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JULY - AUGUST 2026
VOL. 42 | NO. 4



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Agatha Agyemang sings in the choir at the Ghana Mass.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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HAVE A STORY IDEA?

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Sacred vessels

The altar looked odd, covered in a large, mismatched collection of ciboria, chalices and patens. A pile of purificators stood nearby. At first glance, it resembled a holy garage sale.

Instead, the pastor explained, the vessels had been cleaned and refurbished, and he was consecrating the collection to sacred use during Sunday Mass on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, fittingly.

Some of the sacred objects were simple, others ornate, and although they were fashioned from precious metals, what made them valuable was the treasure they once contained, and the treasure they would hold once again: the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Looking around at the congregation in the pews, we looked much like those empty vessels on the altar: a dissimilar collection of individuals, all waiting to be filled with the eternal.

Our purpose, too, was comparable: to share the treasure that we would soon contain — the Holy Eucharist — with the world.

If I'd been able to carefully inspect the liturgical objects, would I have found a scratch or a little dent? Quite possibly.

And certainly, the faithful at the Mass came with a multitude of wounds and imperfections, visible or not. I can vouch for mine.

But the vessels, and the people, are treated with profound care because of their role in the miracle taking place on the altar at every Mass: that Jesus is truly present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, in the appearance of bread and wine.

God, in His infinite wisdom, uses ordinary objects to bring us His love and His mercy in a tangible way in the Blessed Sacrament.

God, in His infinite wisdom, uses ordinary people to share His love and His mercy with all of the world, from the neighbor next door to the foreigner across the ocean.

Although the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is a mystery we will never fully understand on this side of heaven, let us prepare ourselves to receive Him with the reverence and worship that He deserves.

And then let us go in peace, glorifying the Lord by our lives.

Susan Moses

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Views from the Pews

Our Catholic faith is not a one-hour-on-Sunday engagement. By our baptism, we are called to participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the Church, as exemplified here in public witness, education, and fellowship.

The Real Presence. On June 7, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, many parishes in the diocese, including St. Michael Parish in Bedford, held a Eucharistic Procession, a public act of worship of the Blessed Sacrament.

Full STEAM ahead. Bishop Michael Olson celebrated Mass and blessed the new STEAM center at Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep. The new space includes 12 classrooms, four science labs, a conference room, and a black box theater.

Generations of food and fun. St. Mary Parish in Windthorst celebrated its 134th annual parish picnic on June 7, a cherished family tradition featuring sporting tournaments, a raffle, an auction, games, a country store, and homemade sausage.

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NTC/Rodger Mallison



NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Bertha Salazar

That's a wrap!

Traditions of faith and fun close out the 2025-2026 school year

Parents, faculty, and students know the whirlwind of the last weeks of school, managing lessons and making memories to last all summer long.

At right, the Spirit Games, hosted by the Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation and the diocese, brought together families for Mass, games, food, and fun to support Catholic education and the legacy of Stephen Breen. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

Bottom right, students at St. Peter Catholic School in White Settlement honored Mary during the month of May by crowning a statue and bringing flowers. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Below, Thomas Beyer, assistant principal of Cassata Catholic High School, congratulated graduate Josh Halupe, winner of a Stephen Breen Memorial Foundation scholarship. (NTC/Kimberly Speirs) 🇺🇸



MORE PHOTOS



Ramp it up

Volunteers in Wichita Falls give back in fourth annual Catholic Charities Northwest Day of Service

WICHITA FALLS — Bright and early the morning of Saturday, May 16, when many people might otherwise enjoy sleeping in or relaxing at home, a group of 18 people comprised of volunteers, community members, and Catholic Charities Fort Worth Northwest Campus staff members gathered in the atrium of Vernon College's Century City Center in Wichita Falls.

Manuel Borrego, retired police chief and a parishioner of Sacred Heart Church in Wichita Falls, led the group in prayer before they left for two worksites.

Ten of the volunteers and staff drove to a home in Archer City, 26 miles south of the city, to help with the Texas Ramp Project, which builds wheelchair ramps for elderly and disabled people who can't afford one.

Sandy Lindsay and Paula Moore, friends and longtime residents of Wichita Falls, were both part of the group cutting



NTC/Bertha Salazar

Ryan Bianco and Elias Sanchez build the support for a ramp outside an Archer City home.

wood and worked quickly throughout the process.

Lindsay and Moore said this was their second time to participate in the Catholic Charities Northwest Day of Service and with a Texas Ramp Project.

"It is just very rewarding to see the recipient's face when they walk out on this ramp. Something that was done for them makes all the difference in the world. It

is just really nice to know that just a few hours of work can be such a blessing to someone," said Lindsay.

Meanwhile, other Day of Service volunteers went to clean an office building next to the parish office of Sacred Heart so CCFW Northwest can move into that building temporarily.

— Jenara Kocks Burgess



Hero at the door

Catholic Meals on Wheels driver saves woman's life

FORT WORTH — March 10 should have been a normal Tuesday for 19-year-old Meals on Wheels driver Alekzander Dzivak. He was delivering lunch to the last client on his first of two routes of the day, a routine he'd been doing for nearly three months.

But this time things were different: 72-year-old Mrs. Lana was not answering the door. Dzivak waited a few minutes, and then suddenly heard her scream through the Ring camera. Because of a diabetic episode, she had fallen on the floor and was unable to move.

"My heart was beating a million miles a minute," Dzivak recalled.

Thankfully, she had her phone on her, and was able to speak to Dzivak outside. However, the Ring

microphone wasn't picking up his voice, and he had to communicate by nodding and shaking his head.

After realizing her serious condition, Dzivak immediately dialed 911 and stayed with her, keeping her calm until the paramedics arrived.

While Dzivak has been hailed a hero across local news outlets and by the Fort Worth City Council, his actions aren't surprising considering the altruistic background instilled by his upbringing and Catholic faith.

Dzivak was bitten by the volunteering bug early in his days as a student at St. John the Apostle Catholic School in North Richland Hills and continues to serve the community.

— Martin Friedenthal

NTC/Juan Guajardo



St. John the Apostle parishioner Alekzander Dzivak came to the aid of a Meals on Wheels client in a health crisis.



Students start vocations day with Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral.



Ask, listen, follow

Eighth-grade students gather for annual vocations day

FORT WORTH — Eighth-grade students hear many messages — from classmates, from social media influencers, from celebrities and musicians, from their parents. On April 23, eighth-grade students had the opportunity to focus on a message from the Church at the annual Eighth Grade Vocations Day.

To kick off the event, more than 300 eighth-grade students from 15 Catholic schools in the diocese filed into St. Patrick Cathedral, many for the first time. Several students remarked that the beauty of the church's artwork and stained-glass

windows was awe-inspiring.

Vocations Day began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson, who based his homily on a passage on the Good Shepherd from *John 10:11-18*.

As the students prepare to enter high school, he said, "It is time to decide to listen and to follow the Good Shepherd."

Later, the students divided into girls and boys to hear advice on living a life of holiness and growing a friendship with God — an encouragement for every vocation, not exclusively a religious one.

CLERGY ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

REV. ERIC HOMERO FLORES

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills, has been appointed **Pastoral Administrator** of St. George Parish in Fort Worth, effective July 1.

REV. FRANK FURMAN, FSSP

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth, effective June 10.

REV. PEDRO JAVIER MARTINEZ

Previously studying in Rome, has been appointed **Judicial Vicar** with residence at St. George Parish in Fort Worth, effective August 1.

REV. ISAAC McCracken

Previously Parochial Vicar of Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills, effective July 1.

REV. LINH NGUYEN

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

DEACON BLAKE RYAN THOMPSON

Previously studying at Theological College at the Catholic University of America, has been appointed **Deacon** at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound, effective May 18.



MLK essay winners

FORT WORTH — "How can love help diverse peoples to discover a way to live together in peace, thereby creating a psalm of brotherhood?"

That was the prompt for this year's Martin Luther King Jr. essay contest, and with more than 200 entries, diocesan students had a lot of thoughts on the matter.

While the 40th annual MLK Mass was postponed due to inclement weather, the essay contest associated with the Mass went on as scheduled.

Marian Sims, a member of St. Michael Church in Bedford who serves as the MLK Mass Committee Chairperson, said, "With this year's essay focusing on the diversity of all God's people and the emphasis on love helping us to co-exist peacefully with each other, I hope that in researching and writing their essays, they recognize what thoughts, actions, and responsibilities it will take on their part to help themselves ... to live in peaceful harmony with others."

The winners are:

Group 1 – Elementary School

- 1st - Penelope Stahl, St. Joseph Catholic School, Arlington
- 2nd - Nico Colsant, St. Martin de Porres Catholic School, Prosper
- 3rd - Allen Pham, St. Joseph Catholic School, Arlington

Group 2 – Middle School

- 1st - Belen Peña, St. George Catholic School, Fort Worth
- 2nd - Garner White, St. John the Apostle Catholic School, North Richland Hills
- 3rd - Margaret Olivas, St. John the Apostle Catholic School, North Richland Hills

Group 3 – High School

- 1st - Josephine Vu, Nolan Catholic High School, Fort Worth
- 2nd - Alissa Broadway, Nolan Catholic High School, Fort Worth
- 3rd - Annabelle Tenorio, Nolan Catholic High School, Fort Worth

A formation milestone



NTC/Juan Guajardo

PILOT POINT — On June 15, Bishop Michael Olson celebrated the Rite of Candidacy Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Pilot Point.

Seminarians Caleb Scott (left) and Cristian Diaz were formally accepted as candidates for Holy Orders.

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Considering vocations?

IRVING — The annual Vocations Awareness Program, held June 12-14, gave young men and women an opportunity to explore life as a priest, sister, brother, or consecrated lay woman.

Held at the University of Dallas, the two-night weekend included Mass, prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, reconciliation, conferences, and one-on-one discussions.

Sponsored by the Serra Clubs of Fort Worth and Dallas, the Vocation Awareness Program has hosted more than 1,500 guests since it was begun in 1990.

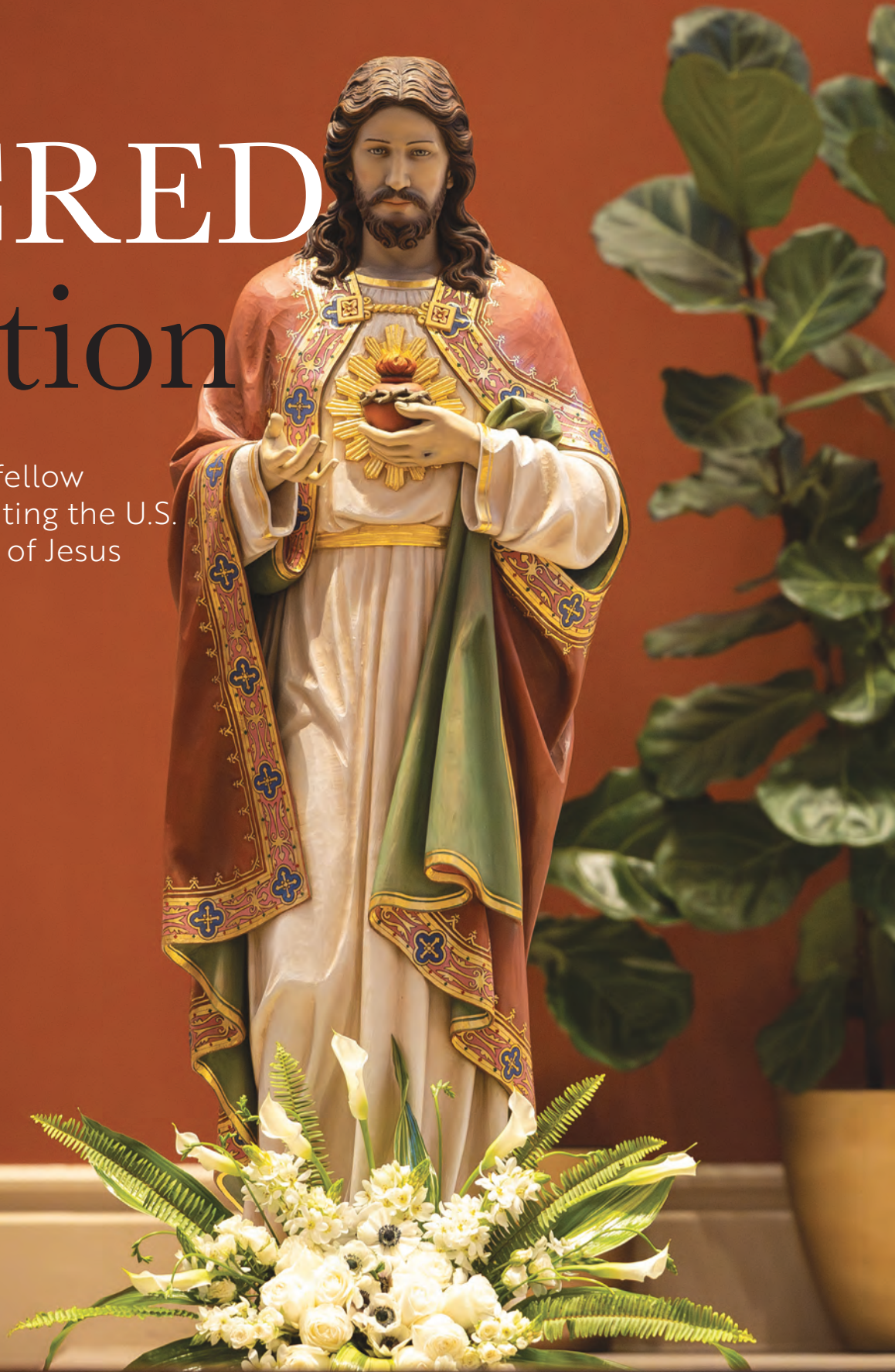
This year, 44 men and 22 women attended, along with 27 sisters and 24 priests and religious men.



Father Samuel Maul converses with two Vocation Awareness Program participants. (NTC/Ben Torres)

SACRED devotion

Bishop Olson joins fellow
bishops in consecrating the U.S.
to the Sacred Heart of Jesus



A statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is seen at St. Philip the Apostle Parish on June 11. Made in Oberammergau, Germany, the statue will reside in the Adoration oratory that is currently in construction at the church. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

By Matthew Smith

June brings several opportunities for Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Worth to learn more and better experience the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Although devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus dates to the 11th century, the entire month of June has been dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus since 1856, when Pope Pius IX established the feast for the Church. In the United States, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated on the Friday following the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. This year's solemnity was celebrated June 12.

This year also being the semiquincentennial — 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence — the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops last November voted to consecrate the U.S. to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Along with his brother bishops, Bishop Michael Olson consecrated the diocese to the same purpose on June 21 at Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche, in conjunction both with the U.S.'s 250th anniversary and the national consecration by bishops throughout America.

“Devotion to the Sacred Heart reminds us that the center of our faith is not a set of abstract rules, but the burning, infinite love of a person: Jesus Christ,” Bishop Olson said of the consecration. “By consecrating our diocese to His Sacred Heart, we are publicly entrusting our parishes, our families, our clergy, and our civic communities to His merciful care.”

Bishop Olson urged parishioners throughout the diocese to attend the consecration either in person or through prayer in their homes or parish communities.

He also encouraged priests in the diocese “to echo this consecration in your parishes on that Sunday, so that the message of the Gospel and the charity of Christ may shine brightly before all people.”

A SYMBOL OF SACRIFICE AND LOVE

Father Matthew Sanka, SAC, pastor of Sacred Heart in Comanche, echoed Bishop Olson's invitation to all members of the diocese.

“The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the whole idea of Jesus' sacrifice for us,” Fr. Sanka said. “So consecrating the diocese to the Sacred Heart is an appreciation of Jesus' sacrifice of His ransom paid for our sins. It's also a symbol of God's love for us.”

Which begs the question, what is the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

A long-standing and profound symbol within the Church, the Sacred Heart of Jesus represents the “immense love and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ,” as per Catholic.com. Devotion to the Sacred Heart focuses on Jesus' heart, which exemplifies His redemptive suffering for the whole world.

As depicted in art either alone or as the heart within Jesus,

Sacred Heart renderings highlight several important symbols. Those include a crown of thorns circling the heart, representing Jesus' suffering for our sins and love for humanity. Flames emanating from the heart represent Jesus' loving transformative and purifying power. A cross above the heart represents His redemptive sacrifice for our sins. The wound on the side of the heart represents the wound inflicted on him both by the Roman soldier at the crucifixion and by all humans through their sins.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, though historically long-standing, gained increased attention between 1673 to 1675 through Jesus' private revelations to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a French nun. Through several visitations, Jesus revealed His heart to St. Margaret Mary as a symbol of his love for humanity and emphasized the need for people to return that love through devotion and prayer.

A DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART

In addition to the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart and devotion to the same, First Friday Devotions offer a way to pay devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Catholics do so by receiving Communion on the first Friday of each month for nine months as Jesus requested St. Margaret Mary to do.

The First Friday Devotion makes reparations for sins against Christ while at the same time bringing participants closer to Him.

Jesus promised St. Margaret Mary that He will grant 12 special graces to those who complete the nine first Fridays. Such graces include the grace necessary for their state of life, the establishment of peace within their families, comfort through their trials, Jesus' presence as secure refuge during their life and death, abundant blessings upon their undertakings, and more.

Since Pope Pius IX extended the Feast of the Sacred Heart to the universal Church in 1856, subsequent popes have weighed in on its “profound significance” and urged fellow Catholics to embrace devotion to it.

Father Bose Jujavarapu, HGN, of Sacred Heart Parish in Seymour explained the importance of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to his parishioners.

“This is a farming and ranching community,” Fr. Jujavarapu said. “Originally settled by Czech farming families celebrating Mass out of the public square until land was purchased. Our church was dedicated in 1917 by [Bishop Joseph Patrick Lynch] and named after the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”

The parish's name joins the month of June and Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in inviting parishioners to practice devotion to the Sacred Heart, Fr. Jujavarapu said.

“It calls us all to join in with Jesus' suffering in remembering the sins committed against His heart,” Fr. Jujavarapu said.

Continued on Page 12



Father Ray McDaniel blesses the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus during the Sacred Heart vigil Mass at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound on June 11. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 11

“It’s about how that carries over into strengthening our love and care for others in the community. Knowledge of Jesus’ Sacred Heart serves as the source of our parish and should be ever present guiding us in what we do and what we have been given to do.”

The hope and goal, Fr. Jujuvarapu said, is that, through devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, parishioners reflect that same love and mercy.

“Through evangelization,” Fr. Jujuvarapu said. “Through working to bring others, bring souls to Christ.”

FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

Pope Francis, through his encyclical “*Dilexit Nos*,” touched upon the importance of and stressed devotion to the Sacred Heart.

“In contemplating the pierced heart of the Lord, who took our infirmities and

bore our diseases, we too are inspired to be more attentive to the sufferings and needs of others and confirmed in our efforts to share in His work of liberation as instruments for the spread of His love,” Pope Francis wrote.

Pope Leo XIV spoke of the Sacred Heart of Jesus’ role in inspiring all to increase awareness of those suffering in the world.

“Particularly in our care for poor and vulnerable people,” Pope Leo XIV said.

A SPECIAL PLACE

St. Philip the Apostle Parish Communications Director Sarah Fritcher expressed excitement over a custom-made Sacred Heart statue that recently arrived from Germany. The statue, to be placed in the Flower Mound parish’s new Eucharistic Adoration oratory, represents months of planning between Father Raymond McDaniel and the sculptor.

In addition to her hopes, the statue

inspires increased devotion among parishioners, Fritcher said the practice holds a special place in her heart.

“My parents practiced the devotion, so I have memories from early on of the Sacred Heart in our home growing up,” Fritcher said. 🇺🇸

PHOTO GALLERY



More photos of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart at St. Philip Parish here:
North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com

FROM JOBSITE TO PRAYER SITE



A view of the new oratory at Holy Family Religious and Retreat Center in south Fort Worth on May 2. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Bishop Olson dedicates oratory at Holy Family Retreat Center

By Susan Moses

In his 40 years in the construction business, Scott Price never encountered a tranquil jobsite until his company built Holy Family Religious and Retreat Center in Fort Worth.

Price, the chief executive officer of Fort Construction, the contractor that built the oratory and nearby residence hall, explained that the project was “unlike any other. Jobsites can be hectic and full of anxiety. There’s a peacefulness that happens at that little place.”

In the last several years, many in the diocese have experienced the peace of 130 wooded acres at the southern edge of Fort Worth, and the new chapel and residence hall will provide the opportunity for many more to step away from their daily lives to enjoy a time and place dedicated to the Lord.

On May 2, Bishop Michael Olson was

the principal celebrant and homilist for the solemn blessing and altar dedication of the Holy Family Religious and Retreat Center, which is run by the Congregation of the Mother of the Redeemer. Established in 1953, the religious order has its motherhouse in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and maintains a provincial house in Carthage, Missouri.

In his homily, Bishop Olson explained, “As we bless this new retreat house and as we consecrate this altar, may this place be — not a parish — but a place of retreat and recreation for families, for community, because the Lord calls us away from daily life to come to know Him better.”

At the conclusion of Mass, Father Philip Thanh Cao, CRM, the director of Holy Family Retreat Center, addressed the clergy, religious, and faithful gathered in the new oratory.

After thanking the bishop, benefactors, and friends, he remarked on the

great beauty and joy of the occasion and said, “Today I have seen not what we have done, but what God has done for us.”

Mydung Nguyen, the leader of the Divine Mercy movement at Immaculate Conception of Mary Church in Wichita Falls, has been coming to the Holy Family Retreat Center for about six years.

The retreat center has been a meeting ground for the Divine Mercy groups from throughout the diocese. On Divine Mercy Sunday, close to 500 people may attend, she said. She looks forward to future gatherings with the beautiful oratory.

“I love the property,” she said. “It feels holy there, very peaceful, safe. To me, it’s a perfect environment for any kind of religious gathering.” 🌟

SEE MORE PHOTOS



PROUD AMERICAN CATHOLICS

Six Nolan Catholic students prepare for military leadership

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Since the war for independence 250 years ago — when a diverse army of citizen soldiers in their teens and early 20s defeated a world power — the U.S. has always relied on the optimism, resiliency, and ideological commitment of its young people.

Nowhere are those traits more evident than in the 2026 graduating class of Nolan Catholic High School. In addition to earning \$17.5 million in scholarships from some of the nation's top-tier schools, the senior class boasts five members appointed to service academies and one accepted into a Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) program.

Trifon Walser, son of Lindsay and Billy Karant, will attend the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy; Daniel Johnson, son of Robert and Jennifer Johnson, is appointed to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy; David Granados, son of Jesse and Deborah Granados, will go to the U.S. Naval Academy; Daniel Cantarella, son of Chris and Karin Cantarella, was accepted to the U.S. Air Force Academy; Brigid Connors, daughter of Michael and Shannon Connors, is headed to the U.S. Naval Academy; and James Suter, son of James and Madison Suter, was awarded an NROTC scholarship to University of Notre Dame.

All six students exhibit purpose-driven leadership, strong academics, and a willingness to serve God and country.

"At Nolan Catholic we talk about being a servant leader. There's a reason for this," said Clint Weber, president of Nolan Catholic High School. "Our faith teaches us there is something bigger and more important than just our own individual will, desire, or self-preservation.

"Whether they choose to join ROTC, the service academies, or direct entry via enlistment, we are incredibly proud of all our Nolan Catholic men and women," continued Weber, a former Marine fighter pilot. "After all, these acts of service are true, authentic patriotism."

A BIG COMMITMENT

Brigid Connors hopes to pilot jets after graduating from the Naval Academy, but a love of science and curiosity about how things work and move are only part of that career decision.

"A pilot is the first line of response for people needing help on the front lines of war," explained the swim team captain, band drum major, and varsity track pole vaulter. "I prayed a lot about it. I wanted to make the right decision because it's such a big commitment."

The St. Vincent de Paul in Arlington



(L-R) David Granados, Daniel Cantarella, Brigid Connors, Trifon Walser, James Suter, and Daniel Johnson pose for a photo outside of Nolan Catholic High School. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

parishioner said attending Nolan allowed her to experience different activities, learn a lot about herself, and grow in faith.

“It set me up very well for my future by having high-level advance placement classes for college credits,” she continued.

Connors’ appointment comes just as the U.S. observes the 50th anniversary of admitting female cadets to service academies. Less than 10 percent of

military pilots are women.

“I’m looking forward to growing that number,” the 18-year-old said.

MY DREAM SCHOOL

After receiving acceptance letters from the Army, Air Force, and Navy service academies, James Suter decided to attend University of Notre Dame — a school honored as the nation’s top NROTC unit in the nation. An NROTC program provides tuition, stipends, and training during a traditional college experience while preparing students to serve as naval officers after graduation.

Passing up a service academy was difficult, admitted the 17-year-old parishioner of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller.

“For over a month I prayed, reflected, and talked with my family and [Nolan chaplain] Father [Brett] Metzler,” Suter explained. “Notre Dame had the Catholic community I wanted. It was always my dream school.”

Knowing there’s not much downtime at a service academy, family was another

consideration.

“I’ll get to see all my younger siblings more,” he added. “I didn’t want to miss out on their childhoods.”

The captain of the football and baseball team described Nolan as a close-knit community where the students support one another. He’s looking for a similar college environment.

“I want to fly. That’s my goal,” said Suter, who plans to study psychology as an undergraduate. “Learning how people think and being able to relate to them will help me be a better leader in the Navy.”

BUILDING CHARACTER

Applying to a service academy was never on Daniel Cantarella’s radar until he caught the attention of a coach at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The 18-year-old joined the Nolan football team as a junior and started honing his kicking skills. Before receiving an offer from the Air Force Academy, he hoped to play for a Division I college.

Continued on Page 16

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GRAD
PHOTOS



More photos of Catholic school graduates:
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Graduation-2026.](https://www.north-texas-catholic.org/smugmug.com/Graduation-2026)

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Cantarella remained undecided until a visit to the Colorado Springs campus tipped the scales.

“I was stunned by how amazing it was,” he recalled. “I believe you set yourself up for success not with money but character. After my visit, I knew these were the best people to develop my character and ability to make tough decisions.”

The soon-to-be cadet credits Nolan with giving him a firm foundation in faith.

“As I take this next step, it shouldn’t be hard for me to calm my mind and know that God is with me,” said the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioner who plans to study business management.

EXCITED TO SERVE

Daniel Johnson will follow in the footsteps of his brother, Robert, at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Seeing his sibling thrive at the institution influenced his decision.

“I saw the potential and opportunities you get from attending a military academy,” said the 17-year-old St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioner. “My father was in the Army, so the military is in my roots. I want to serve my country and get a top-tier education.”

Nominated for outstanding featured performer during the 14th Annual Broadway Dallas High School Musical Theater Awards for his portrayal as Andrew Carnes in Nolan’s production of “Oklahoma,” Johnson enjoyed theater, basketball, and serving as captain of the school’s Siena House. He’s preparing for his new role as cadet by doing 100 push-ups every morning in addition to cardio and pool workouts.

“There are a lot of steps in the application process, but it’s worth the \$300,000-valued education,” Johnson pointed out. “I’m willing and excited to serve. I don’t see it as a burden.”



(Front L-R) James Suter, Brigid Connors, David Granados and (Back L-R) Daniel Johnson, Daniel Cantarella, Trifon Walser pose for a photo outside of Nolan Catholic High School on May 14.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

PROUD TO BE AMERICAN

Recognized as the most outstanding swimmer at the TAPPS state meet with the Bruce Rollins award, Trifon Walser’s first place finishes helped earn him a spot at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.

“I was already looking at some of the military academies when the swim coach reached out to me,” said the athlete who excels at the 200 and 500 freestyle events. “I’d never heard of the Merchant Marine, so I went up to New York, and it was better than other service academies I visited.”

Looking at post-college graduation job opportunities cemented his decision.

“I can choose to go into any of the military services or stay a civilian and work in the maritime industry,” Walser added.

The St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School alumnus enjoyed swim practice at the 25-meter, 10-lane pool on Nolan’s campus.

“Other schools don’t have that,” he said. “Being close to my coaches and teammates definitely helped me do well.”

The Eagle Scout looks forward to serving his country, adding, “I’m proud to be an American.”

FINDING FAITH

Captain of the cross-country team, the male lead dancer in the Ballet Folklorico troupe, and co-founder of a culinary class, David Granados always considered himself a leader.

“Attending the Naval Academy is the best way I can give back and be the servant leader I want to be,” said the parishioner of St. Andrew in Fort Worth. “I’d like to be a pilot but working on a submarine is a possibility. I really want to major in physics.”

The application process was a roller coaster of ups and downs, but his faith helped him deal with the uncertainty.

“When I visited Annapolis, I was still questioning whether this was the education I wanted, but I had the opportunity to talk with the chaplain and go to Mass,” Granados explained. “That really showed me I can find my faith up here.”

The high school graduate, who attended grade school at Holy Family in Fort Worth, believes this is an amazing era in history to be alive.

“We’re a nation with a strong foundation,” he said. “It’s going to be an honor to say I served at this time.” 🇺🇸



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DIPLOMAS IN HAND



Graduate Amy Arteaga at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. (Courtesy photo)

First class of Cristo Rey Fort Worth alumni graduates from college, praising school's training and support

By Sandra Engelland

The first graduating class from Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep is now graduating from college, a major milestone for a school with a powerful, innovative approach to education.

Cristo Rey FW President Dani Ray Barton said she's been looking forward to

the school's founding class of 2022 graduating from college.

"This is a moment I've been thinking about for years," Barton said.

When the school was first established in 2018 at the invitation of Bishop Michael Olson, it was located at a Terrell Heights property that once housed Our Mother of Mercy Catholic School. A year later, Cristo Rey Fort Worth moved to a

4.47-acre site on Altamesa Boulevard in south Fort Worth.

The student body and the campus continues to grow. This past fall, the campus opened a new STEAM Center with science labs, classrooms, and a theater.

"To see our students walking across college stages to receive their diplomas,

Continued on Page 18



▶ The University of Texas at Arlington graduate Paloma Rojas after receiving a bachelor's degree in business administration, economics, and marketing. (Courtesy photo)

From Page 17

it's hard not to get emotional and feel good about what we do," Barton said. "And we're just getting started."

The school graduated about 50 students in 2022 and now has 320 in four grades, with plans to grow to 400 - 425 students over the next several years.

Cristo Rey Fort Worth is part of the Cristo Rey Network of 41 schools across the country. Most students come from families with modest incomes and are usually the first in their families to attend college.

All students at Cristo Rey Network schools participate in a work-study program to help finance the cost of their education, gain real-world job experience, grow in self-confidence, and better understand the relevance of their education.

Cristo Rey Fort Worth has 75 work-study partners this year. Barton said the goal is to add another 10-15 partners for next year.

Every student takes rigorous college preparatory classes four days a week and works for a partner one day a week. Students are "drafted" by local businesses and organizations who employ them throughout the school year.

SUPPORT THAT LASTS

Several Cristo Rey grads who just received college diplomas credit the school's work-study program, rigorous academics, and strong support network for their success.

Paloma Rojas, 21, who just received a bachelor's degree in business administration, economics, and marketing from the University of Texas at Arlington, said that Cristo Rey's work-study program helped her "explore how it is in a corporate setting."

Rojas worked at law firm Haynes Boone and at accounting and tax services company JTaylor while at Cristo Rey. A mentor at JTaylor helped her discover a career path.

She began her college studies in music management but decided it wasn't the best fit for her. Rojas reached out to her former JTaylor supervisor who connected her with a local marketing CEO to better understand opportunities in marketing with an emphasis on economics, a subject at which she excelled.

This fall, she will begin classes at UTA for a master of science in marketing research, one of the top-ranked programs of its kind.

Rojas said that Cristo Rey counselors

also continued to provide help while she was in college, such as assisting her with filling out financial aid forms.

On the academic side, she said Cristo Rey required students to use a planner, and she's continued that practice in college.

"That's been really useful for me," she said. "It's a simpler way to organize assignments and homework, and you combine it with an app for reminders and appointments."

She said her Cristo Rey experience did a great job preparing her for the future.

"I'd advise other students to take advantage of the resources Cristo Rey provides, like the corporate work-study program," she said. "And reach out for help, if you need extra support."

'A PERFECT FIT'

Amy Arteaga, 22, just completed her bachelor's degree in marketing and graphic design at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, and is working at the Fort Worth Club, which employed her in the work-study program her senior year at Cristo Rey and during the subsequent summers. She is considering future opportunities in marketing for hospitality or retail. Arteaga said Cristo Rey helped her a lot, especially with time management and organization.

"The college preparatory academics are very rigorous," she said. "We'd have eight classes a day where we needed to stay on top of assignments. That prepared me for college."

By comparison, three classes a day seemed easy, and Cristo Rey gave her skills to better manage her time in college.

Arteaga said Cristo Rey helped influence her decision of where to attend college. She looked for a small school because she wanted opportunities to connect with faculty.

"At Cristo Rey, the student-teacher

Cristo Rey graduate Amber Castaneda ►
on the campus of the University of
Richmond in Virginia. (Courtesy photo)

ratio allows for personal connection and attention to growth. I wanted that in college, too,” she said.

