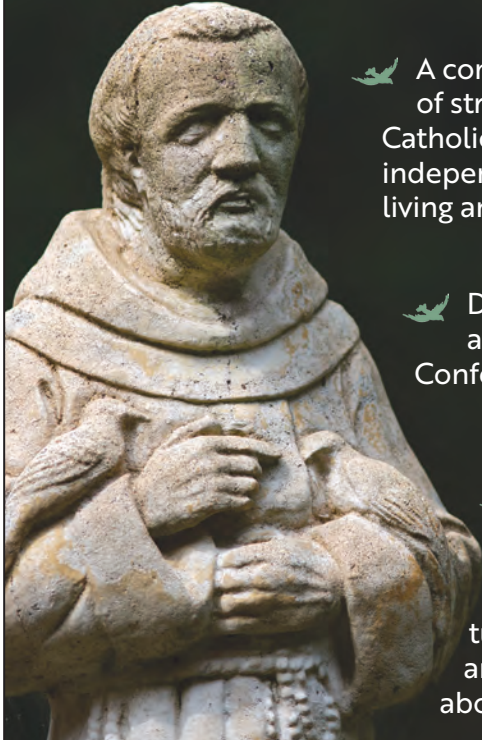
Pope Leo made it known that self-sacrificing love is the only way we will be able to win the hearts of others and bring them to the mercy and love found in Jesus Christ, which is the true mission of the Church.✝



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From professor to pastor

HE IS: Father Dan Pattee, TOR, pastor of St. Andrew Church in Fort Worth.

CATHOLIC START: He grew up in Minneapolis with five siblings, and he attended Catholic schools from elementary through college.

COME AND SEE: While he was a pre-med sophomore at Creighton University, he was assigned to write an essay on why he wanted to be a doctor. Instead, his paper explored whether he might be called to the priesthood. The professor, a Jesuit priest, “simply wrote in the margins: Come and see me.”

A Franciscan seminary in Loretto, Pennsylvania, offered him a “no obligation, just come see what we’re about” year. His spiritual director was Father Warren Murphy, a former pastor of St. Andrew Parish.

ORDAINED: May 30, 1987

FROM CLASS TO CLASSROOM: After his ordination, Fr. Pattee taught at a Catholic boys boarding school; earned his licentiate in sacred theology from the John Paul II Institute for the Study of Marriage and Family in Rome; completed a doctorate at Duquesne University; and taught theology and Catholic social thought at Franciscan University.

FIRST PARISH ASSIGNMENT: St. Andrew Parish is his first and only parish assignment in his 38 years as a priest. “I’m having a great time.”

University life was structured, but the parish is “so much more about availability. I can come in with an open schedule, and by 10 o’clock it’s full. It’s much more pastoral than formal.”

TIME MANAGEMENT: “The Church in the parish is unfolding in real time, whereas in a university setting, it’s postponed until after graduation. What that practically has meant, if something’s going on in the church that upsets people, our phones are ringing off the hook. The vibrancy of that is fascinating and engaging. I like that.”

TEXAS TRANSPLANT: “The Church here is so vibrant, that they’re actually having to build churches, whereas there are places throughout the country that are closing them.”

MAN OF LETTERS: Fr. Pattee writes occasionally for a handful of Catholic publications. “I like to write when I get time or I get an idea that I want to develop. I find it helpful because it clarifies my vision on the truths of the faith — trying to work out some teaching, how it applies to today’s Church.”

TIMELESS TRUTH: “Scripture doesn’t argue. Jesus didn’t spend a whole lot of time

arguing truths with people, but communicating truth with incredible patience.”

NO MORE SCREENS: After 44 years as a Franciscan, he’s learned “in a digital age, love for the humanity of Christ. St. Francis really grounds that by his spirituality.”

Fr. Pattee warns, “They don’t have Wi-Fi in heaven, so our relationships in heaven are going to be direct communion.”

AT REST: “I go out on the Trinity Trails, and I’ll sit on a bench and just take in the scenery and maybe pray the Rosary. I’ll do that frequently.”

SOURCE AND SUMMIT: “From the time I left Creighton and came into the seminary, members of my community taught me prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

“The Eucharist really is front and center. Everything else is preparation for reception of that. The standard for being ready for life is how well am I able to say in good conscience that I can receive Christ in the Eucharist.”

LAST WORD: “The love of Christ is the biggest thing I try to put across. But that’s not available to us without faith. I’m trying to revive faith in the hearts of the faithful,” especially in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. 🇺🇸

Not so happy?

Young Christians today are facing an insidious question when it comes to discernment. This question delays, distorts, and derails them from the adventurous and courageous life to which God calls them. For many, it leaves them paralyzed and directionless.

At the heart of every discernment lurks the fear: What if I'm not happy? What if I choose this route and it doesn't turn out like I hoped? What if I'm miserable? What if everything I'm afraid of happening comes true? How can I leave behind what I'm comfortable with? In other words, it sounds like: Will I be fulfilled? Will I have true joy?

So what is the problem? The problem is not merely the questioning of future happiness. The problem is beginning the path of discernment with this as the foremost question.

We cannot discern fulfillment as our primary goal and marker for validity because it too easily becomes a mere search for emotional satisfaction. Did I feel good about my decision today or not?

In place of this, we must begin the journey with *courage* and a desire to do *God's* will. When doing *God's* will with courage takes first place, fulfillment becomes less of a priority.

All vocations, especially priesthood and religious vocations, require facing the unknown future. A future that could

very well be dark and scary. Could very well call you out of your comfort zone. Could very well hurt you. And at least for a time will absolutely require you to give something up.

We must begin thinking of vocation not primarily in terms of happiness, but first in terms of mission. What am I being asked to do and Who is asking me? That's the first and most essential question. "Will this vocation make me the happiest?" is not.



Fr. Brett Metzler

With a vocation-as-happiness mindset, what happens when life gets hard and our vocation gets tough? What happens when we actually do not feel happy?

Usually, we end up thinking that we are in the wrong place or doing the wrong thing.

With a vocation-as-mission mindset, problems are expected, met head-on, and overcome with time and patience.

The question is then, what are we really discerning with a vocation-as-happiness mindset? Ultimately, we are searching within and examining how we feel about our situation. How do I feel about it? Do I want it? Do I want to keep going? Do we think this is mature Christian decision-making?

Vocation-as-mission mindset asks: Has God moved me in this direction? Has He opened doors for this to happen? Have other people affirmed this path for me? Is

this path ultimately good and does it serve the kingdom of God? And most importantly, do I have the courage to say yes to something that I may not actually want?

Jeremiah did not want to be a prophet, but he said yes. Moses did not want to lead the people of Israel, but he said yes.

We must be reminded that God calls us first and foremost to Himself. It is here that we discover fulfillment, joy, peace, and all the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit. He is the wellspring of nourishment we crave.

From knowing Him, trusting Him, and drawing life from Him, He calls us to do His will. His will entails things we do not necessarily want to do.

He asks for big and small changes. He asks for time. He asks us to be inconvenienced. He often does ask us to suffer. He asks some of us to become priests and religious, some missionaries, and some married people. All four paths that can and will entail both profound joy and potentially profound sorrow.

To whichever path one has been or is being called to, we must remember this key distinction. Fulfillment is found in God; vocation is given by God. Our vocation is God's mission for us. 🇺🇸

Father Brett Metzler serves as chaplain at Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth and as the vocations director for the diocese.



Beauty that lasts

Marine veteran and tattoo artist Jose Trevino serves St. Patrick Cathedral through art and technology

By Matthew Smith

Although he grew up Catholic, St. Patrick Cathedral Director of Communications and Media Jose Trevino strayed from the Church during his teenage years.

“Didn’t really stay as active in the Church,” Trevino said. “My mom all the time would say, ‘Are you going to come to church with me?’”

This perhaps had more to do with lack of focus than a rejection of faith.

“I had no clue to be honest,” Trevino answered when asked what he

wanted to do growing up. “When I got to high school, it was either going to be sports or the military. Then I ended up having a daughter at a young age and knew I had to do something.”

Even then, Trevino said he remained conflicted as to what to do with his life.

“I saw a lot of people my age just trying to get a job,” Trevino said. “I didn’t want to just get stuck forever in something I didn’t like.”

Trevino went on to spend 13 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. His service helped bring him back closer to God

thanks in part to befriending a Catholic chaplain in his unit.

“He and I talked quite a bit, which brought me back to my childhood and growing up in that atmosphere,” Trevino said. “It was a good thing.”

Trevino added that he sought comfort in God throughout his deployments.

“Because I was in Iraq in some very violent time frames,” Trevino said. “Some of those circumstances, if it wasn’t for God, I probably wouldn’t be here. So it did open my eyes and bring me closer to the fact that I might’ve strayed, but God is always there still.”

◀ Jose Trevino, director of communications for St. Patrick Cathedral, shows one of his paintings. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

HEART FOR ART

Trevino's military service also reignited a youthful passion.

"Growing up, I was always drawing and playing with art," Trevino said. "I never truly focused on that though until my last deployment."

During downtime, Trevino began "doodling away."

"A friend saw my art and encouraged me to pursue it," Trevino said. "At that time, I didn't realize how many doors that would open for me. I just knew it was something I really wanted to sink my teeth into."

Once out of the military, Trevino and that same friend opened a tattoo parlor in North Carolina.

At the time, he never dreamed, Trevino said with a laugh, that tattooing would indirectly lead to working for St. Patrick Cathedral.

Trevino went on to study art, videography, photography, and other disciplines at the Art Institute of Dallas in addition to attending other seminars and classes.

"Just adding different wickets of knowledge along the way," Trevino said. "You can take information from painting or photography and apply it to tattooing, or the other way around. It's just how you use those to project an image and what you're trying to accomplish."

Trevino cited American expatriate artist John Singer Sargent and Catholic art as major influences. Although he's studied impressionism, animation, and other art forms, realism remains his favorite style.

"I used to hyper focus on detail but learned the more basic and general imagery you keep it, the more realistic the appearance," Trevino said. "Because our minds tend to fill in the gaps with information. Kind of like peripheral vision."

A COAT AND MANY HATS

A freelance job led to Trevino's current position.

"Jose initially assisted with adjusting the cathedral's coat of arms to ensure it could be licensed and registered in accordance with the code of canon law and



Jose Trevino works on a painting. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

heraldic guidelines," Father John Robert Skeldon, rector of St. Patrick, said.

Fr. Skeldon, upon seeing Trevino's ideas for the coat of arms, mentioned that the cathedral needed someone to livestream Masses and events.

"I told him I'd been trained in all that and can do it," Trevino said.

Which led to what Trevino describes as his multi-hat job at the cathedral.

"I run their social media, help manage the database, videography, photography, and livestreaming as well," Trevino said.

Along the way, he's painted portraits of Fr. Skeldon and Bishop Michael Olson plus redesigned certificates for baptism, confirmation, first Communion, and other documents specific to the cathedral.

"Before, they were just mass ordered," Trevino said. "We wanted to personalize them to the cathedral, so they weren't just some random thing."

Trevino also discovered numerous treasures, paintings, pictures, and so forth, tucked away in the adjacent long-shuttered St. Ignatius Academy building. Items that will now be preserved and restored.

"You'd think that stuff would have been cleared out decades ago," Trevino said. "But it was, 'Wow! There's a lot of important items and history still in here.'"

It's hard, Fr. Skeldon said, to sum up all Trevino brings to the cathedral.

Fr. Skeldon recalled an elderly parishioner who was bothered by a disturbed person. Trevino de-escalated the situation then sat through Mass with the woman for several weeks afterward.

"This was unknown to anyone until she came to me after a Sunday Mass and explained how grateful she was that Trevino had done this on his own to make sure she felt safe and at ease while practicing her faith."

Fr. Skeldon praised, too Trevino's beautiful artistic talents and technical abilities.

"I am incredibly impressed by his talents and would highly encourage my brother priests to collaborate with Jose on artistic projects," Fr. Skeldon said.

Trevino has already helped craft a backdrop for Masses at Nolan Catholic High School in addition to other outside projects.

Although he still tattoos occasionally, Trevino said he finally feels at home.

The work can be stressful, he admitted, "But if this is what I do for the rest of my life, I'm happy, and it's worth it because this is in God's house and it's for God's people. It doesn't feel like a 9-to-5. It feels like making an impact." 🍀



Fishers of Families



Nicole and John Paul Velasco with their four children, Levi, Madeline, Matthias, and John-Luke in Roanoke. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

In his June 3 message to participants in an evangelization seminar, Pope Leo XIV called for special attention to families, noting “Many parents, in raising their children in the faith, feel the need for communities that can support them in creating the right conditions for their children to encounter Jesus.”

At St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Roanoke, Nicole and John Paul (JP) Velasco — alongside their four young children — are helping build that kind of community, both for their own family and for other young families seeking to grow in that faith together.

HOW THEY MET: About a month after attending a Come and See discernment retreat in his home diocese of Orange, California, JP decided to stop discerning the priesthood. Shortly after, he agreed to take charge of beverages for a parish Theology on Tap event, where Nicole was signed up to bring food. One month later, the two were dating, and “from there, our relationship definitely blossomed,” Nicole said.

MARRIED: October 12, 2018, in California.

ALL TOGETHER NOW: Not long after the Velasco family moved to Texas during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of their family and friends joined them.

“Most of ‘em said they would never move out here, and then they’d come visit us and saw what it was and wanted to be part of it,” JP said.

In a similar way, the couple has helped lead numerous families to the newest parish in the diocese.

“A lot of people said, ‘We’re not going to come here because there’s no church building,’” Nicole recalled. “We’d tell them, ‘You have to come. You have to see the beauty of it,’ and then they’ve stayed.”

EVERYONE IS INVITED: Extending an invitation to join the growing parish community is important.

“It’s the idea that everybody’s a part of this big community, even though we don’t have a church building, but the church itself

is the community. And I think that's what pulls everybody in."

"We're building a church. We're building a community," JP added.

OPPORTUNITIES GALORE:

Although St. Teresa of Calcutta celebrates weekend Masses in an elementary school cafeteria, the parish has a vibrant and youthful community. "There are so many ministries for young families and ways to get involved," JP said.