She was searching for a small college with strong academics and a beautiful, walkable campus. Once she settled on Augustana College, she learned it was a Cristo Rey partner college, meaning they would provide extra financial aid.

“I think God wanted it to happen,” Arteaga said. “I was the only senior student to come, but since I came, more Cristo Rey students are coming here.”

She also appreciates the presentation skills she gained while in the Cristo Rey work-study program. At the end of every year, students are required to give a presentation to colleagues at their designated workplace.

“It made giving presentations throughout college that much easier,” said the Immaculate Heart of Mary parishioner.

Professors also commended her for professionalism in emails, something she gained in work-study.

She has advice for young students considering Cristo Rey.

“If you’re seeking to discover your personal strengths and find your calling, Cristo Rey would be a perfect fit for you.”

‘INVESTMENT IN MY FUTURE’

Amber Castaneda, 21, just received her bachelor’s degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing and a minor in sociology from the University of Richmond.

She had never been out of Texas when she and her mom visited the University of Richmond campus in Virginia her senior year at Cristo Rey.

Now she’s returning home to Fort Worth for her “dream job” in consumer marketing at GM Financial.

GM Financial employed her in Cristo Rey’s work-study program her junior and senior years and gave her an internship last summer, followed by the full-time job offer.



“It’s something completely different and unexpected compared to what I thought I’d do when I started at Cristo Rey at 14,” Castaneda said. “I knew it was an investment in my future, but it’s something completely different from my peers at other schools.”

At first, she wanted to go into architectural engineering, but a work-study year at an architectural engineering firm showed her that her strengths were more in math than engineering.

Cristo Rey counselors provided plenty of help while Castaneda was in college, from guidance on filling out FAFSA forms to advice on adding a major or minor.

While at the University of Richmond,

Castaneda spent a year studying abroad in Madrid, Spain. She also volunteered at Cristo Rey Richmond and played tour guide when Cristo Rey Fort Worth students visited the campus.

Her advice for graduating high school students is simple.

“I talked to some seniors last week, and I told them to never stop dreaming, as cheesy as that sounds,” Castaneda said.

Cristo Rey also helped her develop perseverance.

Castaneda said, “In college I encountered so many bumps on the road where I thought this was the end of my college journey, but these are little hurdles we can overcome.” 🇺🇸

Golden Milestone

Father Tom Wigginton marks the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination

By Jennifer Johnson

The 50th ordination anniversary is a monumental milestone in the life of a priest.

In Father Tom Wigginton's five decades of pastoral leadership, faith, love, and service, he has left an indelible mark on the lives of parishioners in our diocese.

Although health challenges preclude a big celebration of his golden jubilee, Fr. Wigginton and some cherished friends reflected on the momentous occasion.

Jane Sandoval, director of faith formation at St. Paul the Apostle Parish, worked in the parish office with the priest for many years until his retirement in 2013.

"When my parents were passing, it was 2:30 a.m. and raining. Fr. Tom [Wigginton] got in his car and came to the nursing home to be with them," she recollected. "He said they needed it and that's what we are here for — to serve."

Sandoval emphasized the gift of his willingness to sacrifice a great deal of time and energy for his flock. "He wanted people who were broken to be whole. If he saw a need, he would try to create a program to help them. He would worry about your soul getting to heaven."

His years as a priest give him an insightful nature, she added, describing him as a "lovely man." She added, "He'd see things in me that I didn't see in myself. He would tell me that I had gifts that I don't realize I have to help our church be a better church."

SERVING GOD AND COUNTRY

Born Ellsworth Thomas to Anne and Ellsworth Wigginton on August 1, 1944, Fr. Tom, as he is known, is the oldest of five children raised in Chicago, Illinois. He first thought about becoming a priest at a very young age.

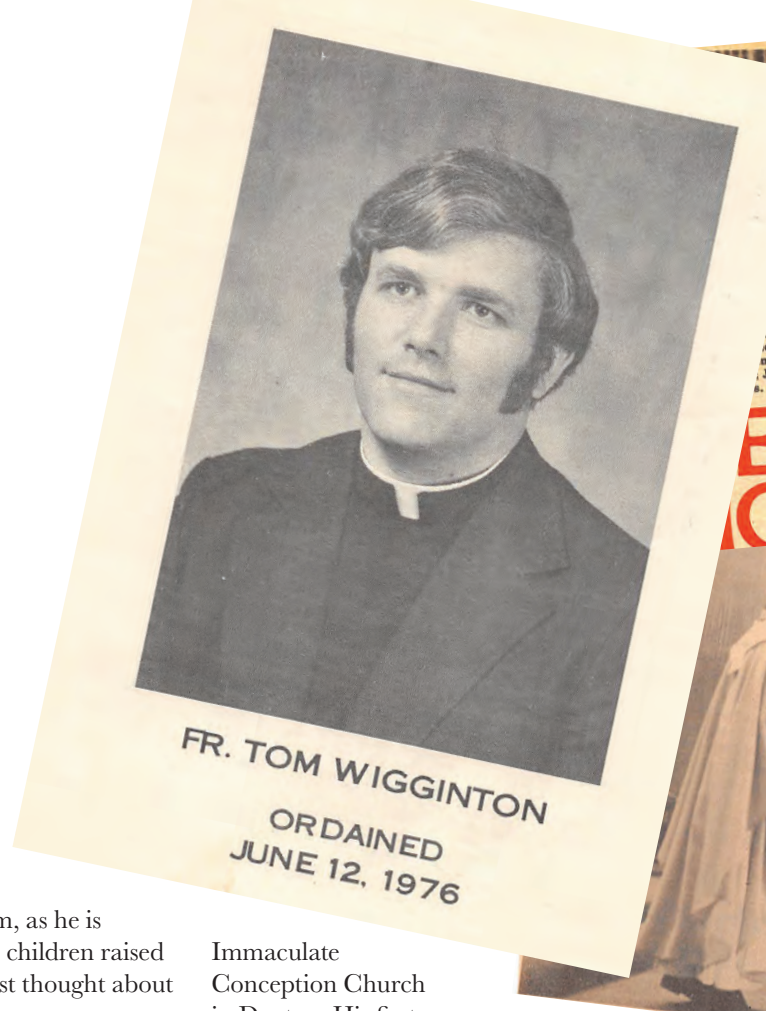
"I was in second grade at St. Leo Elementary School in Chicago and felt called," Fr. Wigginton remembered.

His high school years were split between the St. Augustine Minor Seminary in Holland, Michigan, and Bogan High School in Chicago where he graduated in 1963. Two years later, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and completed basic training in San Antonio. He served as a chaplain's assistant at Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth from 1965-1967, followed by one year on Shemya Island, part of Alaska's Aleutian Islands.

After accepting an early separation from military service, the young Wigginton returned to Fort Worth and began studies for the priesthood. He received an undergraduate degree in humanities from the University of Dallas and Holy Trinity Seminary in Irving in 1973 and then completed a master's degree in divinity from Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, Louisiana.

FIFTY YEARS

Bishop John Cassata ordained Fr. Wigginton as a priest in the Diocese of Fort Worth on June 12, 1976, at



Immaculate Conception Church in Denton. His first assignment was as associate pastor of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills. Three years later, he was named pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Hillsboro.

In 1981, Fr. Wigginton became pastor of Holy Cross Parish in The Colony until he was named parochial vicar of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington in 1990, where he was also a hospital chaplain and involved in federal prison ministry. Three years later, he was appointed pastor of St. Paul Parish, where he remained for 20 years.

Fr. Wigginton served under all four bishops of the diocese since its establishment in 1969: Most Rev. John Cassata (1969-1980), Most Rev. Joseph Delaney (1981-2005), Most Rev. Kevin Vann (2005-2012), and Most Rev. Michael Olson (2014-present). Fr. Wigginton said he felt a special connection to Bishop Cassata, whom he described as "very personal ... like a father to all the priests."

In his free time, the priest often shares his variety of interests with his younger sister, Barbara, including ethnic foods, movies, art, music, traveling, and especially reading.

Ordination to priesthood set for Deacon Thomas Wigginton

DENTON -- Deacon Ellsworth Thomas Wigginton will be ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Fort Worth June 12 by Bishop John J. Cassata.

The ordination will begin at 10:30 a.m. at Immaculate Conception Church, Denton.

Deacon Wigginton is the son of Mrs. Agnes C. Wigginton of Chicago, and the late Ellsworth and Anne Wigginton.

He attended St. Augustine Minor Seminary in Holland, Mi., and graduated from Bogan High School, Chicago. In 1965, he entered the U.S. Air Force, and entered basic training in San Antonio, as a chaplain's assistant. After attending a technical school in Amarillo, he was stationed at Carswell AFB, Fort Worth, until 1967, and in Shemya, Aleutian Islands, Alaska, from 1967-68.

He entered the University of Dallas and Holy Trinity Seminary in 1968, and graduated in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in

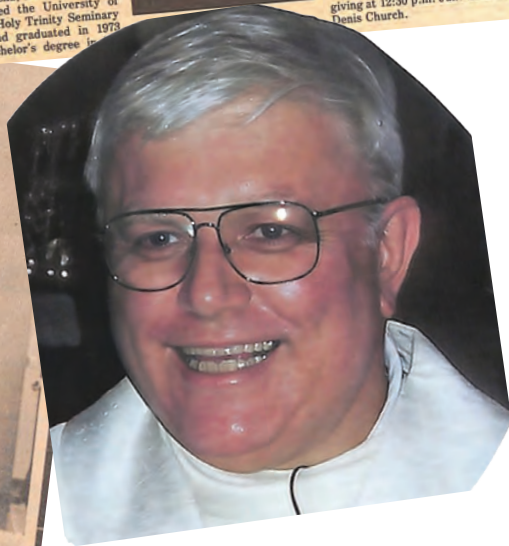
humanities. He completed preparation for the priesthood at Notre Dame Seminary, New Orleans,

and graduated in May with a master of divinity degree.

Deacon Wigginton worked at St. Thomas Church, Fort Worth, and Catholic Charities during the summer of 1974, and as a deacon at Immaculate Conception Church, Denton, during the summer of 1975. He has also assisted as a deacon at St. Agnes Church, Jefferson, La., through his final year in the seminary.

Sister Mary McLarry, SSM, diocesan director of music, and combined groups from the Denton parish community, will provide music for the ordination.

Father Wigginton will celebrate his first Mass of Thanksgiving at 3 p.m. June 13 at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Fort Worth. Father Richard Weaver, St. Pius X Church, Dallas, will be homilist. In Chicago, Father Wigginton will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving at 12:30 p.m. June 20 at St. Denis Church.



"I had a whole series on the lives of the saints," he said. Among his favorites are St. John Vianney, patron saint of parish priests, and St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of Italy, a country he has visited several times.

COMPASSIONATE SHEPHERD

A lifelong parishioner at St. Paul, Dianne Garcia knows Fr. Wigginton through her service in the parish council and various church groups.

She said, "One of the most impressive things about Fr. Tom is that he always wants everyone to have a relationship with our precious Lord," she said. "He wants to instill a love for Jesus in everybody."

By his initiative, St. Paul Parish launched GriefShare, DivorceCare, and other ministries, Garcia recalled. Fr. Wigginton saw these programs as an opportunity to invite others to the parish, regardless of their religious affiliation.

Garcia said she treasured Fr. Wigginton's homilies, his ability to explain the Gospels, and how he always makes himself available if someone wants to talk. "He would take the time to listen. He was very approachable when parishioners had questions," she said. "Fr. Tom doesn't make you feel like it was a dumb question, just one that wasn't answered."

Fr. Wigginton has a fun-loving nature and "loves to laugh," Garcia said. One of her favorite memories includes his clown and puppet ministry, which Fr. Wigginton used to illustrate Jesus' love to the parish youth. "He made a good clown," she insisted. "He was



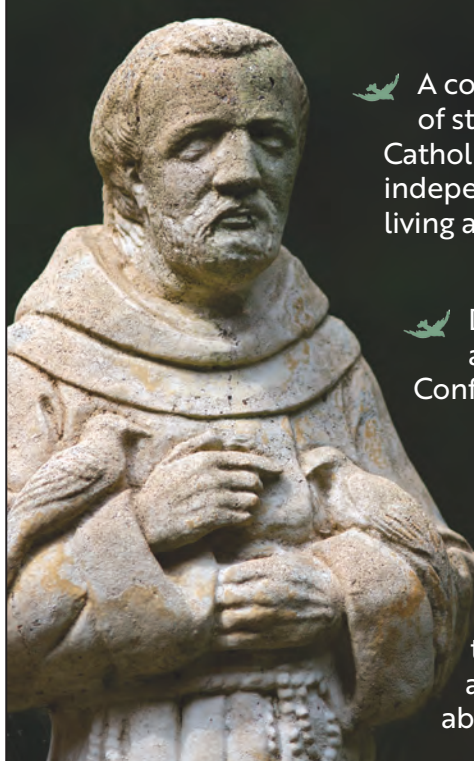
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adorable and loved children. Through that ministry, he would bring the kids to the Lord."

Garcia said parishioners felt seen by Fr. Wigginton. "He is good at shepherding and knowing his people," Garcia said. "He is a very compassionate individual."

Patricia McKeever, administrative assistant at St. Paul, agreed that Fr. Wigginton has a "large personality" and "likes to have fun and joke." She said his warmth and dedication to the parish was most evident.

"You could tell he loved us and wanted to instill faith and service in us," she said. "That's what made us feel like a family here. We all were working toward becoming better and following Christ. That's what he wants for everybody." 🌱



From left: Rev. Thomas Jones, Rev. Joseph Moreno, Rev. Jason Allan, Rev. Linh Nguyen, Rev. Samuel Maul, and Rev. Brett Metzler

On May 22, 2021, six men were ordained priests for the Diocese of Fort Worth. Five years later, they share their memories and experiences.

FATHER LINH NGUYEN

PASTOR OF ST. GEORGE PARISH, FORT WORTH
PREVIOUSLY AT ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON, KELLER



ORDINATION MEMORIES: Our transitional diaconate ordination was at the beginning of COVID. The cathedral was nearly empty. But to have the diocese and everyone come together for our priestly ordination is a moment that has stuck with me.

FUTURE GOALS: Just to continue to remain faithful. It's a blessing to celebrate five years, but one of the biggest struggles and biggest challenges in any priest's life and in their vocation and call is not just to remain faithful, but to remain faithful to the end and to their last breath in service to the Church. It's beautiful that we've hit five years, but five years is going to

be nothing in the grand scheme of God's plan.

PRAYER AND GRATITUDE: I want to thank the people of God for their patience and their love of us as priests. For all those that have been praying for us, continue to keep us in prayer. It's through your love, your prayer, and your support that we can continue to do what we do.

THE REAL PRESENCE: I feel close to God when I get to celebrate the Mass, the Eucharist. It's a moment of meditation and wonder that this all knowing, all present, all powerful God is making Himself known and present at the altar. Through the Eucharist, He makes Himself part of our daily life.

NEXT STEP: This summer, I will begin a three-year program to study liturgy at the Pontifical University in Rome.

FATHER JOSEPH MORENO

PASTOR OF ST. MICHAEL PARISH, BEDFORD
PREVIOUSLY AT ST. JUDE THADDEUS PARISH, BURKBURNETT;
CHRIST THE KING, IOWA PARK; AND ST. PAUL PARISH, ELECTRA



GOD IS NEAR: Especially recently in the sacrament of confession. One particular day I was in there almost three hours and person after person after person had been away from the Church for decades. The Holy Spirit was calling them back, reconciling them to God, reconciling them to His Church, accepting God's divine life within their soul. All of these things that happened in the confessional, it was just amazing.

SUFFERING SOULS: So many people try to carry the cross that God has allowed them to carry, and they don't realize that

they are not big enough to carry it on their own. Christ is supposed to be carrying it with them on another side.

BIG, BEAUTIFUL FAMILIES: Big Catholic families are the happiest families I've encountered over the last five years. Lots of children truly are a gift from God. I wish that more people would be open to that.

STATUS CHECK: The priesthood is more fulfilling than I ever dreamed it would be, the most fulfilling thing I've ever done in my life. There are ups and downs even in the priesthood, but, even in the worst days that you have, the fact that you are a priest called by God, configured to Jesus Christ, serving, through the Holy Spirit, the people of God is absolutely amazing. Remembering that is enough to take you through whatever it is that you're going through.

FATHER BRETT METZLER

VOCATIONS DIRECTOR
CHAPLAIN, NOLAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



SOURCES OF STRENGTH: Holy hour has been essential. In that intimate time with the Lord each day, He does speak directly to your ministry and offer a lot of words of encouragement, helps reframe things that are difficult or when you experience discouragement.

The brotherhood of priests has been extremely helpful. I feel like I can go to any of the priests in our diocese for support. As soon as we entered into the presbyterate and got ordained, all of a sudden every other priest was also our brother.

FAVORITE TIMES: All of the things that are most essentially priesthood: working with people, walking with people. Offering people the sacraments, the Mass, anointing people. I really like being in the people business.

LABORERS FOR THE HARVEST: We need more priests. The amount of growth that's happening, the amount of people that are coming here — there's such a demand for sacraments, for the Church, for priests. Not to mention all the people who are converting.

THE NEXT FIVE: I would like to get holier, and I would like to continue to deepen my trust of the Lord and what He's doing. It really is Jesus' ministry, and He's the one who bears fruit through us.

FATHER SAMUEL MAUL

PASTOR OF ST. MARIA GORETTI PARISH, ARLINGTON
PREVIOUSLY AT ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE PARISH, NORTH
RICHLAND HILLS



PRIESTLY BLESSINGS: Intrigue about the Blessed Sacrament is what started my journey toward the priesthood, was reaffirmed in seminary, and is the backbone of my life and my devotion to the Lord. Attending to Him who attends to us.

GROWING GOALS: The prayer that I pray every day is that I get out of the Holy Spirit's way.

The best priest is one who becomes a vessel and pours out what it is that he has received, not one who stands above all and says, "Look at all that I have."

I want to allow the Holy Spirit to first form my heart all the more perfectly to love more perfectly, to sacrifice myself more, and to become a worthy instrument of Christ's ministry.

Over the next five years, I hope I don't grow in the opposite direction, saying, "Oh, look at all these tasks I've accomplished or all these new skills," but instead "How wonderful it is that the Lord has become more present in my life."

MAY 22, 2021: Beforehand, the six of us were sitting there and talking and trying to keep our cool and build each other up. During the Kyrie everything hit. Asking the Lord for His mercy is the stance of every priest throughout the entirety of the Mass. Christ have mercy on me for entering into this life. Asking the Lord for His love and His mercy to carry me through.

Continued on Page 24

The six priests lay prostrate at their May 22, 2021, ordination at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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FATHER THOMAS JONES

PASTOR OF IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY PARISH, ABBOTT;
NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY PARISH, PENELOPE
PREVIOUSLY AT ST. JUDE PARISH, MANSFIELD



all the presbyterate, even guys from different religious orders, God put us here for the same reason. There is something similar to the camaraderie of the military. We have an unspoken bond with every other priest, throughout the world and all history. Our mission is to shepherd souls to heaven.

HUMAN NATURE: I'm an introvert and I worked on computers in the military — which doesn't lend itself to building relationships, at least not easily. However, pastoral work is all about building relationships, with a lot of people, and this is what Christ has called me to. Building relationships and communicating well is not just necessary for my vocation, it is critical for living life and being an adult human being.

BROTHERS AND FATHERS: The six of us didn't start at the same time, but we all finished at the same time. As with

GOD'S PRESENCE: I experience God most closely in the Eucharist. It is the sacrament of His Sacred Heart upon the cross. I know He is also there for us when we are suffering, whether in mind or in body, in the confessional or in the hospital. I feel most like a priest when I am able to help someone in a dark place, to give that person peace or perspective, to see that spark of hope, or the weight of sin lifted in the confessional.

NOT ME: It's not about me. I am not the source of salvation for anyone. I point the way to Christ and His saving power.

FATHER JASON ALLAN

PASTOR OF ST. THOMAS THE AQUINAS PARISH, PILOT POINT
PREVIOUSLY AT IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH, DENTON



through the Eucharist and the other sacraments, I can especially see that role as a father providing for his children. Then also whenever people come with complaints or demands, I get to see that aspect of being a parent as well.

MAY 22, 2021: Having grown up at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Keller, I had served at Mass in every capacity: altar server, lector, acolyte, deacon. But at my first Mass that evening of the ordination, I was at the back of the procession, then standing behind the center of the altar. It was pretty powerful.

FATHER FIGURE: Whenever someone comes, especially with a struggle in their life, and wanting to seek advice or guidance, my fatherly role is definitely noticeable in those moments. Being the one to feed and provide to people spiritually

REWARDING MOMENTS: Sick calls continue to be an impactful moment for ministry.

And now being at St. Thomas and only at St. Thomas, it's really enabled me to know the parishioners better and be a part of their lives. There have been some great moments accompanying people on their journey through life.

GOD'S GRACE: I see God's grace when people are experiencing some difficulty, sickness, or death in their life or their loved ones, the daily hardships that everyone experiences. I see them carry their cross and I try to help them carry it. 🙏



Case managers Nadia Lalani, at left, and Stefany Maldonado help clients of Catholic Charities Fort Worth achieve a better future. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Front-line Strategies

By Mary Lou Seewoester

Case managers at Catholic Charities Fort Worth are the faces, hands, and feet of the agency's long-term case management programs. They do more listening than talking. They ask questions and listen to what clients want and need to achieve their "bigger, brighter future," explained Stefany Maldonado, case manager for Padua, CCFW's long-term case-management program.

"We use respectful curiosity," she said. "Instead of telling clients what they need to change, we use open-ended and interested questions."

"We don't give answers," she continued. "We allow them to choose what they need to do. If they get stuck, we can offer options."

Padua Case Manager Nadia Lalani said CCFW's long-term case management is both holistic and client-led. She said holistic case management goes far beyond financial needs.

"We're not just giving them one-time financial assistance for rent and then saying goodbye. This is not that kind of program,"

she said. "This program provides the opportunity to work with clients in a deeper manner."

The "client-led" aspect of Padua "is building rapport and trust, learning about the person, following their lead, and allowing them to take this journey at their pace," Maldonado explained.

Lalani said, "It takes as long as it takes. Some are in the program six months ... some for three years. People come with different goals. It takes time to reach those goals."

In addition to being holistic and client-led, Padua also is research-based. Research shows that Padua clients are 25 percent more likely to achieve full-time employment and earn a 46 percent higher income. Unhoused clients are 64 percent more likely to secure stable housing. That research now benefits all CCFW long-term case management programs.

Padua Program Manager Melissa Toro said, "Research and insights gained from Padua have been integrated throughout our programs and services, so this approach is not unique to Padua but reflects how CCFW delivers care more broadly."

Because CCFW's long-term programs

offer lower caseloads, a caseworker to assist the case manager with resource connections, and flexible strategic financial assistance, case managers have time and resources to guide clients toward financial and emotional resilience.

"We do that by not doing it all for them," Maldonado said. "We want them to build those skills so if they're ever in that situation again, they know what steps to take."

Maldonado explained clients often are in crisis when they begin case management, so coaching for emotional resilience requires a safe, nonjudgmental relationship. With trust and rapport, she sees their executive function begin to evolve.

"They start to think in a manner which helps them make better decisions for themselves," Lalani noted.

"We say in Padua that our clients are 'resourceful, resilient, and creative,'" Maldonado concluded. "They are all resilient in some way — so we just have to bring it out." 🇺🇸

Volunteer at, contribute to, or learn more about Catholic Charities Fort Worth by visiting CatholicCharitiesFortWorth.org



Called to the Truth

Recent confirmands reveal the sacraments and teachings that led them to the Catholic faith

By Lisa Moore

Sometimes it's too easy to take for granted something that's been around for 2,000 years, but talking to any newly confirmed Catholic, the beauty and gift that is the Catholic Church will reveal itself in profound and new ways every time.

In recent years, the Diocese of Fort Worth has seen increasing numbers enter the Church at the Easter Vigil, including more than 1,700 this April.

A few recent confirmands spoke with *North Texas Catholic* about the sacraments and teachings that drew them to the Church, and the commonly held

misconceptions that kept them from entering sooner.

"WHAT WILL PEOPLE THINK?"

Palens Pacius began attending Mass at the age of 8 with his aunt in Florida after immigrating from Haiti in 2001. He became involved in Protestant services in college and found himself immersed in a "very anti-Catholic" tradition.

After completing his degree to become a high school teacher in 2019, Pacius came to Texas and found a Protestant church that eventually asked him to leave "because of sin." After watching documentaries on the early Church and noting the connection to Catholicism, he enrolled in

OCIA at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington.

"I was yearning for something sacred," he said. "The more I stayed, the more I realized, 'I believe this. I can't go back to what I was doing before.'"

Coming from a "Bible only" tradition, Pacius came to realize, "Tradition is good when it is aligned with what God is saying." Like many former Protestants, he found relief no longer having to interpret Scripture on his own.

He explained, "[The Church] has been around for 2,000 years. Who am I to [question this]? I can be assured that God will take care of His Church. The Holy Spirit is able to bring the Church through time to 2026. I could relax. I felt like I

After researching the early Church, Palens Pacius decided to join the Catholic Church at St. Joseph Church in Arlington.
(NTC/Kevin Bartram)



didn't have to make my own meaning. The hard work was done for me."

The liturgical calendar was another welcome difference, he noted, allowing him to discover his patron saint and role model, St. Charles Lwanga.

The biggest difference for Pacius is the sacrament of reconciliation. "I was so anxious. In the gentleness of the priest, I realized, 'That's Christ.' The Church provides the sacraments for me, not to keep me away. So daily I'm saying, 'God, I want to choose holiness, even though it seems hard.' Of course I can ask God to help me love Him more. Christ is there to clean me up. If I do what the Church says in her wisdom, [come] Sunday, I could take Communion," he said.

Initially worried about what others would think, Pacius now proudly wears religious medals and crosses himself in public.

PROVE ME WRONG

Erynn Williams-Reed and Chance Reed grew up together in nondenominational traditions. Married for two years, Williams-Reed, a pediatric nurse, and Reed, a police officer, both wanted a Christian household for their future children, but couldn't find a church.

They found implementing their own practices difficult. "We tried sitting down to read the Bible together once a week, but nothing stuck," she said. "We didn't feel closeness with God or the foundation of our marriage like I envisioned. I felt lost, like something's not there that needs to be."

Williams-Reed started investigating Catholicism after social media posts kept appearing in her feed.

"In looking for confirmation that Catholics were wrong, I ended up becoming Catholic," she said.

She phoned St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Pilot Point, "accidentally" signing up for OCIA. She then told her husband, who accepted it as another opportunity to bond with his wife.

"Let's do this together," he told her. "I'd been wanting to seek a relationship [with God] and never had the opportunity."

Misinterpretations that held them back, like venerating Mary or not realizing



After searching for reasons to disprove Catholicism, Erynn Williams-Reed and Chance Reed enrolled in OCIA at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Pilot Point, where they are now parishioners. (Courtesy/Erynn Williams-Reed)

how much Scripture was read in Mass, were steadily dispelled.

"Do the research," she said.

"Everything I had been told was either a complete misinterpretation or not true at all. There's a reason behind everything, and we're not just mindlessly doing it."

What started as an "experiment" became "instrumental" to their marriage.

"This process gave me everything I wanted for our marriage," she said. "We're openly talking about God all the time. Learning how to pray the Rosary together in the evenings — that's the fulfillment I needed and really strengthened our marriage. It's changed our mindsets, the dynamic of daily life, and praying. I'm excited that this is what I get to bring my kids up in — that tangible feeling of God present in our lives."

TANDEM JOURNEYS

Cory Dalton, a lawyer for Nissan, was raised Lutheran and fell away during

college. When his history major led him to research Church history, he found himself questioning denominational authority.

"There was no way to tell between all the different Protestant groups," he said. "You'd ask one group the same question and get completely different answers. Jesus founded the Catholic Church and He gave that authority to the Apostles [which is] passed down today. [Otherwise,] you could spend your whole life researching every single theological issue, which seemed an impossible task."

He enrolled in OCIA after attending a few Masses at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine, where he met Meagan, now his fiancée. He was confirmed Easter 2025 and she in 2026.

"For the entirety of our relationship, we've been on this journey together," he said. "We've tried to make it the basis of what we do. If it's a big part of each of our lives — for the relationship to work, it should be a big part of our joint life." 🇺🇸

REPURPOSED TREASURES

Two sacred items, each created more than a century ago, find a new life but maintain their original mission: to draw people closer to Christ

By Christina Benavides

Countless treasures of the Church's history have been lost to time. Yet sometimes sacred art and structures are rediscovered, inspiring the faithful to give these holy objects new life.

Such is the case at St. Michael Parish in Bedford and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, where

antique items have found a new home while retaining a mission to draw people closer to Christ. Though separated by miles and history, both projects reflect a common desire: to preserve sacred objects not as museum pieces, but as instruments of evangelization for future generations.

SEAT OF MERCY

God's timing is evident in Bedford, where the faithful of St. Michael Parish will soon see an old confessional restored and repurposed as a reliquary for a first-class relic of St. Maximilian Kolbe.

The confessional, donated to the church by parishioners who own a moving company, originated in Puebla, Mexico, and is believed to be more than a century old. The large wooden structure features a central seat for a small priest and screened windows on either side where penitents may kneel and confess their sins.

Father Joseph Moreno noted that a curtain was sometimes drawn around the priest's seat to provide additional privacy during the sacrament of reconciliation.

On a pilgrimage to Poland, Fr. Moreno received a first-class relic of the Polish saint while visiting Niepokalanów, the Franciscan Monastery that Kolbe founded in 1927.

Upon his return, he learned of the unusual donation, and "it all started falling together," Fr. Moreno said, adding the timing gave him "the idea to turn [the confessional] into a little shrine display case, so to speak."

Because the confessional's size

and age no longer make it practical for its original use, the pastor hopes "to put the confessional back in service — this time as a relic shrine."

The relic is strands of hair from the Franciscan priest and martyr.

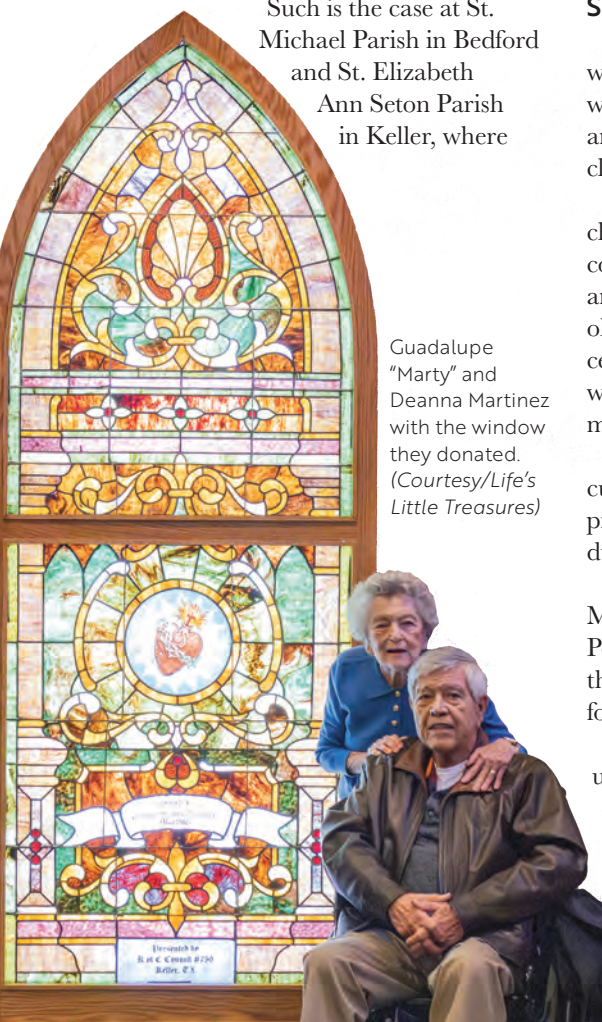
"The strands of his hair are the only thing that is left of Maximilian Kolbe," Fr. Moreno explained. "When the Nazis killed him in Auschwitz, they knew he was going to be a saint. They didn't want him to be venerated, so they burned his body and threw the ashes into the nearby river. They didn't know that while he was in the monastery, a monk that was cutting his hair and trimming his beard was keeping the clippings."

With some sanding and the addition of shelves to hold the relic and its accompanying documentation, the repurposed confessional will make an ideal shrine, Fr. Moreno said.

Although work has stalled while the parish searches for a skilled volunteer to complete the refurbishment, he hopes the shrine will be finished in time for the feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe on Aug. 14.

For now, the confessional remains in the parish chapel, where Fr. Moreno believes it can "really enhance [his parishioners'] prayer life, especially those who are going through really tough situations. I mean, St. Maximilian Kolbe saw the Nazis invade ... but he kept the faith and he lifted the spirits of others around him."

Fr. Moreno said he hopes Kolbe's witness will inspire parishioners to persevere in faith and prayer, "regardless of what



Guadalupe "Marty" and Deanna Martinez with the window they donated. (Courtesy/Life's Little Treasures)



NTC/Kevin Bartram

Father Joseph Moreno holds an icon of St. Maximilian Kolbe outside the confessional, which he plans to convert into a shrine for the saint.

their situation is, especially when it seems hopeless.”