The two are involved in several, including the Knights of Columbus; Advancement Committee; Parish Financial Council; Pastoral Council; Moms Group; religious education and VBS; and ushering. In May, the Velascos were recognized as Family of the Year in Texas by the Knights of Columbus for their contributions to their parish.

LITTLE EVANGELISTS: Whether striking up conversations with strangers about God, proclaiming "Jesus loves you," reenacting saint stories, or inviting people to a sometimes-nonexistent party after Mass, the four Velasco children — all under age 5 — have become natural evangelizers and a joyful inspiration to their parents.

"It's surprising what they do and then how that is interpreted into our family lifestyle," Nicole said. "It's basically, the kids are leading us. We give them a background, but they lead us too."

A TIME FOR JOY: As their children grow, Nicole and JP are committed to passing on meaningful traditions, starting with prioritizing the sacraments and building a strong community of faith.

"I feel like for both of us, prioritizing the sacraments was a very big thing," Nicole said, reflecting on the values instilled by her parents. "I feel we are already doing that."

JP recalled how celebrations for sacraments like baptisms, first Communions, and confirmations were "bigger than the birthdays," and intentionally so.

"Tying the faith and our social life" was key, he said. He emphasized faith

should be engaging and joyful: "Church isn't meant to be boring, and being Catholic isn't meant to be a lesser life ... if it's just go sit in church and don't talk for an hour or two, and now we're going home." Instead, their Sundays often include Mass with friends, followed by brunch or playground time, creating a time of connection and joy for the entire family.

DISCERN ALL VOCATIONS: A

recent talk they attended reframed how the Velascos speak to their children about vocations. "I've heard multiple times, 'Oh, you encourage your kids to get married and have kids, but do you ever encourage them to be a priest or a sister?' And I realized, 'Oh, no,'" JP admitted. "I don't think I've ever done that for my kids. ...

"It's something that I could see — one of our kids going that path, and it doesn't bother us at all," but the father of four stressed the need for proper discernment: "I want to make sure they do it for the right reasons."

A CHURCH FOR KIDS: Building a church and a community means helping construct a legacy of faith for his children. "I mean, maybe Maddie will be getting married in that church.

"Who knows? That would be nice. But my hope is actually that, with all these young families starting out, all of our kids remain friends, and then they will have friends like I did, to go through life as Catholics, to keep them on the path."

STAY SMALL: On a previous visit to the Roanoke parish, Bishop Michael Olson challenged the community to remember the feeling and value of being a small group. "Stay small even when you're big," the bishop said.

JP reflected, "The big challenge now for us is we have a good pool of people doing these ministries, but as we grow, we need to bring more people in." "We will have to make sure that these ministries aren't based around the individual person, but really around the whole community." 🇺🇸

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 special year

courtesy photo/Antonio Sanchez

On any given year, we will all enjoy special moments, whether it be celebrating birthdays, marriage anniversaries, ordinations, or work galas.

These moments take on special significance when certain numbers are attached — a sweet 16; the excitement of turning 18; and reaching the milestones of 30, 65, 90, or for some, even 100 years. Celebrating anniversaries of 10, 25, and 50 years and above also seem to have a deeper significance than others.

Completing one more year of pretty much anything is an accomplishment, yet certain milestones feel more significant than others.

In the life of the Church, this is no different. This is why we find ourselves in a Year of Jubilee. A year where we mark, in a special way, the freedom that comes from the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ. We receive these graces every year, really, every day and every moment of our life, but this year is a unique opportunity.

I know for myself, I can get lackadaisical in my practice of faith and fall into a rut. Routines are not bad, but they do not lend themselves to extraordinary moments, deep encounters, extra efforts, and unique experiences.

Enter the Jubilee year where we are encouraged to make a pilgrimage to a holy place, go through a “holy door,” perform

an extra work of mercy, and attend an extra Mass. Combine this with confession to obtain a plenary indulgence.

We can do any and all of these things any day of the year, but do we? Thus, the Jubilee year.

Just like we can go on a special vacation for every wedding anniversary or birthday, we tend to go all out for special ones. Well, this is a special year in the life of the Church, and we have the opportunity to go outside of our normal practices and do something more.



Jeff Hedglen

I recently got back from a pilgrimage, and it was extraordinary. Yet, in many ways it was ordinary, too. I saw some beautiful churches, went to confession and Mass, prayed a little more along the way, and received some blessings from priests.

Part of what makes all of these ordinary experiences extraordinary is the intention behind them and the fact that the Pope, the Vicar of Christ on Earth, proclaimed this a Jubilee year. And a Jubilee year opens the floodgates of heaven for graces to pour down upon us.

Dr. John Bergsma in his book, “Jesus and the Jubilee: The Biblical Roots of the Year of God’s Favor,” explains that, reaching all the way back to *Leviticus*, God has given the jubilee to bring forgiveness,

freedom, family, and fullness to us all. We encounter these blessings today through the redemption won by Jesus: release from the bondage of sin, restoration into the family of God, and deep rest in the love of God.

We can use this year to take a trip to any number of cathedrals and basilicas throughout the U.S. or even all the way to Rome, and all points in between. But we can also encounter these blessings just down the road.

Bishop Michael Olson has designated these churches as Jubilee sites in the Diocese of Fort Worth:

- St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth
- St. Philip the Apostle Church in Flower Mound
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Fort Worth
- Immaculate Conception of Mary Church in Wichita Falls
- Sacred Heart Church in Comanche

Going beyond our normal going-through-the-motions and going on a pilgrimage is a great way to level-up our typical practice of our faith. The graces of the Jubilee year are showering down from heaven; let’s step out into the rain! 🇺🇸

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



NTC/Juan Guajardo

My personal Eucharistic miracle

When we hear of Eucharistic miracles, we tend to think of the extraordinary phenomena wherein the Lord removes the thin veil between our natural perception and the supernatural reality of Christ's real presence in the Eucharistic species. The type of Eucharistic miracle I would like to share is of a different sort: an immediate moral miracle at my first Holy Communion.

I write this with great fear and trembling, for it is a public confession of sorts. However, in the spirit of "The Confessions of St. Augustine," it may help some poor soul to hear how the Lord has worked in my life.

Much against the proper upbringing afforded by the Christian devotion of my family, I began taking the Lord's name in vain chronically and without remorse for many years, beginning as a teen, continuing well into my adulthood.

There are any number of reasons for this, such as growing up in locker rooms, etc. The chief of all causes, however, was simple indifference. Regardless of my devotion to the Lord in other areas, I did not cultivate an appreciation for His good, holy name, regularly abusing it in vain to a grotesque extent.

Sadly, this continued into my years of RCIA formation. While I was becoming progressively aware of any number of issues I needed to work on in my life,

for whatever reason, proper respect to the Second Commandment never came on my "radar." Then the Easter Vigil happened. I was received into the Church at the Easter Vigil in 2012 where I made my Profession of Faith and received confirmation and first Holy Communion. Unbeknownst to me, something happened to me at this moment, as evidenced by what happened afterward.

After the Vigil, while soaring on an emotional high and walking through the parking lot heading back to my car, I overheard a man walking down the street who, by all appearances, was intoxicated. Suddenly, I suffered physical pain, which felt like an ice pick in the ear. He was taking the Lord's name in vain with vulgarity, and I was unable to bear it. More to the point, I still cannot.