Reflecting on the project and how “it just kind of fell in our laps,” Fr. Moreno said, “God just gives it to us sometimes.”

RESTORING A SACRED HE(ART)

Catholic youth attending The Pines Catholic Camp in East Texas this summer will have a new opportunity to deepen their devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

As campers enter the dining hall, they will notice a striking new addition: a large stained-glass window of the Sacred Heart housed in a nearly 10-foot-tall wooden display case illuminated with LED lighting.

“The majority will look up and wonder what exactly it is,” quipped Omar Holguin of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. The past Grand Knight of Knights of Columbus Council 759 led the restoration of the antique window, a project

introduced to the council in 2024 by Holguin’s fellow Knight and friend of 73 years, Guadalupe “Marty” Martinez.

The undertaking was a dream on hold for more than 30 years, Holguin explained. Martinez purchased the former chapel window from Our Lady of Victory College and Academy in Fort Worth at a 1991 auction and stored it in his garage for decades.

“My intention was to help out the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur when I bought the window,” Martinez told the *North Texas Catholic*.

Martinez entrusted what Holguin described as “the meaningful piece of art” to Council 759, whose members quickly began raising funds and commissioned its restoration by a local stained-glass specialist. “It didn’t take us long to realize that restoring a Sacred Heart of Jesus stained-glass window wasn’t going to be a small

feat — it’s both a preservation of history and a labor of devotion,” Holguin said.

The process took a year and a half to complete, and the final product was displayed at their home parish in December 2025 where its “beauty impressed and amazed all who entered,” Holguin said. After its transfer to the Catholic camp in Big Sandy, it was securely installed to inspire generations of campers.

“For some, it may just be stained glass,” Holguin admitted, “but what I hope is once they get over the initial shock of that big thing there in the dining room, I hope they will make a Sign of the Cross and pray to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”

Along with a \$1,000 donation to the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, the Knights council placed a plaque beside the window honoring Martinez and his wife, Deanna, thanking them “for giving us the responsibility and trust.” 🇺🇸



Nolan Catholic High School teacher and soccer coach Lauren Sajewich poses with student athletes after practice on June 10. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

The Beautiful Game

Aficionados explore commonalities
between soccer and the Catholic faith

By John English

When the previous World Cup began in June of 2022, Pope Francis hoped it would be a way to unite people and foster goodwill among nations.

“May this important event be an occasion of encounter and harmony among nations and may it promote fraternity and peace among peoples,” Pope Francis said.

When his home country of Argentina eventually defeated France to win the championship match, his response was humble and measured.

“Bless God,” were his only words.

The former pontiff understood how important the sport of soccer/football is to millions of people around the world and that while his fellow countrymen were celebrating in the streets, many, many more people felt disappointed.

As people around the world revel in the 2026 World Cup hosted in North America, properties and virtues of “the beautiful game” will be on full display.

But perhaps a subtler, less obvious phenomenon is the parallels between World Cup soccer and the Catholic faith itself.

WORKING AS A TEAM

Lauren Sajewich, a theology teacher and soccer coach at Nolan Catholic High

School, started playing the sport at the age of 5.

Growing up in suburban Chicago, Sajewich would eventually play college soccer at Texas Christian University and said the similarities between soccer and Catholicism are some of her favorite topics of discussion.

“Soccer is a team sport, and Catholicism is a body, specifically the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ here on Earth,” Sajewich said. “Just like a team is made of many positions and strengths, so is the Church dependent on its members to faithfully contribute to the whole with their abilities and strengths. With all of our strengths also come weaknesses. The beauty of soccer is you get to see both in a

team of players.”

Sajewich said Catholicism also brings out both strength and weakness in each of its individual members.

“In the pursuit of holiness, all of our shortcomings and faults will be realized,” Sajewich said. “In the pursuit of excellence on the field and off the field, the same will occur. With the pursuit of excellence and holiness comes the development of many virtues.”

Two of her favorite virtues, humility and magnanimity, are especially pertinent to the sport of soccer.

“The physical demand of soccer opens the door to big-heartedness, which is magnanimity, because it asks a lot physically of an individual but also a spirit of loving sacrifice,” Sajewich said. “To chase a ball down after a teammate loses it. To make a mistake and make the gut-busting run to get back in position. These are opportunities soccer gives to build virtue, in addition to the relationships that are formed in the highs and lows of the game, much like the people that are there for you when you experience the highs and lows of your faith.”

A member of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, Sajewich believes what makes the World Cup such an appealing event for so many people is that it gives them something to root for and something to belong to that is bigger than them.

“We have such a deep longing as human beings to belong to something bigger than ourselves, which is a longing that can only really be fulfilled in the Trinitarian life of God,” Sajewich said. “St. Augustine says, ‘You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.’ The community of love that is the three persons of the Trinity is always inviting us to be more deeply in relationship and communion with others here in this world as well, which is what people are looking for and why I think the World Cup is so appealing — besides, of course, being the best game in the world.”



Lauren Sajewich leads soccer practice on June 10. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

LIFE LESSONS

Yasmin Cuevas, director of religious education at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in White Settlement, organizes a parish youth league soccer team and integrates faith elements such as prayer before and after games.

Cuevas took that approach to the game to reinforce a notable life lesson.

“It’s important to show the teens to bring God to the field,” Cuevas said. “To include Him in everything that we do.”

Cuevas said her players are excited about the World Cup, and she hopes her students understand how their faith and their favorite sport complement each other.

“They both create a community,” Cuevas said. “They bring people together and provide a sense of belonging, purpose, and identity. Both environments foster a sense of being part of something bigger than oneself; both players and the laity work together for the common good. It unites people of diverse backgrounds; it brings families together — it’s shared from generation to generation.”

BODY, MIND, AND SOUL

Javier Escutia, a seminarian who just completed his pastoral year at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield, said the 2014 World Cup is when his passion for the sport really began to blossom.

“As a child, my father tried to teach me how to play soccer, but I did not really find it interesting,” Escutia said. “But

after watching that World Cup, I began to follow, learn, and play the sport.”

Escutia, who is studying theology at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio and will likely be ordained a transitional deacon in the spring of 2027 and a priest in the spring of 2028, said what makes the World Cup such an important event is that it is the “world’s” competition.

“It is larger than the Olympics,”

Escutia said. “Soccer is the world’s sport, which means the entire world is watching it, especially the final.”

Escutia said besides the excitement of the tournament itself, the World Cup truly embodies the principles of Catholic social teachings and provides economic opportunities in ways that make the event valuable to everyone.

“The World Cup raises awareness about immigration, poverty, racism, social justice, just living conditions, just working conditions, and civil rights,” Escutia said.

“The World Cup, again, brings unity and peace, which the Church actively promotes,” Escutia said. “And the Church recognizes the value of the sport. In fact, popes, including the late Pope Francis, who was an avid soccer fan, often spoke about the importance and value of the sport.”

“He always promoted it as a sign of unity and peace, encouraged soccer players to work well for the good of the world, and emphasized the benefits of the sport, such as working the body, mind, and soul.” 🇺🇸



Liv

Catholic school educator brings historical figures alive in his reenactments and his books

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

As the United States prepares to celebrate the 250th anniversary of its independence, there's one retired Catholic school teacher who wants Americans to remember the patriotism, courage, and tenacity of the revolutionaries who made it possible.

"I'm alarmed we don't spend more time teaching the history of our country," said Jack Crowder, a former educator at St. Andrew Catholic School and Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth. "So many times we gloss over the American Revolution. I think it's important to know the sacrifices people made back then even though the odds were against them."

After the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776,

Jack Crowder, a retired educator at St. Andrew Catholic School and Nolan Catholic High School, researches, writes, and makes in-character presentations about the Revolutionary War. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ing History

56 delegates signed the embossed document that declared the 13 American colonies were now “free and independent states,” and no longer under British rule.

“Sometimes teachers get too involved in details that are not important,” stressed the 82-year-old. “They get worked up over battles and dates rather than what is really consequential or what the Declaration of Independence really means.”

A graduate of Texas Christian University with a master’s degree in school administration, the St. Andrew parishioner served as principal of the parish school and then academic dean at Nolan for 10 years before returning to the classroom.

As for his own student years, “I enjoyed reading history, especially books about Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, and George Washington,” Crowder enthused. “Other than that, I hated school except for sports.”

Two influential teachers — one in high school and the other in college — were so enthusiastic about their profession, they inspired him to become an educator.

DEDICATED TO HISTORY

Since retiring from full-time work in 2009, Crowder has written 13 books on Revolutionary War history and makes in-character presentations to schools and organizations based on the lives of six men instrumental to American independence. Most people have a passing knowledge of George Washington, Paul Revere, Benedict Arnold, Nathanael Greene, and Francis Marion, but the sixth citizen soldier has a personal connection to the speaker.

“Matthew David Scott from Virginia is my fourth great-grandfather who served three years under General Washington as a sergeant at Valley Forge,” disclosed Crowder, who discovered the ancestor

thanks to a cousin’s genealogy research. “I don’t have battle stories, but I know where he served and have a copy of his discharge papers signed by General Washington and pay records from Valley Forge.”

During his 90-minute talks, designed using an interview format, the self-described storyteller answers a variety of questions without the help of notes. His wife, Peggy, a second-grade teacher at St. Andrew Catholic School for 40 years, helps with the program.

“I memorize 24 pages of dialogue and have to know the characters pretty well,” Crowder said, explaining audiences like to learn unknown facts about their heroes. “I get into things people wouldn’t find out in a general history class.”

The realistic period garments he wears enhance believability and help bring out a character’s personality. For example, Benedict Arnold walked with a limp. To impersonate him, Crowder places a rock in his boot so he falters a bit while pacing in front of his listeners.

Americans are familiar with the notorious traitor, but there is more to the turncoat’s story than most people realize, the historian is quick to point out.

“At the Battle of Saratoga, we defeated the British strictly because of Benedict Arnold’s leadership. He took over field command and turned the tide in our favor,” Crowder explained. “After that, the French came in on our side. He saved the revolution for us but is remembered only as a traitor.”

At the end of his presentation, the lifelong Fort Worth resident asks the audience to judge Arnold on the entirety of his service. Most vote to hang him.

A FOUNDING FATHER

Another historic figure popular with the public is Founding Father George

Washington. Because America’s first president was known for powdering his hair, Crowder dons a white wig to portray the military hero.

He’s less successful recreating Washington’s 6’2” height and physically imposing stature. Most men at the time measured no taller than 5’7”.

“He was very strong with large hands and feet,” said the author of the book “So You Think You Know George Washington? Stories They Didn’t Tell You in School!” “He was a powerful man, and I give examples of his strength in my portrayal.”

Washington was also an enthusiastic dancer and experienced at least two rejected marriage proposals. His eventual union with Martha Custis, the wealthiest widow in Virginia, was initially a marriage of convenience.

“He married her for her money and social standing, and she needed someone to look over her property,” Crowder said. “But it grew into a deep romance. Washington called Martha his ‘dearest patsy.’”

The father of our country was also a slave owner — something he later regretted and opposed privately. In his will, Washington ordered the freedom of the enslaved people he owned and provided for their care and education.

The misdeeds of some of the Founding Fathers are truths you can’t overlook, Crowder admitted, but they’re often viewed from a modern perspective.

“People look at our Founding Fathers, see their warts, and want to condemn them,” the seasoned educator continued. “They lived in a different time with different moral standards. We should judge them by the completeness of their lives and not some incident or belief you don’t agree with.” 🇺🇸

THE LONE CATHOLIC REBEL

Charles Carroll of Carrollton was the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence

By Sean M. Wright

During this Semiquincentennial — the official way of saying “250th” — anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, it is fitting to realize that one solitary Catholic was allowed to sign that crucial document. His activities both before and after that event were as momentous as any other of the Founding Fathers but few know his name any longer.

The apostolic endeavors of missionaries accompanying French, Spanish, and Portuguese explorers graced the New World. In the 1500s the Catholic faith found a permanent home in the southern regions of what became the United States. Not so in the mid-Atlantic colonies of New England and New Amsterdam. No Catholic crew sailed the ocean blue in the English ship “Mayflower” or in the Dutch ship “Fortune.”

The Church of England was established in Virginia and elsewhere whilst dissenters, such as Congregationalists and Presbyterians, established themselves in other colonies. All had laws, more-or-less enforced, barring Catholics from being educated, voting, holding office, practicing law, or engaging in public worship. Pennsylvania alone, founded by peace-loving Quakers, allowed Catholics to build chapels without hindrance.

A PLACE FOR CATHOLICS

King Charles I granted a proprietary colony in 1632 to George Calvert, the 1st Baron Baltimore, as a refuge for Catholic settlers. Called Maryland, it ostensibly honored Henrietta Maria, Charles’ queen consort. Purchasing land from the Yaocomico Indians — no “stolen land” here — Cecil Calvert, the 2nd Baron Baltimore, established what became the colony’s first capital, St. Mary’s City, demonstrating that the colony was really named for the Mother of God.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was openly celebrated for the first time in an English colony on the Feast of the Assumption, March 25, 1634, the day on which the ships “The Ark” and “The Dove” landed. It is annually celebrated by the state as Maryland Day.

The Maryland Toleration Act allowed anyone who believed in Jesus Christ to settle there. Taking advantage, Puritan rebels seized the colonial government in 1650, burning churches and persecuting Catholics. The Calvert family regained control, ousting the Puritans in 1658.

THE CARROLLS ARRIVE

In 1689 the first Charles Carroll arrived from Ireland bearing a commission from Baron Baltimore appointing

him attorney general. In 1691 the joint monarchs, William and Mary, removed the Calverts as proprietors. Refusing to renounce his faith, Carroll was stripped of his position and imprisoned for a time.

Carroll married the wealthy Mary Darnall in 1693 and cannily began acquiring land. By the time he died in 1720, he was considered the colony’s wealthiest landowner. He welcomed Catholics to his home each Sunday for Mass, since while seeking “to prevent the growth of Popery in this Province,” an act of 1704 banned public worship but allowed Mass in private.

Born in 1702, Charles Carroll of Annapolis inherited and extended his father’s fortune, primarily by growing tobacco and raising thoroughbred horses. As a Catholic, he was forbidden participation in Maryland politics, yet the second Charles, along with his wife, the former Elizabeth Brooke, continued his father’s work to curb anti-Catholic hatred and promote the faith. They lived to see their son eventually secure “his family’s vision of personal, political, and religious freedoms for all citizens” before, during, and after the Revolutionary War.

A FOUNDING FATHER

That son was Charles Carroll, born in Annapolis in 1737. He adopted the

sobriquet “of Carrollton” primarily to distinguish himself from his father, after accepting a gift from his father of a 10,000-acre estate called Carrollton upon his graduation from university.

Topflight education was important to the Carrolls. At the age of 10, Charles was sent to secretly study at Bohemia Manor, the clandestine Jesuit school in Maryland. His cousin, John Carroll, destined to become the first archbishop of Baltimore, was a fellow student. Both continued their studies with the Jesuits in Europe. Charles considered his Jesuit education “the most vital component of his spiritual life and successful civic career.”

Says the *Catholic Encyclopedia*: “In later days he spoke in highest praise of the training he received at St-Omer [Flanders] and the College Louis le Grand [Paris]. To the former he owed his deep conviction of religious truth, and to the latter his critical ability, his literary style, and the basis for the breadth of knowledge which made him an invaluable citizen.”

Charles went on to study law within the exclusive Inner Temple in London before returning to Maryland to wed his cousin, Mary “Molly” Darnall, in 1768. They had seven children, only three of whom survived into adulthood, including a fourth Charles Carroll.

The Carrolls’ personal fortune at this time was some £2.1 million sterling, equivalent to about \$375 million today. Welcoming such dignitaries as John Hancock, George Washington, and the Marquis de Lafayette, their home, Doughoregan Manor, and its grounds were the scenes for many social events, “humble feasts,” and after-the-races dinners.

GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE

Yet bitterness with George III’s policies grew. Charles staunchly supported colonist demands that their rights be respected by the king, despite his being the wealthiest man in the colonies and thus the man with the most to lose should there be any retaliation from London. In 1770, when the colony’s governor imposed a fee by proclamation, Charles defended Marylanders’ right to tax themselves by representative government.

Beginning with a series of articles

appearing in the *Maryland Gazette*, Charles gained a reputation as a thoughtful scholar and skillful debater, “embracing the principle that the people are the true foundation of government.” After being appointed to the Annapolis Committee of Correspondence and Council of Safety in 1774, Charles Carroll was elected to the 2nd Maryland Convention, effectually ending the ban on Catholics serving in Maryland politics.

In 1775, Charles was elected one of four Maryland delegates to the Second Continental Congress. Early in 1776,

Charles, along with Samuel Chase, Benjamin Franklin, and the now-ordained Father John Carroll, were appointed as commissioners to Canada but failed to gain that colony’s support in the growing conflict with Great Britain.

With Chase, Charles persuaded the Maryland Assembly to instruct them to vote in favor of independence. Despite the importance of the date July 4, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, together with many other delegates, did not sign the

Continued on Page 36



“Charles Carroll of Carrollton,” by Joshua Reynolds, c. 1763

Charles Carroll of Carrollton

From Page 35

Declaration until August 2, 1776.

Charles took part in the formation of Maryland's new government, helping write its first State Constitution and Declaration of Rights in 1776. He served in the Maryland Senate in 1777, being elected president of the Senate in 1783.

Another of Charles' cousins, Daniel Carroll, was active in Philadelphia, assisting in framing the United States Constitution, specifically the 10th Amendment.

In 1789, Charles became one of

Maryland's first two senators of the new Republic.

THE LAST SURVIVING SIGNER

Through his efforts as city alderman and councilman, St. Mary's, the first sanctioned Catholic church in Annapolis, was erected on the Carroll property in 1822.

Charles was of two minds when it came to slavery. He had inherited 400-500 Black slaves, needing them for his crops. Yet, knowing persecution as a Catholic, he realized that all men bore the image and likeness of God. He became president of the American Colonization Society

(1828-1831) seeking to solve America's slave problem by humanely resettling them in what would become Liberia.

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the American Republic. On November 14, 1832, Charles Carroll of Carrollton died, a true statesman and public benefactor. He was the last surviving signer of that powerful document proclaiming liberty to all men "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

World without end, Amen. 🇺🇸

For the Ones You Love Most

During this Make-A-Will-Month, join thousands of individuals who are making a lasting difference for their loved ones and their parishes and Catholic ministries throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth. Create a plan now for your future at no cost.



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Some assembly required

Have you ever assembled IKEA furniture? This excruciating endeavor can be done in a few ways: follow the instructions, watch YouTube, or wing it.

Same thing with learning to cook, play a sport, or knit. But sadly, with the most important project in our lives, we often just fly by the seat of our pants.

Becoming a fully functioning adult follower of Jesus Christ as an integrated human person with a deep spirituality, an expansive intellectual capacity, and an impactful pastoral ministry rarely just happens.

The Church follows these four dimensions for the formation of priests, deacons, and those in religious life.

Put succinctly, the four dimensions are: Human — who you are; spiritual — your relationship with God; intellectual — what you know about what you believe; and pastoral — how you serve others.

If we laity are lucky, we get one or two of these partially completed, with others just scratching the surface or totally left behind.

For the last number of years, I have been part of a committee that assists the diocesan formation team for the permanent diaconate. One of my favorite parts of this work is when ordination is just a few months away and we ask the deacon candidate's wife how the five years of formation has changed her husband. Invariably, a huge

smile comes to her face, and she effusively explains how he is so much more patient, prayerful, knowledgeable, and present at home and to other people in his life. It always makes me wish everyone could go through this type of formation.

Most of us, if we are honest, have been about as successful in our life of faith as a person trying to put together a SMÅGÖRA shelf from IKEA wearing a blindfold. We barely resemble a disciple, and we have a bunch of parts either missing or left over.

Imagine taking one dimension a year, or quarterly rotating through all of them, for the rest of your life.

How different might we be?

Here is an overview of the four dimensions and a few ideas to get started.

Human formation: helps a person grow in healthy maturity and virtuous character. The goal is to become a well-integrated person capable of loving and serving others well.

Ideas: Make a few appointments with a counselor; be honest with your failures; seek to grow in virtue and holiness; have intentional screen-free times with family and friends.

Spiritual formation: growing in relationship with God through prayer, the sacraments, Scripture, and holiness. The goal of this dimension is deepening union with Jesus Christ.

Ideas: Begin and end each day with

prayer; find time for silence daily; attend an extra Mass a week; work on praying the whole Mass with the priest; go to confession regularly; research *Lectio Divina* and practice it regularly.

Intellectual formation: studying and understanding the Catholic faith including theology, Scripture, Church history, morality, and doctrine. The goal of this dimension is to form the mind to think with the Church.

Ideas: Listen to episodes of Bible or Catechism in a Year; read books on the saints; or sign up for one of the institutes the Diocese of Fort Worth offers.

Pastoral formation: learning how to serve others practically in daily life. The goal is to put our faith into action.

Ideas: Join the OCIA team as a volunteer/sponsor; help with religious education; become a Mass minister; when you see a need, ask God how you can help.

There is no one-size-fits-all instruction manual for becoming a spiritual master, but there is a singular goal — union. Union with Jesus, His Church, and our neighbor.

Success is not measured in accuracy or how many parts are left over, but in stick-to-itiveness. We are not finished being formed until we draw our final breath. 🌟



Jeff Hedglen

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



ONE CHURCH



The universality of the Church in the Diocese of Fort Worth is growing, recognized, and celebrated

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Ghana native Charlotte Koranteng began to understand “universality” in the Catholic Church the first time she went to Mass in a foreign country.

“In the 1990s, I was an exchange student in Germany,” remembered the St. Joseph parishioner. “I didn’t understand the German language, but I was able to follow the Mass from beginning to end. Universality means I can go to Mass anywhere in the world and know what’s going on despite the local language.”

Derived from the Greek *katholikos*, the word “catholic” means universal or according to the whole. The Church is Catholic because all baptized people are members and possess the opportunity for salvation. Universality refers to its mission to proclaim the Good News of Christ to the entire human race.

The Church’s use of the same liturgical structure, synchronized cycle of Scripture readings, and creed is intentional. It highlights the fundamental belief that the Mass is a unified sacrifice shared by the worldwide Church rather than a local, customized service. All members belong to a single, global community.

At the same time, parishes embrace the various cultures of its members through multicultural worship, multilingual services, and community outreach. In the Diocese of Fort Worth, quinceañeras, the Vietnamese *Tet* Lunar New Year holiday, Christmas *Posadas*, and the African naming ceremony for infants are now commonly celebrated.

Catholicism is not just for one ethnicity, economic class, or society. It is meant for all.

As the population of Catholics in North Texas grows beyond 1.2 million, the diocese continues to embrace the varied traditions, languages, and customs of immigrants calling the Lone Star State home. Communities of people

from Vietnam, Korea, Mexico, Central America, Eastern Europe, and Africa have become an integral part of many parishes, and many attend parishes established to enable worship according to the traditions of their heritage.

OUT OF AFRICA

Koranteng moved to the U.S. in 2008 and appreciates the Sunday 1 p.m. Mass celebrated at St. Joseph Church in her native tongue. The Ghanaians who settled in North Texas will have their own parish in Arlington early next year.

“When we come here, we want to continue that culture and have the Mass said in our own dialect,” expressed the administrative assistant who leads the children’s Rosary before the weekly liturgy. “We have a very vibrant community.”

Joseph Nketia joined St. Joseph Church in Arlington 20 years ago and is now president of the parish’s Ghana Catholic mission.

Other immigrants from his homeland like coming to the Ghana Mass every Sunday because they want to worship God in a way that is familiar.

“In Ghana, it’s a long Mass with a lot of music and dancing,” the parish leader said. “They want to experience the music part of it, but language is also important. If they don’t get that, they leave and go to other churches.”

Socializing after Mass builds the feeling of community.

“They want to share the experience of being in this country,” said Nketia, who noted Fort Worth Bishop Michael Olson has celebrated Mass with them several times as well as visited Ghana.

African immigrants from Rwanda and Nigeria are also growing in number in the diocese.

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Rosemary Korang Acolatse shares a joyful moment during a Ghanaian Mass at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington on May 31. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Father Mate Bizaca celebrates Mass in Croatian on June 13 at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Parishioners wait expectantly as Bishop Olson hands out "lucky money" after a Mass celebrating the Lunar New Year on Feb. 15 at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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In April, Bishop Olson celebrated the first Mass for the expanding Rwandan community, recognizing its rich cultural heritage, history of suffering and healing, as well as a deep faith in God.

The special afternoon liturgy at Our Mother of Mercy Church in Fort Worth marked the beginning of a monthly Mass for natives of the east-central African nation. Father Peter Wiafe Akenteng, Our Mother of Mercy pastor, celebrates Mass with the Rwandans on the third Sunday of each month.

In 2023, the Nigerian community began celebrating a monthly Mass in Igbo at St. Maria Goretti Church in Arlington.

A WELCOMING PARISH HOME

Immigrants arriving in North Texas from Croatia find a welcoming home at St. Mary of the Assumption. The Fort Worth parish on Magnolia Avenue hosts

a 5:30 p.m. Saturday Mass in their native language about four times each year.

More than 80 percent of Croatia's population identifies as Catholic, and their faith shapes the country's culture and history. Croatian Christian heritage is 14 centuries old.

"We've had a Croatian Mass here going on 20 years," explained Zoran Radan, who came to the U.S. in 2003 and oversees maintenance at the church. "It's a different feeling when you can have Mass in your own language."

The married father of two girls credits the late Father David Bristow for adding the special liturgy to the parish schedule.

"He welcomed us with a big heart," said the employee, remembering the pastor's compassion for immigrants. "He understood that we had left everything behind in our country and took care of our community."

Today, a priest from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles travels to Fort Worth to celebrate Mass at St. Mary for approximately 50 people. Father Martin



Father Peter Wiafe Akenteng celebrates a Ghanaian Mass at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington on May 31. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Vivaca also visits other parishes in the south and southwest to provide the same outreach to Croatian-Americans. It's a way of preserving their mother country's rich traditions and family values for future generations.

Every Croatian Mass at St. Mary is followed by a meal featuring familiar Mediterranean and Eastern European dishes.

"Inviting people who recently moved to Texas to the Mass helps them make friendships and settle here," said Radan, describing the fellowship that develops.

PRESERVING FAITH WITH TRADITION

At the four Vietnamese parishes in the diocese — Our Lady of Fatima, Christ the King, Vietnamese Martyrs, and Immaculate Conception of Mary — language and traditions of the homeland help raise children in the faith.

The Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement at Our Lady of Fatima in Fort Worth teaches participants to be virtuous people and good Christians by modeling Jesus.

Brought to Vietnam by French missionaries in the early 20th century, the VEYM took hold in the U.S. with the arrival of Vietnamese refugees in 1975.

"The organization is very active with a lot of students," said parish volunteer Christina Hoang, explaining the Sunday meetings help 7- to 17-year-olds understand the fundamentals of the Catholic faith.

Vietnamese Catholics also share a deeply rooted devotion to the Virgin Mary with their youngsters. May is traditionally known as *Thang Hoa* — the flower month — and is marked by processions, folk dances, and color-rich flowers symbolizing the virtues of Mary.

"Children perform a dance as they

offer their flowers to Mary," Hoang added, describing the 18th-century custom that remains a cornerstone of Vietnamese-Catholic identity.

Retaining ethnic religious customs is encouraged by the diocese.

"Passing on our Vietnamese traditions to the youth, students, and little ones keeps the faith intact," she said.

A MISSION TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS

Unknown to most people, the Catholic Church has 24 different, autonomous churches led by the elected pope.

The largest is the Western, the Roman Catholic Church, headquartered in Vatican City, but 23 other Catholic institutions, referred to as Eastern Churches, profess allegiance to the Bishop

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Father Kostiantyn Popov, pastor, prays during the Divine Liturgy at St. Sophia Ukrainian Catholic Church on Nov. 2, 2025, the parish's 25th anniversary. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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of Rome and accept his authority.

These bodies have a distinct history and heritage expressed by their own worship style, theology, cultural traditions, and hierarchy but never stray from the essentials of doctrine or dogmas defined by the Church. Any Catholic that belongs to the Latin Church or one of the Eastern Churches may receive the sacraments and attend Mass at any church in full communion with the pope.

“Partaking of the Eucharist — partaking of the holy mysteries, the sacraments — applies both ways,” explained Father Kostiantyn Popov, pastor of St. Sophia Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in The Colony. “Members can come to our church or the Roman Catholic Church. It’s all valid.”

Located near Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church in The Colony, St. Sophia often welcomes visitors to its services. Both parishes frequently

interact with one another. “They like our church. They like the worship, but they are hesitant,” the pastor said. “They don’t know if they can partake or not. Not every Catholic knows there is a communion with the Eastern Churches.”

When discussing the balance between the traditions of the East and West Catholic Churches, the married priest with two children references a metaphor used by the late Pope John Paul II: “The Church must breathe with her two lungs!”

“The Roman Church is one lung and the rest of the Catholic Churches are the other lung but together we build the one body of Christ,” he clarified. “The main thing is unity in the Eucharist and unity in Christ.”

Janet Bogdon and her husband, Richard, are charter members of St. Sophia Church, founded in 2000.

Raised a Roman Catholic, she married a Ukrainian-American and began attending the church which uses the Byzantine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. It is the primary and most frequently

used Eucharistic service in the Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine traditions.

“We call it Liturgy and it is longer because we chant everything we do. There are no musical instruments,” said Bogdon, pointing out some differences from the Roman church. “And we don’t bless ourselves with holy water.”

Instead of statues, the altar is adorned with icons. One of the most revered holy images is *Theotokos*, Mary.

During most of the Divine Liturgy, worshippers stand rather than kneel.

“This is done to emphasize that God has risen,” explained the church secretary.

St. Sophia is a parish of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Chicago which is part of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. With more than 5.5 million faithful, it is the largest of all 23 Eastern Catholic Churches, second only to the Roman Catholic Church.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the local parish saw an influx of new members.

“We saw people not just fleeing war but relocating here and wanting the traditions of the Ukrainian church,” Fr. Popov added. “We wear national embroidered clothing for big holidays, sing Christmas carols for hours, have pysanky decorated Easter eggs and bless our Easter baskets, palm branches, and pussy willows. We bring a different level of celebration to the holidays.”

GLORIFYING GOD IN A DIFFERENT WAY

In Lewisville, Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church demonstrates the universality of the Catholic Church, said Father Peter Raad, the former associate pastor. “God is one and He has called us all to His heart no matter what language we speak or whether we’re

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Rwandan Catholics pray during the first Rwandan Mass celebrated at Our Mother of Mercy Parish on April 19. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Hundreds of Vietnamese Catholics celebrate Mass at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Fort Worth on Feb. 16. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Bishop Michael Olson addresses the congregation during the first Rwandan Mass at Our Mother of Mercy Parish on April 19. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



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Greek, Jews, Gentiles, Black, white, male, or female. He made all of us as one.”

When you have a faith that interacts with ancient cultures and languages, each one is going to glorify God in a different way, Fr. Raad emphasized.

The Maronite Church can trace its roots to St. Peter, believed to have founded the Church of Antioch as its first bishop. Saints Paul and Barnabas were early teachers in Antioch where the people spoke Greek and were influenced by Judaism.

“By the time Peter and Paul made it to Rome, the Antioch Church was already

evangelizing in India, China, Armenia, and Persia,” he added. “Each had a different history, geography, culture, and language.”

In the Maronite Church, confirmation, referred to as Chrismation, is received at the same time as baptism. The Body and Blood of Christ is administered on the tongue, only by a

priest or deacon.

“Each Church was commissioned to teach the Good News about Jesus Christ who suffered for us, was crucified and rose from the dead,” the priest said. “The creed is universal. We believe the same things.”

In a day and age when people are defined by their differences, it’s important



Matachin dancers perform a dance prior to the vigil Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth on Dec. 11, 2025. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

to remember that God calls us to be one, Fr. Raad is quick to assert.

“Whether we are followers of Peter, Andrew, or Bartholomew, it’s fitting to emphasize what is common — God loves us, He loves us into eternity and is Creator of all.”

SHARING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Observing Our Lady of Guadalupe’s feast day on Dec. 12 is a popular tradition that brings the Hispanic parish communities of Decatur, Jacksboro, Bridgeport, and Weatherford together inside St. Stephen Church in Weatherford.

The celebration includes performances by costumed *matachines* and dance groups, tamales, and prayers to the Virgin Mary.

“There’s a deep devotion for the love of Mary that brings people to hear Mass even if they only come to church two or three times a year,” observed Deacon Mauricio Hernández, who works with the Hispanic ministry at St. Stephen. “It’s a big deal for the Spanish-speaking

community and now the Anglo community is being integrated.”

But there’s another deeply rooted Mexican custom witnessed by St. Stephen parishioners. During a *Tres Años*, (celebration for 3-year-olds) parents give thanks to God and the Virgin Mary for the gift of a child’s life.

Dating back hundreds of years when the infant mortality rate was high, the practice celebrated a 3-year-old being past the point of danger.

“Both the parents and child receive a blessing at the altar,” the deacon said, adding the custom parallels the presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple. “It’s not a big celebration but often done at Sunday Mass in front of the community.”