To this day, after 13 years of being a Catholic, not only do I no longer take the Lord's name in vain, I cannot bear the physical pain of hearing His name defiled. This is what I call a miracle!

I wish to express the extent to which this was a movement wholly born of God's sanctifying grace by participating in His divine nature through receiving His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. This sudden change in my heart and mind had nothing to do with me.

I want to take this opportunity to

thank the Lord, in writing, for saving me from further insulting His holy name. My previous indiscretions and sins could be piled to the heavens if they were counted, but our Lord of mercy saw fit to renew me through giving me more of Himself, opening my mind and heart to His love, spurring me on to express my love for Him more fully.

I beg the Lord to maintain this state of my soul, for I cannot bear going back to what I once was.

Of course, there is much work yet to be done in my continual sanctification, but if God saw fit to affect such a miraculous change

in my life, I am confident in my hope of Him helping me the rest of the way to glory.

May we all remember the importance of the Second Commandment and, in seeking His grace, ask for the strength to reverence Him properly. As we do, let us never forget the power residing in the gift of the Most Blessed Eucharist wherein our Lord seeks to supernaturally empower us with a participation in His divine nature to live life to the fullest in anticipation of seeing Him face to face. ✚



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.

HABEMUS PAPAM!



El Papa León XIV saluda a la gente mientras viaja en el papamóvil el 1 de junio. (foto CNS/Lola Gomez)

Católicos locales celebran el anuncio del nuevo Papa

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

A la primera señal de humo blanco que salía de la chimenea de la Capilla Sixtina, el Padre Pedro Martínez acudió a la Plaza de San Pedro, junto con miles de peregrinos, para presenciar algo histórico.

El sacerdote diocesano, que se encuentra en Roma cursando su licenciatura en Derecho Canónico en la Pontificia Universidad Gregoriana, estaba ansioso por saber quién había sido elegido Papa por el cónclave de 133 cardenales para dirigir la Iglesia Católica. Cuando el Cardenal Dominique François Joseph Mamberti apareció el 8 de mayo en el balcón central de la logia para anunciar que el cardenal Robert Francis Prevost, estadounidense nacido en Chicago, era el nuevo pontífice, el Padre Martínez celebró la gran noticia.

“Fue una experiencia profundamente conmovedora poder presenciar cómo se desarrollaba la historia de la Iglesia y del mundo ante mis propios ojos”, explicó el sacerdote con entusiasmo. “Escuchar las primeras palabras del Papa en la Plaza de San Pedro fue como escuchar el latido del

corazón de la Iglesia: un testimonio vivo de la presencia de Cristo entre nosotros”.

El nuevo Pontífice, que tiene 69 años, asumió el nombre de León XIV. Es miembro de la Orden de San Agustín e ingresó al noviciado en el 1977. Tras hacer sus votos solemnes en el 1981 fue ordenado sacerdote al año siguiente.

El Padre Prevost dedicó 20 años de su ministerio a las misiones de su comunidad religiosa en Perú, donde trabajó como párroco, funcionario diocesano, director de formación, profesor de seminario y vicario judicial. Regresó a Chicago para servir a los Agustinos como Prior Provincial y, luego, fue nombrado Prior General hasta el 2013. El Padre Prevost regresó a Perú para realizar una última asignación y el Papa Francisco lo nombró en el 2015 administrador apostólico de la Diócesis de Chiclayo y obispo de Chiclayo.

Papa Francisco lo nombró recientemente Prefecto del Dicasterio para los Obispos, un puesto clave en la Curia Romana. El Obispo

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 52



CNS/Vatican Media

El Papa León XIV saluda a la multitud congregada en la Plaza de San Pedro del Vaticano tras su elección como papa el 8 de mayo.

DE LA PÁGINA 51

Prevost fue elevado al rango de cardenal el 30 de septiembre del 2023. Este sacerdote misionero posee doble ciudadanía, la estadounidense y la peruana.

El Papa León XIV es el primer Pontífice nacido en los Estados Unidos y el segundo papa consecutivo que proviene de América.

“Esta elección sirve como un poderoso recordatorio de que la Iglesia, aunque diversa en culturas e idiomas, está unida en Cristo”, señaló el Padre Martínez. “Para mí, como alguien moldeado por las culturas mexicana y estadounidense, esto afirma que la universalidad de la Iglesia tiene sus raíces en la verdad de Cristo, quien nos une a todos en su amor y misión”.

UN RESULTADO SORPRENDENTE

El Obispo Michael Olson no esperaba la elección de un papa estadounidense.

“Pero estoy muy agradecido por ello”, declaró el prelado al North Texas

Catholic, aludiendo a la sólida trayectoria del nuevo pontífice en administración y su formación pastoral como misionero peruano. “Creo que es una maravillosa combinación de lo que lo ha formado como ser humano, cristiano y sacerdote”.

Al elegir el nombre papal de León, que no se había usado en 122 años, el excardenal honra especialmente a dos predecesores que sirven de gran inspiración, el Papa León XIII y el Papa León Magno, apunta el Obispo Olson.

“León XIII es el papa que primero abordó los desafíos de los derechos de los trabajadores y los pobres acosados por la era moderna”, explicó. “Y León Magno fue uno de los doctores de la Iglesia, cuya enseñanza se centró en la naturaleza y la centralidad de Jesucristo”.

El líder de los católicos del norte de Texas nunca ha conocido en persona al nuevo Santo Padre, pero espera con ansias la audiencia papal prevista durante una peregrinación a Roma y Asís en junio. Ambos son originarios de Chicago e ingresaron a sus respectivos seminarios

a los 14 años. El Obispo Olson pide a los católicos de la diócesis que recen por el nuevo papa y que no lo juzguen con criterios partidistas.

“Como originario de Chicago y ciudadano de Estados Unidos, me enorgullece dar la bienvenida al primer papa estadounidense”, expresó con entusiasmo el Obispo. De niño, su párroco le dijo que el Obispo de Roma sería siempre italiano. “¡Dios nos sorprendió!”

UNA VISIÓN MÁS GLOBAL QUE LA ESTADOUNIDENSE

Tener al primer papa nacido en los Estados Unidos es una alegría y una bendición, pero el seminarista Paul Trinh cree que la estancia del misionero en Perú ejercerá una gran influencia en su pontificado.

“Tiene una visión más global y no se centra en un solo país”, dijo el seminarista, que realiza su año pastoral en la Parroquia de St. Philip the Apostle de Flower Mound. “El Papa León XIV no parece tener fuertes vínculos políticos

en los Estados Unidos, por lo que puede promover la enseñanza católica sin americanizarla”.

Trinh, de 25 años, dijo que su familia y amigos están ansiosos por aprender más sobre el Santo Padre, quien parece ser más joven que la edad que tiene.

“Hay muchas cosas sucediendo en el mundo y rezo para que sea un buen pastor”, agregó el feligrés de Cristo Rey.

Su compañero seminarista Trent Barton seguía las noticias del cónclave en su computadora mientras trabajaba en la Parroquia de St. Vincent de Paul de Arlington. El seminarista de 36 años, originario de Seymour, está completando su año pastoral en la diócesis antes de volver a la Facultad de Teología de la Universidad Católica de América.