Using a culture’s language, symbols, and rituals to share the Gospel message helps spread the faith and fosters meaningful participation in the liturgy.

For Dcn. Hernández, that universality of the Church conveys one thing.

“Everybody’s welcomed,” he said. 🌟

THERE’S
MORE!



See more photos of the universal Church by scanning the QR code or visiting North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com.



SERVING BY HEART

St. Martin de Porres parishioner's passion for the Lord inspires service to school and parish

By Brenda Raney

When you live your faith, people notice and many are inspired. This is true for Melissa Getty, who lives a vibrant life of faith visible to friends, family, and fellow parishioners at St. Martin de Porres Church in Prosper.

At the core of Getty's faith is her "love for the Lord," said Father Stephen Hauck, who nominated her for the diocese's 2025 Light of Christ Award for her commitment to the faith and exceptional stewardship at St. Martin de Porres.

"It really is what motivates her in everything she does, whether it's her home life or the things she does in the parish

community,” the pastor said. “It is out of a genuine experience of faith.”

Getty said she has always felt drawn to serve.

“I think it was something the Lord put on my heart at an early age,” she explained. “I watched my grandmothers serve in their parishes. I was an altar server, and I sang in the choir. I just loved it and the flow of the Mass fascinated me.”

Getty feels it was the Lord that led her and husband, Bobby, to the Frisco area when they moved to Texas in 2013.

They purchased their home because of its proximity to St. Martin de Porres Catholic School so their two daughters could be grounded in the faith of their families. The fact that a church was being built to create a new parish community proved to be the answer to the Ohio-born Catholics’ prayers. To Getty, “it felt like home.”

After their daughters were old enough for school, Getty said, “I felt like I was able, and was willing, to dive into getting to know what the community was about and who was part of that community.”

Just as Getty joined the parish’s fall festival committee, COVID hit. Even though volunteer opportunities slowed or stopped, Getty’s name continued to circulate throughout the parish as someone who would step up, show up, and manage a project to fruition.

According to Fr. Hauck, Getty has served on just about every parish committee. She is “plugged into all aspects of the parish: in helping out, in increasing more volunteers, but also helping make different events successful.”

Getty is part of the faith formation ministry that prepares youngsters for the sacraments of reconciliation and first Communion.

She has served on the leadership

team for Vacation Bible School and helped the parish transition to *Totus Tuus* (Totally Yours), a youth catechism summer program led by college students or seminarians who serve as missionaries.

Getty located and organized parishioners willing to house missionaries, host dinners, and create a welcoming environment for the young visitors. She recruited volunteers to assist with the daily faith-based activities to maintain the proper adult-to-student ratios and helped coordinate Safe Environment training for upwards of 60 volunteers.

Three years ago, she also joined the women’s ministry and has enjoyed being part of the group’s hospitality committee especially when “we would go to Adoration, guided reflection, and [to pray the] Rosary.”

The ministry gave Getty a chance to meet other members of the faith than what she’d expected. “I love being able to really connect with so many different people, not just seeing them at Mass,” she said. “I feel like we really come together, and I get to know a lot of people on deeper levels.”

Considering Getty’s breadth of presence at the parish, Business Manager Kathy Campbell said, “Melissa’s life is a beautiful reflection of stewardship in action — a faithful response to God’s gifts through joyful service, discipleship, and love for others. Her example inspires us all to ask how we, too, are being called to respond.”

FAITH BEGINS AT HOME

Getty’s passion for her Catholic faith is her strength. Aside from being a participant in the Evangelical Catholic program at St. Martin de Porres — where, according to Campbell, “Melissa has embraced the mission of the

Evangelical Catholic beautifully, inspiring others through her words and the example of her daily faith” — she is also part of the Devotions Ministry and was the catalyst in the parish’s reinstatement of home enthronements of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

During an enthronement ceremony, a family acknowledges Jesus as Lord, Savior, and King of the household and places a blessed image of the Sacred Heart in the center of their home.

Logistics, budget, and staff had initially made the program difficult to offer the ceremony to parishioners, and it had been phased out. With Getty’s commitment, she and fellow parishioner Kerry Rhodes were able to revive the process. The reinstated program has enthroned 15 homes, with 10 more scheduled for this summer.

“I was an adult before I learned about home enthronements and how it fulfills the ninth promise that Jesus made to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque: *I will bless the homes where an image of My Heart is exposed and honored*. I think I was led by the Holy Spirit to do this,” Getty said.

“Home enthronements bring the family together and reinforce love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The ceremony is just beautiful, and I am honored to be a part of the process,” she added.

The enthronements reflect Getty’s belief that faith begins at home. Her family regularly prays together, and they have been known to say the Rosary during long car trips. It is her hope that her daughters will follow in her footsteps in both faith and service. Her message to them is “You want to give glory to God every day.”

Reflecting on the experience and her five years of service at the Prosper church, Getty said, “Volunteering is how I can give back to the Lord. It is how I show my gratitude.” 🇺🇸



SERVING AND SACRIFICE

By Christina Benavides

In his encyclical *"Magnifica Humanitas"* ("Magnificent Humanity"), Pope Leo XIV writes that the quality of a civilization is measured by the care it offers. He describes care as "a fundamental dimension of our humanity, one that is learned and mastered through lived experience," listing examples of "simple gestures rooted in family life" that "train us to recognize others as persons worthy of attention" (114).

Gabby and Martin Esquivel of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Eastland share an intimate knowledge of such care. The couple are parents of four children under the age of 10, with a fifth on the way.

Through all their joys and challenges, the Esquivels place love,

companionship, and sacrifice at the center of their home.

HOW THEY MET: Although they met at a wedding in December 2006, they didn't start dating until a year later when they reconnected through family ties. Nearly nine months into their relationship, Martin was involved in a motorcycle accident on his way to work.

"I don't know if you've ever heard of a brachial plexus injury, but those are the nerves that control the arm and part of those nerves were torn off the spinal cord, so most of [my arm] is paralyzed," Martin explained, gesturing toward his arm in a sling.

After learning his injury would be permanent, he did not expect Gabby to remain by his side. "His accident really changed our relationship,"

Gabby said. "He would ask me, 'Why did you stay?' But why wouldn't I?"

As he recovered and came to terms with his partial paralysis, Martin was touched by her loyalty, resolve, and care.

"It showed her love," he said.

MARRIED: Sept. 8, 2012, in Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Breckenridge.

RETURN TO ROOTS: Originally from Guanajuato, Mexico, Martin recalled regularly attending Mass and receiving the sacraments as a child. But after graduating from Eastland High School and going to college, he strayed from the Church.

Gabby likewise grew up a cradle Catholic in Breckenridge, about 25 miles from Eastland. As the two

◀ Gabby and Martin Esquivel pose with their children, Javi, 10, Emma, 8, Leilani, 5, and Logan, 1, at their parish, St. Francis Xavier in Eastland. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

looked to their future, they returned to the faith.

“We got married and then we started coming back,” Martin reflected.

Gabby noted that both her faith and Martin’s received a boost after they met Father Vijaya Raju Mareedu, SAC. The couple credit their former pastor for drawing them further into an active life of service.

PAIN AND SERVICE: Over the years, advancements in medicine and physical therapy granted Martin some relief from the chronic pain he’s endured for nearly 18 years, but “the pain is always there,” he admitted.

Martin doesn’t let his condition stop him from serving God. He is often found at St. Francis, mowing the grass, cleaning the sanctuary, repairing pews, teaching catechesis and baptism classes, and coordinating lectors and liturgical ministers.

The Deputy Grand Knight of the local Knights of Columbus council, Martin also helps organize the annual Passion Play, Guadalupan activities, and the vocation chalice program.

“Sometimes when I’m on my way home, I realize that I didn’t think about the pain. I remember it, but its presence isn’t as bothersome as it usually is,” he said.

Martin attributes God for “having the strength to do all this,” and he sees the fruit of that service reflected in the authentic faith he sees in his children.

“I feel like in just being part of the Church, He has united us, and He has kept us close to the Church.”

FAMILY TIME: Sundays after Mass are typically family time.

“Mass is over by 12:45 p.m., one o’clock and right after, we go to Taco Bell,” Martin shared.

The weekly tradition brings

together the extended family, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, Gabby said.

LEARN TO SERVE: The Esquivels’ eldest son, Javi, is an altar server, and their daughter, Emma, eagerly awaits her turn. Kids learn by example, Martin observed.

“If they see you go to church, they see you pray. All it takes is to just pray. Teach them to pray when you wake up in the morning, before going to bed, before every meal.”

KEEP BUSY: Gabby keeps things running at home and supports Martin as he juggles his two jobs, volunteering, and his soccer coach responsibilities.

“If he’s not at church doing something, he’s at soccer practice with our kids,” she observed.

Keeping busy is an intentional choice, Martin insisted.

“We want to keep our kids away from [technology] and, I figure, even though it’s a lot of work to have to take my kids to sports and all the other activities, it’s a lot better for them.”

While it may be hard at times, their efforts are fruitful and may be part of a larger design.

“I think that’s what we were called to do, or at least I feel like it is,” Gabby said. “I was meant to be a mom.”

A GROWING CHURCH: Martin remarked that the Eastland church “is not big enough for all these people, all these kids growing.”

The parish is known for its many young families, and Martin hopes the youth will one day join him in serving the parish as leaders and volunteers.

“Hopefully my son — eventually he’s able to help out as well,” Martin said, expressing his hope that Javi will serve God wherever life leads him. 🌟



SAFE ENVIRONMENT

In the case of alleged abuse by clergy or Church personnel, contact the Victim Assistance Hotline, the Office of Safe Environment, or the Vicar General:

- **Victim Assistance Hotline**
817.945.9345
- **Director of Safe Environment**
817.945.9334
- **Vicar General**
817.945.9315

To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

Call CPS (800-252-5400)

AND/OR

Call the local police or 911

Tips for Communicating:

- Use clear, objective language — describe what was seen or heard without assumptions or speculation.
- Refer to specific behaviors rather than personal judgments or labels.
- When using written forms such as submitting a report to CPS online or the Office of Safe Environment, fill out all required fields with as much detail as possible.
- Please include CPS or law enforcement report numbers in reports submitted to the Diocese.

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



Invite Him into your life

NTC/Thomas Otto

HE IS: Father John Pacheco, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Gainesville since 2016.

A MOTHER'S PRESENCE: Mary Lou Pacheco took her two sons to Tepeyac when they were very young. Fr. Pacheco remembers the vast amount of pilgrims, how his mother tightly gripped his hand, and the devout making their way to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe on their knees.

The priest noted, "That was my first entanglement with the Blessed Mother, and I believe she's been with me all this time."

A DREAM MADE POSSIBLE: He felt called to priesthood early in life, but his parents didn't support his calling.

He studied communications at University of Texas at Arlington before spending more than 20 years in law enforcement, mostly at Texas Christian University.

When he applied for seminary in his mid-40s, he was denied.

A year later, he received a call from the diocese with an invitation to reapply.

At the time, he was caring for his mother, who had begun to present signs of Alzheimer's.

"I thought, 'Well, Lord, if You want me to be a priest, this is in Your hands.'"

His brother, Adam, encouraged him to enter seminary.

"He said, 'John, you really want to be a priest? Then you go do it. We will take care of Mom here.'"

Fr. Pacheco emphasized his gratitude to his brother and sister-in-law, Mary, and their family who looked after his mother, who passed away two years before he was ordained.

ORDAINED: May 23, 2009, at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth.

TO SERVE: He has served at St. Matthew Parish in Arlington; Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Wichita Falls; St. Mary Parish in Graham; and St. Theresa Parish in Olney.

BEST COMPLIMENT: "I had a little, elderly man, who just passed away a few months ago, who said, 'Father, the way you explain your homily, I understand it. It makes sense to me.'"

FAVORITE SACRAMENT: "To me, the Body of Christ is everything. It's just everything."

He treasures seeing how the faithful encounter Jesus in the Eucharist when they come up for Communion. "You see how much it means to people during Mass."

SPECIAL MEMENTO: Fr. Pacheco's mother recalled carrying the heavy infant on the bus to St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Fort Worth for his baptism. She handed him to then-parish pastor, Father Meinrad Marbaugh, OSB, saying, "Here, I'm giving him to you."

Upon Fr. Pacheco's ordination, Fr. Marbaugh's family gifted him the priest's chalice.

"That is the biggest honor to me, having his chalice."

ADVICE FOR THE FAITHFUL: Talk with God daily. "Don't sit there and say, 'I'll do it later whenever I have time' or whatever. Talk to Him daily. It's like talking to your father or grandfather every day because you want them to know, and they want to be a part of your life."

"That's what God wants from you. He wants to be a part of your everyday life. He wants you to invite Him into your life."

GOD'S SERVANT: "I'm starting with Parkinson's myself, and I've always felt I was going to try to go as long as I can to be a priest and let God use me for as long as He can," said the 71-year-old priest, who plans to retire from ministry at age 75.

"We're supposed to give, we're supposed to love each other, and I think that's what I'm supposed to be doing." 🇺🇸

Tumbling walls

NTC/Rodger Mallison

In his book *A Confession*, Leo Tolstoy, a famous Russian writer of the 19th century, describes an event of how his friend lost faith. “On a hunting expedition, when he was already 26, he once, at the place where they put up for the night, knelt down in the evening to pray — a habit retained from childhood. His elder brother, who was at the hunt with him, was lying on some hay and watching him. When [he] had finished and was settling down for the night, his brother said to him: ‘So you still do that?’ They said nothing more to one another. But from that day [he] ceased to say his prayers or go to church. And now has not prayed, received Communion, or gone to church, for thirty years.”

Tolstoy describes how what happened to his friend was not a pressure to join his brother’s ideas or even some kind of intentional decision, but rather “like the push of a finger on a wall that was ready to fall by its own weight.”

Tolstoy goes on to describe his own loss of faith as a teenager beginning with a misplaced goal: to perfect himself. As he pursued self-perfection, his wall of faith became less about God and more about himself.

It wasn’t long before his own wall crumbled to the ground and he ran

forward, clinging after power and success.

For those who profess faith, what’s holding up the wall?

Is it mere willpower, discipline, habit, culture, or perhaps others’ opinions? What or who truly resides in the depths? Is it Jesus Christ? Or is it maybe something we’re doing for Him?



Fr. Brett Metzler

Perhaps it’s a project, a lifelong project of self-betterment, of achieving, progressing, growing, so that one day, eventually, in the future, at some vague moment, we’ve finally made it? Maybe it’s the family, a memory, a moment, a “dream” you’ve been holding

on to.

Another way to ask the question is: What is sustaining you? What gets you from day to day? What do you look forward to?

The truth is that for many it’s something unstable, something not deeply rooted. And in a culture of entertainment and exhaustion, one cannot overlook the real possibility that the main motivator of each day might simply be getting back to the couch.

While rest is good, and while many of the above goals or habits may be worth pursuing and even from certain perspectives considered holy ... they

are not Him. They cannot stand in the center. And when they do, we must face the disquieting fact that they do not actually fulfill. They do not hold up the walls.

What then do we need? We must come to the true moment of conversion when we finally accept that our present life on Earth is not meant to fulfill us, but rather that God, who is Life and fulfillment Himself, is present, and in fact, fulfilling. He offers us Himself each day as the One who stands in the depths; the One who can hold up the walls. And not only does He hold them, but He strengthens them, builds them up, and fashions them into a castle, or as Jesus says in *Luke*, a Kingdom.

So we pray. We pray not only for *something*, but for Him. We pray for more of Him. We pray that He takes His place on the throne in the depths of hearts, and from there holds up the walls.

It is only this that converts, that changes, that inspires. It is only this when found and taken hold of, particularly by our youth, that brings about more courageous and passionate hearts who follow the Lord as priests and religious. ✚

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



una meta más GRANDE

Rafael (Rafa) Villela juega fútbol frente a la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en la Parroquia de Holy Name de Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Mientras millones siguen el torneo internacional, algunos católicos encuentran en el fútbol lecciones que los acercan a Cristo

Por Christina Benavides

Los partidos inaugurales de la vigésima tercera edición de la Copa Mundial de la FIFA comenzaron en la Ciudad de México el 11 de junio. El Papa León XIV destacó antes del comienzo del torneo el valor del trabajo en equipo y la comunidad: “La vida no es una carrera para vivir de forma solitaria; es algo que se juega en equipo y hay que aprender a correr juntos”.

El valor del deporte trasciende la competencia para muchos católicos y puede señalar el camino hacia una relación más profunda con Jesucristo.

UNA NUEVA META

Desde que era niño Rafael (Rafa) Villela hacía todo lo posible por jugar fútbol en un pequeño rancho de San Luis Potosí, México. Sin embargo, aprender a no convertir el deporte en el centro de su vida se le hizo muy difícil. “Yo quería estar con Dios, pero siempre terminaba poniendo al fútbol como mi prioridad”, admitió.