“Rezo para que el Papa León siga la voluntad de Dios como todo sucesor de Pedro ha intentado hacerlo”, dijo Barton.

La emoción que genera la elección de un nuevo papa es algo que muchos no comprenden.

“Vemos el papado como un regalo increíble que Cristo da a su Iglesia en la Tierra”, explicó el seminarista. “Nos bendice con un líder conforme a Su corazón, un descendiente del apóstol Pedro, a quien podemos acudir en momentos de necesidad”.

ENCUENTRO CON EL FUTURO PAPA

Christine Messner-Fleishman puede presumir de que no sólo conoció a un futuro papa, sino que también recibió su bendición. La exmiembro de la selección nacional femenina de fútbol estuvo en Arequipa, Perú, hace ocho años para una boda cuando el cortejo nupcial decidió visitar el histórico Monasterio de Santa Catalina.

“Las monjas estaban muy contentas porque un grupo de misioneros y dos sacerdotes habían llegado para repartir comida y bendiciones”, recordó la católica del norte de Texas que siguió a las hermanas a la Plaza de Armas.

Uno de esos visitantes era un



Una clase en el Centro Católico el 8 de mayo se convirtió en una oportunidad para observar en vivo la elección del Papa León XIV.



El Padre Pedro Martínez posa frente al balcón central de la Plaza de San Pedro el día de la elección del Papa León XIV el 8 de mayo.

estadounidense de voz suave que vestía ropa normal con cuello romano; y era en ese entonces el obispo de Chiclayo. Hoy día, ese sacerdote es conocido como el Papa León XIV.

“Una familia le trajo a un niño enfermo con una pierna deforme y él le dio una bendición”, continuó Messner-Fleishman. “Otros aldeanos le mostraban su agradecimiento. No había

nada estructurado en ello. No llamaba la atención, pero era obvio que él era el líder”.

Antes de irse, el Obispo Prevost ofreció una bendición al grupo de turistas.

“Nos habló en español, nos deseó un buen futuro y nos pidió que ayudáramos a los necesitados”, relató. “El mal está ahí fuera, así que nos dijo que fuéramos la luz en la vida de alguien”. 🇺🇸



UN DÍA A LA
VEZ



El Obispo Michael Olson impone las manos sobre Isaac McCracken durante su ordenación el 24 de mayo en la Catedral de St. Patrick en Fort Worth. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

Isaac McCracken es ordenado sacerdote

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Andrés Hernández, Lucas Hernández y Jacob Smith tenían una gozosa motivación para levantarse temprano la mañana del 24 de mayo. Viajaron al centro de Fort Worth y esperaron frente a la Catedral de St. Patrick a que se abrieran las puertas de la histórica iglesia. Un joven al que admiran mucho estaba a punto de dedicar su vida a Dios y a la Iglesia.

Isaac Joseph McCracken pasó su año pastoral trabajando en la Parroquia de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton de Keller. Los adolescentes estaban ilusionados por ver al Obispo Michael Olson ordenar al diácono de transición de 27 años al sacerdocio durante una misa solemne llena de rituales centenarios.

“Soy monaguillo, así que pasé mucho tiempo con el Diácono Ike en la iglesia”, explica Lucas Hernández, un joven de 17 años, graduado de la preparatoria y futuro alumno de la Universidad de Ave María. “Siempre fue muy reverente y nos ayudó cuando lo necesitábamos. Recuerdo una vez que el sacerdote estaba enfermo, pero aun así, dio la homilía. Fue muy buena”.

Ésta era la primera vez que los tres jóvenes asistían a una misa de ordenación sacerdotal.

“El Diácono Ike nos dio un buen ejemplo”, añade Hernández. “Eso, sin duda, te hace pensar en una vocación al sacerdocio o a la vida religiosa”.

UN NUEVO COMIENZO

La ordenación de Isaac McCracken al Sagrado Orden del Sacerdocio es la

culminación de siete años de estudio, discernimiento y oración para este joven de Arlington, que en algún momento pensó en convertirse en profesor de economía.

McCracken se graduó recientemente de la Facultad de Teología de Catholic University of America, donde obtuvo una maestría en divinidad, una licenciatura en teología sagrada y un certificado de posgrado en latín. El exfeligrés de St. Vincent de Paul comienza su nuevo ministerio al mismo tiempo que la Iglesia universal da la bienvenida a un nuevo papa, Su Santidad León XIV, el excardenal estadounidense Robert Prevost.

“Tengo mucha esperanza; tener un nuevo papa para la Iglesia y, al mismo tiempo, ser ordenado al sacerdocio”, expresa con entusiasmo el Padre McCracken, que ha sido asignado a la Parroquia de Holy Family de Fort Worth. “Estoy muy emocionado”.

Antes de seguir su vocación, el hijo de Joann y Gary McCracken pasó dos años en la Universidad de Texas de Arlington y participó activamente en la comunidad católica universitaria del campus. Su decisión de ingresar al seminario en el 2018 es un compromiso que mantiene, “un día a la vez, un año a la vez”.

UNA EXPERIENCIA EMOCIONANTE

Sus padres compartieron esa jornada con Isaac y su hermano mayor, Liam, a quienes criaron en un hogar católico típico. Fueron educados en escuelas

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 56



Padre Isaac McCracken distribuye la Comunión durante su Misa de ordenación. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

DE LA PÁGINA 55

públicas, asistieron a clases de catequesis, a la escuela bíblica durante las vacaciones y a misa con la familia.

La determinación de Isaac de estudiar para el sacerdocio sorprendió a sus padres.

“Es un sacrificio, pero estamos muy orgullosos de él”, afirma su madre, enumerando las cualidades que harán de su hijo un buen sacerdote. “Nuestro hijo escucha. Es amable y muy inteligente. Pero, sobre todo, se preocupa y quiere que a la gente le vaya bien”.

Fue muy conmovedor presenciar la consagración de las manos de su hijo con el Santo Crisma tras varios años en el seminario.

“Ha sido un largo camino, pero estamos preparados, y sé que Isaac lo está también”, asevera McCracken con entusiasmo. “Para que la Iglesia avance necesita sacerdotes jóvenes buenos con valentía y compasión. Los necesita para hacer del mundo un lugar mejor”.

REBOSANTES DE ALEGRÍA

En su homilía, el Obispo Olson afirmó que los corazones de la Iglesia local rebosan de alegría y esperanza por la ordenación de un nuevo presbítero.

“Cristo quiso darnos sacerdotes a la Iglesia como pastores de su rebaño”, declara el obispo a los seiscientos veinticinco fieles presentes ese día en la catedral. “Los sacerdotes están llamados a proteger su rebaño y dirigirlo a superar

y debilitar a los lobos astutos de hoy, no con mayor astucia, sino con la sencillez inocente y el amor desinteresado de nuestro Señor Jesucristo”.

El líder de los católicos del norte de Texas explica que el ministerio de un sacerdote consiste en establecer, mantener y reparar el vínculo entre Cristo y su pueblo mediante la plegaria Eucarística, la predicación y una presencia misericordiosa en el confesionario.

“Nosotros como sacerdotes, incluso cuando somos vasos frágiles y de barro, estamos llamados a liderar dando ejemplo de discipulado, servicio desinteresado y la misericordia que se requiere de todos los bautizados”, agrega.

UN RITUAL ANTIGUO

Luego de la homilía, el Rito de Ordenación continuó con el elegido expresando su disposición a aceptar las responsabilidades que conlleva la ordenación. El futuro sacerdote hizo promesas de respeto y obediencia al obispo y a sus sucesores.

En un momento muy emocionante, que simboliza la dependencia de un hombre de Dios y su indignidad para el ministerio, el Diácono McCracken se postró ante el altar mientras la congregación cantaba la Letanía de los Santos.

La parte más solemne de la ceremonia de ordenación continuó con la Imposición de Manos. Al igual que los Apóstoles que utilizaron este gesto al elegir los primeros diáconos de la Iglesia (*Hechos 6, 6*), el Obispo Olson colocó las manos sobre la cabeza del ordenando y oró en silencio para invocar los dones del Espíritu Santo. Varios sacerdotes se acercaron también al presbítero recién ordenado e hicieron el mismo gesto para indicar que todos pertenecen a un solo sacerdocio con Jesucristo.

El Padre Philip Brembah y el Padre James Flynn asistieron al obispo en la investidura del Padre McCracken con una estola (señal de su oficio sacerdotal) y una casulla (vestimenta que se usa para la celebración de la Misa). El recién ordenado se arrodilló de nuevo ante el obispo y sus manos fueron ungidas con el Santo Crisma, que es símbolo de su nueva autoridad para consagrar la Eucaristía y administrar los sacramentos.

Sus padres llevaron el cáliz y la patena al altar, que el Obispo entregó al Padre McCracken mientras decía: Recibe la oblación del pueblo santo para ser ofrecida a Dios. Comprende lo que harás. Imita lo que celebrarás y conforma tu vida al misterio de la cruz del Señor.

A continuación, el Obispo celebró la Liturgia de la Eucaristía junto con el Padre McCracken.

SER VALIENTE

El seminarista Nicholas Hoelscher, que comenzará su segundo año de teología en agosto, se alegró de ver a su amigo y mentor convertirse en sacerdote de la diócesis.

“Me llena de esperanza para mi futuro”, dijo este joven de 30 años, que asistió a la Facultad de Teología en Washington, D.C., junto con el Padre McCracken. “Allí asumí un papel de liderazgo y se aseguró de que los demás seminaristas estuvieran bien”.

Su consejo para otros jóvenes que consideran una vocación es conciso: sean valientes.

“El miedo es la muerte del amor”, enfatiza el feligrés de St. Joseph. “Hay que tener valentía para entregarse de esta manera. No se puede amar, si se tiene miedo”. 🇺🇸



El Padre Isaac McCracken abraza a su padre después de entregarle su estola confesional durante su primera Misa el 25 de mayo en la Parroquia de St. Vincent de Paul en Arlington. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



El Padre Brandon LeClair ora frente al Santísimo Sacramento durante una Procesión Eucarística en la Parroquia de St. Frances Cabrini en la Peregrinación Eucarística Nacional el 7 de junio. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

Unidos por la EUCARISTÍA

La Peregrinación Eucarística Nacional une
corazones y culturas de los fieles

Por Karla Silva

Alrededor de 600 personas participaron de la procesión, misa y adoración que la Peregrinación Eucarística Nacional brindó el viernes 6 de junio a la Parroquia de Immaculate Heart of Mary de Fort Worth.

La Peregrinación Eucarística Nacional comenzó en el 2024 e hizo un hermoso recorrido por todos los

Estados Unidos, que culminó con el Décimo Congreso Eucarístico Nacional en Indianápolis. Esta iniciativa dio tantos frutos de unidad, conversión y paz, que se decidió organizar una nueva peregrinación este año utilizando una ruta diferente.

La peregrinación de este año comenzó el 18 de mayo en Indianápolis, Indiana. A lo largo de su recorrido, la

peregrinación pasará por 20 diócesis y arquidiócesis distintas y se celebrarán procesiones, misas y adoraciones eucarísticas. La peregrinación culminará el día de la Solemnidad de Corpus Christi en la Arquidiócesis de Los Ángeles, California.

La patrona de esta peregrinación es Santa Katharine Drexel, fundadora de las Hermanas del Santísimo Sacramento.

“El caminar con el Señor y llevarlo a más personas a lo largo de esta peregrinación es un regalo que ha hecho crecer mi fe de una forma que nunca hubiera imaginado”, comentó Stephen Fuhrmann, uno de los ocho peregrinos perpetuos que acompañan al Santísimo Sacramento durante todo el trayecto.

“Nunca había vivido algo así, fue muy bonito y me siento muy bendecida de que la Parroquia de Immaculate Heart of Mary haya sido elegida para que esta peregrinación pase por aquí”, comentó María Floran, feligrés de la parroquia.

La procesión eucarística comenzó a las 7:00 am y el recorrido alrededor de la parroquia duró aproximadamente una hora. Se rezó el rosario y se cantaron varios himnos de alabanza durante la procesión mientras se visitaban los cinco altares que los feligreses de la parroquia construyeron. “A las 4:30 de la mañana ya estábamos aquí para arreglar los altares y muy felices por la oportunidad de prestar nuestro servicio para esta peregrinación”, comentó Lilia Barcenas, que lleva siete años trabajando en la parroquia y sirve además como ministro de la Comunión.

Al terminar la procesión eucarística se celebró la misa presidida por el Párroco Padre Oscar Sánchez y Padre Rubén Tena, que fueron acompañados por los dos capellanes de la peregrinación, Padre Joshua Johnson y Padre Malachy Napier, y dos sacerdotes más de la Diócesis.

El Padre Sánchez recalcó en su homilía cómo Jesús no sólo se preocupa por nuestras necesidades físicas, sino también por darnos el pan de cada día, el alimento que permanece para siempre: su Cuerpo y Sangre en la Eucaristía. “La Sagrada Eucaristía no sólo nos mantiene vivos, no sólo nos mantiene en la fe que hemos recibido y que profesamos, sino que además nos une por completo a Jesucristo. Hoy agradecemos a Dios por ese gran misterio, porque esa promesa se sigue cumpliendo. Cada vez que participamos de la Eucaristía, Él se hace presente y recordamos el momento en el que nos deja el regalo de su Cuerpo y de su Sangre”, manifestó.

El Padre Sánchez también recordó que el Señor Jesús nos deja la gran enseñanza del compartir: “Éste es un



El Padre Oscar Sánchez Olvera, CORC, lleva la Eucaristía durante la Procesión Eucarística en la Parroquia de Immaculate Heart of Mary el 6 de junio. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

signo de la vida cristiana, es un signo de los primeros cristianos, cuando ponían todos sus bienes en común y compartían velando por las necesidades de los más vulnerables. A nadie le faltaba porque todos vivían unidos en un mismo corazón y en una misma fe. Hoy, el Señor Jesús nos invita a mantenernos unidos en una misma fe, en un mismo corazón, unidos a Él, que es la fuente de vida, unidos a Él, que es el Salvador. Nos invita a seguir manifestando nuestro amor y nuestra devoción a Jesucristo Sacramentado, a Jesucristo Eucaristía”.

El claro ejemplo de este compartir se pudo notar durante toda la peregrinación, ya que aunque las celebraciones fueron en español, no sólo participaron personas hispanohablantes, sino gente de diversas culturas y edades, que hablaban distintos idiomas, pero unidos todos en una sola fe. “Me encantó ver gente que, aunque no hablaba español, vinieron a nuestra iglesia a adorar a Jesús. Participaron en la misa, aun cuando no entendían el idioma por completo. Esto demuestra lo universal que es la Iglesia Católica, ya que todos pueden ser parte de lo que pasa en la

misa y alabar a Dios sin importar la diferencia de idiomas”, comentó Nancy Cantú, miembro del grupo de jóvenes adultos de la parroquia.

Esta jornada culminó con la adoración eucarística, que se llevó a cabo dentro de la iglesia y fue acompañada de lecturas, reflexiones, cantos y momentos de silencio. “Fue un privilegio pasar tiempo con Jesús Eucaristía; fue una bonita experiencia cantando, adorando y sintiendo su presencia entre nosotros”, describió Cantú. Por su parte, Floran expresó que fueron esos momentos de silencio donde pudo entrar en intimidad con el Señor: “Fue algo tan hermoso que es difícil explicarlo”, aseveró.

“Gracia, reflexión y compromiso”, fueron las palabras de Caro Covarrubias, que participó de la peregrinación. “Este evento es inspirado por Dios mismo para una Iglesia multicultural que necesita retroalimentarse y fortalecerse mediante la Palabra de Dios, la oración y el gozo de la alabanza. Nos ayuda a tener una fe fuerte ante los retos de la vida, los cuales no nos deben intimidar; y nos recuerdan que la vida es un peregrinar y la meta es el cielo”, afirmó Covarrubias. 🇵🇷



SIEMPRE HACIA ARRIBA

Impartir clases de informática, y luego de Catecismo, ayudó al Diácono Jesús Valadez a encontrar su llamado

Por Christina Benavides

El Diácono Jesús Valadez, de la Parroquia de All Saints en Fort Worth, recordó cómo visitaba a las personas disociadas o enfermas en un asilo durante su formación.

“Cuando entré, las personas que estaban encargadas del asilo me dijeron, ‘Bueno, una paciente siempre está dormida, pero si quiere pasar, pase — ella no abre los ojos’”, relató. “Entonces pasé y empecé a orar”.

Valadez continuó visitando a la paciente durante varias semanas, orando por ella cada vez, pero sus ojos no se abrían.

“El último día que fui, estuve orando por ella, pidiéndole a Dios que algún familiar viniera a verla o que Él viniera

por ella, si era su voluntad”, recordó el diácono. “Al irme, abrió los ojos y me dijo: ‘Te amo’”.

La experiencia dejó una huella imborrable en el candidato a diácono.

“Es una manifestación muy hermosa de Dios, el poder de cómo te reafirma que estás en el camino correcto, que fuiste elegido por Él, no por nadie más”, compartió.

EN EL CORAZÓN DE SU CAMINO

En su juventud, el Diácono Valadez fue un apasionado bailarín de salsa, lo que lo llevó a muchas fiestas y festividades, y finalmente a su primer encuentro con su esposa Elvia.

Su relación se convirtió en un compromiso a distancia de cinco años: él trabajaba en turismo en el Distrito Federal

(ahora Ciudad de México), mientras ella vivía en Chicago. Valadez finalmente se mudó a esta ciudad, donde la pareja se casó por lo civil en Illinois antes de establecerse en el área de Fort Worth.

Juntos tienen dos hijos, dos nietas y un bisnieto.

En el corazón de su respuesta al llamado de Dios al diaconado, el Diácono Valadez reconoce el apoyo incondicional de su esposa.

Elvia desempeña un papel clave en cómo el diácono equilibra la vida familiar y las responsabilidades eclesíásticas. Él considera su apoyo invaluable, desde preparar una merienda para el camino hasta ayudarlo a cultivar valores católicos fundamentales en su familia, como mantener a Dios en el centro de su hogar.

“Yo creo que eso es, más que nada,

el cómo podemos administrar nuestro tiempo: orando y estando nosotros en las manos de Dios”, dijo. “Porque si queremos ver a Dios en nosotros mismos y en nuestras vidas, entonces tenemos que poner a Dios en todo lo que tenemos, ¿verdad? Creo que eso es lo que me ha resuelto muchas cosas: el estar cerca de Dios y poder traerlo a mi familia”.

UNA GRACIA PARA COMPARTIR

Cuando el Diácono Valadez recuerda las múltiples trayectorias profesionales que siguió tras salir de México en busca del sueño americano, puede ver con claridad los planes que Dios tenía para él.

El Diácono Valadez siempre se ha destacado por ser un gran trabajador. Comenzó su camino en Chicago en el año 2000, donde se desempeñó como conserje escolar y trabajó en una fábrica de chocolate. Más adelante se mudó a Texas, obtuvo la ciudadanía estadounidense y se convirtió en coordinador de importaciones para una empresa deportiva, donde trabajó durante 18 años, mientras estudiaba diseño gráfico. En el 2010, obtuvo su licenciatura en Northside College, en Fort Worth, y comenzó a impartir clases de informática en esa misma institución. Posteriormente, también enseñó como profesor adjunto en Tarrant County College.

“Empecé a darme cuenta de que tenía un don de poder enseñar”, dijo. Después de que los estudiantes acudieran a él con preguntas sobre diferentes temas, comenzó a impartir clases a adultos que aspiraban a tomar el examen de GED, y así fue como conoció a la Hermana Aracely Lobatón, MCSH. “Ella había venido a sacar su GED porque también quería seguir estudiando”, comentó. La Hna. Aracely reconoció su don para la enseñanza y lo invitó a dar catecismo.

“Puedo enseñarles matemáticas o álgebra, lo que usted quiera, pero de Dios, no sé mucho”, el diácono recordó haberle dicho a la hermana.

Aun así, la hermana insistió en que asistiera a algunas clases. Lo presentó

como un “catequista oyente” y poco a poco lo fue animando a preparar temas para enseñar.

“Así que empecé a dar clases de Catecismo, y fue entonces cuando empecé a sentir la preparación a la que Dios me estaba llevando”, compartió el Diácono Valadez.

COMUNIDAD PARA LAS VOCACIONES

Unos diez años después, mientras Valadez se preparaba para su ordenación diaconal el 10 de agosto de 2022 en la Parroquia de St. Elizabeth Ann Seton en Keller, reflexionó sobre dos factores que lo ayudaron a escuchar el llamado: el tiempo de Dios y su comunidad de fe.

En una ocasión, llevaba un maletín y un alba para el Diácono Juan Reyes, y los feligreses confundieron a Valadez con un diácono. A pesar de las firmes negativas, la gente seguía diciéndole: “¡Buenos días, diácono!”. Cuando el Diácono Reyes regresó, Valadez mencionó la confusión de los feligreses. El diácono coincidió con ellos y le dijo: “Sí, es cierto, yo te puedo ver como diácono”.

Ahora, tres años después de su ordenación, el Diácono Valadez sigue disfrutando de su alegría sirviendo a la Parroquia de All Saints como diácono y coordinador litúrgico, asistiendo al Padre Tim Thompson con los matrimonios y funerales, entre muchas otras responsabilidades y ministerios.

Consciente de su camino hacia el diaconado, pide oraciones a los fieles de la diócesis por las vocaciones: “Porque hay muy pocos, y aunque hasta ahora no han faltado, podría llegar a notarse su ausencia si la comunidad no reza por las vocaciones ni anima a sus hijos a discernir y formarse”.

“No tengan miedo de ayudar a otros a prestar atención al llamado”, instó el Diácono Valadez. “Hay que poner a Dios en nuestras manos, en nuestro mundo, en nuestros círculos, para que podamos tener una mejor respuesta a las vocaciones sacerdotales, diaconales y religiosas”. ✚

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 seminarista Javier Escutia asiste a la Misa en la Parroquia de St. Vincent de Paul de Arlington el 25 de mayo. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ATENTOS AL LLAMADO DE DIOS

Cuatro seminaristas responden a preguntas frecuentes
sobre su experiencia en el seminario

Por Christina Benavides

En *Isaías 6, 8*, después de contemplar la santidad de Dios y experimentar su purificación, el profeta escucha el llamado divino: “Yo oí la voz del Señor que decía: “¿A quién enviaré? ¿Y quién irá por

nosotros?” Yo respondí: “¡Aquí estoy: envíame!”

Así como Isaías tuvo la oportunidad de escuchar y responder al llamado, los jóvenes varones de nuestra diócesis tampoco deben temer discernir su vocación al sacerdocio. En busca de su consejo, se les hizo varias preguntas a cuatro seminaristas de la diócesis sobre su experiencia en el seminario.

¿Qué idea equivocada tenían tus amigos o familiares sobre el seminario?



CRISTIAN DÍAZ: Muchas personas piensan que entrar al seminario es como ir a un convento, a un claustro o a un lugar apartado; y que simplemente rezamos todo el

día. Pero no es así. Sin embargo, es mucho más que eso: como en la experiencia universitaria, tenemos clases, formación y comunidad. También podemos salir, ir a la tienda o al restaurante más cercano. No es como el ejército, supongo que se podría decir.

¿Puedes mencionar algo que realmente disfrutas de la vida en el seminario — algo que crees que no habrías vivido si no hubieras comenzado a discernir?



JESÚS SEGURA: Como seminarista, tengo el privilegio de conocer distintos ámbitos de nuestra diócesis, más allá del entorno en que crecí. He podido encontrarme con

personas de diversos orígenes, historias y culturas, todas profundamente atraídas por la misma fe, y el mismo Jesucristo. Vivir esta experiencia ha sido aún más maravilloso de lo que imaginaba.

A medida que escucho las historias de las personas — sus esperanzas, luchas, alegrías, fracasos y logros —, me siento cada vez más motivado a tomar en serio mi formación. Y nace en mí un deseo aún mayor de llegar, si Dios lo permite, al sacerdocio, para poder servir con todo el corazón a quienes he tenido el privilegio de conocer.

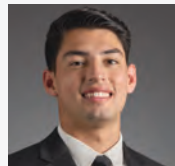
¿Qué persona crees que debería considerar el seminario?



JAVIER ESCUTIA: Alguien debería considerar el seminario si se siente llamado a servir a una diócesis en particular, quiere servir a una comunidad parroquial, realizar ministerio,

dar los sacramentos, dar consejo, y ser un líder. Uno debe tener el deseo de servir al Señor primero que nada, pero también debe tener el deseo de vivir el celibato, prometer obediencia al obispo, dedicar tiempo a los feligreses y sus necesidades; y sobre todo, ser un servidor que dará buen ejemplo que todos puedan seguir.

¿Qué era lo que más te preocupaba al ingresar al seminario? ¿Actualmente, cómo te sientes al respecto?



ERIC HERNÁNDEZ:

Diría que lo que más me preocupaba era si Dios realmente me llamaba al sacerdocio. No tenía la certeza plena de que Él

quisiera que fuera sacerdote, así que dudaba de si estaba haciendo lo correcto o incluso si debía ingresar al seminario. Al recordarlo ahora, agradezco las gracias que Dios me ha dado para seguir adelante, porque Él ha estado presente en todas las etapas de mi formación de seminarista, incluso en los momentos en que no estaba seguro de si estaba en el lugar correcto. ... He aprendido que no hay problema en no tener total certeza de la vocación al entrar al seminario, ya que es precisamente un tiempo para discernir en oración si Dios me llama verdaderamente al sacerdocio.

JAVIER ESCUTIA: Lo que más me preocupaba al ingresar al seminario eran los estudios. A veces el estudio es difícil, y lo es, pero se puede con la ayuda de Dios. Pero también uno tiene que poner el esfuerzo, poner atención en las clases, echarle ganas, dedicar tiempo para estudiar, pedir ayuda cuando sea necesario y, sobre todo, no estresarte mucho, especialmente cuando fallas o no sacas los resultados que quieres.

¿Tienes un mensaje para nuestros lectores católicos de North Texas Catholic?

JESÚS SEGURA: Creo que es muy importante la necesidad de más sacerdotes, especialmente sacerdotes hispanos, que hablen el idioma o conozcan la cultura, porque ellos mismos crecieron en esa cultura y con ese idioma. ... Uno no debe tener miedo de que va a estar infeliz, o va a estar solo y va a estar separado de la familia. Porque yo como hombre hispano — mis papás de México, yo de México — he podido encontrar la gracia de Dios en mis hermanos seminaristas. He encontrado el amor de Dios y el apoyo de Dios en aquéllos que están aquí para ayudarme a formarme. Entonces, tengan confianza y tengan fe. Y hagan un propósito de hablar con sus hijos, nietos y sobrinos; y exponerlos a esta conversación. 🇺🇸

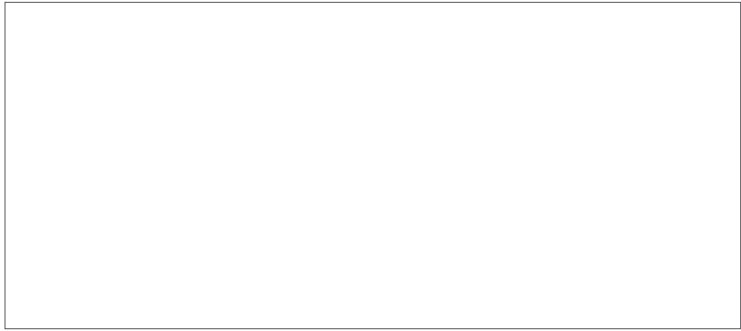
ESCUCHA LA LLAMADA

Este verano, los jóvenes tendrán dos oportunidades para escuchar el llamado de Dios y responder con generosidad, tal como lo hizo Isaías:

- **DESAYNO DE SAN ANDRÉS:** Varones de secundaria y universidad están invitados el 19 de julio en la Catedral de 8 a.m. - 9 a.m.
- **QUO VADIS:** Varones que hayan terminado la secundaria — desde los que ingresarán a primer año hasta los recién graduados — están invitados al retiro vocacional *Quo Vadis* el 25 de julio de 7:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Descubre más eventos vocacionales en el calendario diocesano: fwdioc.org/public-calendar

NOTA DEL EDITOR: Estas entrevistas fueron editadas para mayor claridad y brevedad.



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