El joven de 24 años reflexiona sobre cómo llegaba a volverse emocionalmente dependiente de las victorias y derrotas del juego. “Si me iba bien un fin de semana y metía goles, andaba bien contento toda la semana. Pero si no metía goles, andaba enojado y frustrado.”

A pesar del éxito en el trabajo y en la cancha de juego, Villela sentía que algo le faltaba. Recordó haberle pedido a Dios que “Él me ayudara a salir de esa depresión y que yo le iba a servir a Él de alguna otra forma”.

Mientras cubría a un compañero de equipo durante un partido en una fría tarde, Villela sufrió un accidente cuando un jugador enorme chocó contra él. El golpe le fracturó la clavícula.

El joven decidió mientras se recuperaba que finalmente había llegado el momento de acercarse a Dios y comenzó a asistir a Misa diaria en la Parroquia de Holy Name of Jesus de Fort Worth. “A lo mejor, es momento de decirle sí”, recuerda pensando.

Poco después comenzó a servir como lector y se integró al grupo de jóvenes adultos de la parroquia. Dejó las ligas más competitivas pero continuó jugando en un club local y procura aplicar la disciplina del deporte a su vida de fe.

Al enfrentar ahora las victorias y las derrotas, recuerda una lección que aprendió tanto a través del fútbol como de la fe. “Siempre hay que poner a Dios en primer lugar, y luego lo demás, porque Dios siempre va a estar ahí”.

En su camiseta lleva *Romanos 8:31*: “Si Dios es por nosotros, ¿quién contra nosotros?”

Villela expresa que espera seguir fortaleciendo

su fe; esto podría ser difícil de lograr, pero que vale completamente el esfuerzo. “Me doy cuenta de que la verdadera felicidad está aquí”, afirma Villela. “La paz que me da, el gozo ... aquí me siento pleno de verdad.”

UN MISMO OBJETIVO

Daniel Sánchez de la Parroquia de Holy Redeemer de Aledo se unirá este verano a las decenas de miles de aficionados que asistirán a los partidos de la Copa Mundial de la FIFA 2026 en el Dallas Stadium de Arlington.

El joven de 28 años dará la bienvenida a los visitantes como voluntario de la FIFA, una oportunidad que surgió de su trabajo con un club local de fútbol.

Sánchez comentó que su fe renovada y su amor por el fútbol crecieron a la misma vez. Después de sentirse aislado y espiritualmente desorientado durante la pandemia, señala que el regresar al Centro Católico de St. John Paul II (JP2) en Denton le recordó la parábola del hijo pródigo.

“Estaba perdido, pero fui encontrado. Todos mis amigos en JP2 realmente me ayudaron. ... Allí fue donde se reactivó mi amor por el fútbol y mi fe”, asevera. Allí se integró a un club comunitario de fútbol y encontró amistades con estudiantes católicos de la parroquia universitaria.

“Realmente llegué a conocerme a mí mismo y a descubrir quién es Dios”, afirma Sánchez. “Simplemente estar allí en JP2 y trabajar con el club de fútbol me ayudó a definir mejor mi propósito”.

Refiriéndose al lema de la FIFA de que el fútbol une al mundo, Sánchez señala que, al igual que el deporte, “realmente creo que el catolicismo une al mundo. ... Todos estamos juntos por un mismo objetivo y ese objetivo es llegar al cielo”.

Sánchez manifiesta que espera con entusiasmo dar la bienvenida a los visitantes que llegarán al estadio. “Sólo le doy gracias a Dios porque me ha brindado una oportunidad maravillosa”.

Pese a que Sánchez espera que Argentina gane la copa este año, su fe y sus valores no dependen del resultado final. “Hay cosas que no van a salir como uno quiere. Tal vez, no sea lo que esperabas, pero de alguna manera sí terminan funcionando”, dice.

Sánchez explica que la oración y un momento de calma pueden ayudar a quienes se dejan llevar por la intensidad de la competencia.

“Nosotros los hispanos tratamos el fútbol como si fuera cuestión de vida o muerte”, confiesa Sánchez, y anima a los aficionados exaltados a “poner cualquier problema que puedan estar teniendo en las manos de Dios”. 🙏

"Mamá María"

SIEMPRE PRESENTE

Feligreses y expertos reflexionan sobre las advocaciones marianas y el papel de la Virgen como madre e intercesora de la Iglesia

Por Violeta Rocha

Carmen Cornejo, 58, feligrés de la Parroquia de St. John Paul II de Denton aprendió hace más de tres décadas el profundo amor a "Mamá María" expresado mediante las diferentes advocaciones marianas.

El mes de mayo está dedicado a la Virgen María y la Iglesia invita a sus fieles a rezar el rosario, coronar su imagen y llevarle rosas blancas. Nuestra Madre María tiene diferentes advocaciones y diversos títulos, pero "su amor de madre" es siempre el mismo, señala Cornejo. Carmen es oriunda de San Luis Potosí y al mudarse a este país trajo consigo su devoción a la Virgen de Guadalupe. Ella, junto a su esposo Carlos y sus tres hijos, que tienen 34, 30 y 27 años, sirven en el grupo de la Danza de los Matachines de la Parroquia de Immaculate Conception de Denton. Es en esta parroquia que ella "conoce y aprende a amar" otras advocaciones como la Virgen de Fátima, la Virgen de los Dolores o La Dolorosa y la Virgen del Rosario, entre otras. Así se fue abriendo una puerta de "servicio y oración", ayudando por más de 10 años en la

consagración a la Virgen de Fátima, bajo el movimiento del Padre Stefano Gobbi.

Además, coordina actualmente el grupo de consagración a la Reparación del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús en la Parroquia de St. John Paul II.

"Orando, aprendiendo y trabajando en las virtudes de María", Cornejo lleva su imagen a "la gente enferma o a

quien tenga una necesidad" para "enseñar y transmitir" a otros "la docilidad con la que Mamá María nos ama" y compartir que "María nos entrega a su hijo, nos entrega su amor y se queda además como madre en la cruz, para seguir ese legado de Jesús. Ella nunca se separa de Jesús", Carmen apunta.

La Virgen de San Juan de los Lagos, la Rosa Mística o la misma Virgen de Guadalupe nos "acercan a la figura de María como la madre de Jesús", en diferentes formas aprobadas por la Iglesia, "según cada pueblo y su cultura la va conociendo", o bien, según "cada persona se va identificando con Ella, según su propia historia". Esto es distinto a los dogmas, que son una verdad de fe revelada inmutable y donde "se reconoce a María como madre, a nivel general", como lo es la Inmaculada Concepción y el Inmaculado Corazón de María, explica la Hermana Eufemia Santiago MCSH, de las Misioneras Catequistas de los Inmaculados Corazones de Jesús y María, y Directora de Educación Religiosa de la Parroquia de Immaculate Conception de Fort Worth.

La devoción al Inmaculado Corazón de María fue impulsada por San Juan Eudes y se celebró por primera vez en el 1648. Esta devoción se extendió y consolidó durante los siglos XVIII y XIX. Alrededor de esa época aparece también la devoción a la "Medalla Milagrosa", explica la Hermana Femy, como le llaman cariñosamente,



por las apariciones de la Virgen María en el 1830 a Santa Catalina Labouré; y cuya medalla en el reverso muestra los corazones de Jesús y María.

Tener “la claridad de que María nos lleva a Jesús y que no es quien hace milagros, sino la intercesora”, es saber que “Ella estuvo cerca de Jesús y lo tuvo en su vientre”. Al igual que Ella, con ese mismo “Fiat consciente” (su “Sí”), y “conociéndola y reconociéndola” como Madre Dios, nosotros podemos ‘engendrar’ a Jesús en nuestro corazón “descubriendo nuestros proyectos de vida” y como finalidad de todo cristiano de “llegar a la santidad”, destaca la Hermana Femy.

Desde la antigüedad se han utilizado “referencias bíblicas” al rezar el Santo Rosario y se relaciona la imagen de una rosa con la Virgen María, además de los diferentes títulos en la Letanía de Loreto, señala el Dr. Richard Bulzacchelli, Profesor Asistente Afiliado en Teología y experto en Mariología de la Universidad de Dallas.

Por ejemplo, el verso de “la rosa de Sarón” en el *Cantar de los Cantares 2,1* y en *Isaías 11,1*, en que la rosa es una metáfora poética de la “vara del tronco de Isaí y un vástago retoñará de sus raíces”, haciendo referencia a Cristo, él explica.

María refleja en la Letanía de Loreto “su disponibilidad para recibir a Dios y su integridad perfecta ante Dios”, apunta Dr. Bulzacchelli con respecto a títulos como el “Arca de la Alianza” y que hemos de ver a María, no como un individuo, sino como quien llevó a Cristo en su vientre”; o como “Refugio de los Pecadores, ya que María comparte la compasión por el amor, porque Ella nos dio a Cristo”, afirma el profesor.

El Dr. Bulzacchelli destaca que hemos de ver que María realiza un “rol



Una imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe frente a Jesús en la cruz en la Parroquia de St. Joseph en Arlington. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

activo” en el plan de Dios de salvación, pero sin “esperar signos de buena fortuna” ni caer en “excesos o abusos”, como el pensar que Dios no es misericordioso y sólo María puede interceder. Ni tampoco verla como una “persona de la Divinidad”, pensando como si fuera una ‘Cuadridad’, en vez de una ‘Trinidad’, declara con firmeza. Resalta también “la virginidad perpetua de María”, antes,

durante y después de Cristo, que está “representada por tres estrellas”; una en su frente y una en cada hombro. El profesor Bulzacchelli añade que en la “dimensión espiritual” de la maternidad de María, “Ella no busca quedarse con el amor del Niño Jesús para Ella, sino que nos lo da para la salvación. Se trata de su ‘supremo amor’, como lo llama San Pablo”. ✝



Redescubriendo su identidad

El campamento Kairós ayuda a mujeres solteras, viudas y divorciadas en un entorno de oración, sanación y convivencia

Por Karla Silva

El campamento “Recuerda quién eres”, dirigido a un grupo de 50 mamás solteras, viudas y divorciadas, se realizó en un entorno de reflexión, sanación y convivencia el otoño pasado en Possum Kingdom Lake.

“El campamento cambió mi vida. Logré recordar quién soy, perdonarme y aumentar mi fe”, compartió una participante en una encuesta anónima al final del retiro.

El campamento se originó de la necesidad que el Diácono Rigoberto

Leyva, director de la oficina del Ministerio Hispano, identificó dentro de la comunidad.

“La idea nació de cómo ayudar a mujeres que en ocasiones se sienten olvidadas o dolidas, ya sea por haber perdido a su pareja o por haber

experimentado un divorcio, y que no encuentran o no saben cómo buscar la ayuda que realmente necesitan”, explicó el Diácono Leyva.

Con esta necesidad en mente, el diácono y su equipo - formado por Mónica Martínez y Melly Andrade - emprendieron la búsqueda de una solución.

“Pensamos en la idea de hacer un retiro espiritual donde las participantes tuvieran un encuentro con Jesús y recordarles que, antes que nada, son hijas de Dios vivo y que Él les ha dado una dignidad como mujeres que nadie tiene derecho de pisotear ni disminuir”, añadió el Diácono Leyva.

Para desarrollar este proyecto acudieron al ministerio de Kairós, que es conocido por organizar campamentos para responder a distintas necesidades dentro de la diócesis.

Rosy Ramírez, coordinadora general del ministerio a nivel diocesano, señaló que, aunque el enfoque principal de Kairós en la diócesis es con los jóvenes y los matrimonios, le pareció importante que se extendiera el alcance del ministerio para evangelizar y acompañar a más personas. Por eso, aceptó la invitación y comenzó la planificación.

Ramírez seleccionó a Fátima González como directora del campamento, quien a su vez eligió a Edith Hernández como codirectora. Ambas son miembros del ministerio de Kairós Matrimonios de la Parroquia de Immaculate Conception de Denton.

“Lo primero que hicimos fue ponernos en el lugar de estas mujeres y preguntarnos qué le sucede a una mujer que está criando sola a sus hijos, sin una pareja o apoyo”, explicó González. “Nos dimos cuenta de que muchas veces se entregan tanto a sacar adelante a sus hijos, proveer para ellos y estar presentes, que terminan olvidándose de sí mismas y de su valor. De ahí, surgió el

nombre del campamento ‘Recuerda quién eres’”, agregó.

La cita bíblica de *Isaías 43,1-4*: “No temas, que yo te he redimido, te he llamado por tu nombre: tú eres mía. ... Porque eres preciosa a mis ojos, valiosa, y yo te amo”, le sirvió a González y Hernández de inspiración para desarrollar los principales objetivos del campamento.

Se propusieron de ayudar a cada mujer a recordar su identidad como hija amada de Dios, sanar heridas de abandono, culpa, rechazo o confusión, crear un espacio de interiorización, acompañamiento espiritual y formar una comunidad de apoyo entre mujeres con historias similares.

“Una vez definidos los objetivos”, destacó Hernández, “el reto fue encontrar las charlas y dinámicas para poder llevarlos a cabo, ya que era la primera vez que se hacía un campamento con esta temática”.

Sin embargo, utilizaron como modelo un programa de Kairós en México y desarrollaron la estructura del campamento que incluye charlas basadas en las mujeres de la Biblia.

“Por lo general, la transformación de los participantes en los campamentos comienza a verse el segundo o tercer día. En esta ocasión fue muy impactante ver cómo muchas mujeres comenzaron a abrir su corazón desde la primera charla”, comentó González.

González y Hernández coincidieron en que todas las charlas fueron importantes y beneficiosas para las participantes, pero González resaltó especialmente la charla enfocada en el perdón.

“No sólo el perdón hacia los demás, sino el perdón hacia ellas mismas. Además, en ese momento se estaban llevando a cabo confesiones, así que fue

un momento de mucha sanación para muchas de ellas”, aseveró González.

“Este campamento me ayudó a sanar a mi niña interior, me sentí realmente amada por Dios”, expresó una de las participantes.

González también destacó la última charla titulada “Propósito y Misión”, en la que se recordó a las participantes que más allá de ser madres y proveedoras son mujeres llamadas por Dios a cumplir una misión única.

“Fue una experiencia maravillosa. Pude sanar heridas que ni siquiera sabía que tenía, y así poder tener un reencuentro y renovación conmigo misma, recordando para qué y para quién fui creada”, apuntó otra participante.

Por su parte, Hernández comentó que los frutos del campamento no sólo fueron visibles en las participantes, sino también en las mujeres que lo organizaron y ayudaron durante el mismo.

“Yo no soy mamá soltera”, señaló Hernández, “pero al casarme y convertirme en madre, poco a poco fui olvidando quién era como mujer. Servir en este campamento también me ayudó a reencontrarme con mi identidad y propósito”.

Tras el éxito de este campamento, la oficina del Ministerio Hispano espera realizar un retiro cada año y dar seguimiento a las participantes mediante un programa especial que sea dedicado a ellas. El propósito sería que más mujeres puedan reencontrar su identidad, sanar heridas y recordar que son amadas por Dios; y así poner en práctica el lema del campamento: “Quien sabe quién es, sabe hacia dónde va, porque sabe quién la guía”.

El próximo retiro está programado para septiembre de 2026. Para obtener información adicional y actualizada visita fwdioc.org/ministerio-hispano. 🇺🇸



Creer, Crecer y Lograr

Formada en la fe, impulsada por la confianza:
el recorrido de una estudiante ejemplar

Por Violeta Rocha

Grace Zaucha, 20, que durante su niñez se sentía a veces que su rendimiento académico podía ser mejor, comparte hoy con su familia y antigua escuela la alegría de haberse graduado recientemente con una Licenciatura en Contaduría de la prestigiosa Universidad Notre Dame de Indiana, con la que soñó siempre ir y en que sólo un 9 por ciento de los aplicantes es admitido.

Mientras visitaba la pequeña sala de

clases de su escuela primaria St. Peter Catholic School of White Settlement, en la que fue aceptada hace una década con los brazos abiertos, reflexionó y expresó su agradecimiento a sus primeros profesores en el área de Fort Worth. Fue entre esas sencillas aulas que Grace aprendió sobre “la dignidad humana”, a tener confianza en sí misma, pero sobre todo, que “la grandeza de Dios se ve en el más chiquito”.

Muy distinto a la inseguridad que tuvo al regresar brevemente a su natal Houston, luego de vivir 5 años en Italia debido

al trabajo de su mamá, Grace encontró “esperanza” en sus nuevas profesoras, como la Sra. Diana Yandell. Ella señala que no se trataba sólo de lo que aprendió, sino de sentir que “sí valgo el tiempo de otras personas”. Ella se graduó en el 2019 de St. Peter y fue a Nolan Catholic de Fort Worth, en donde con determinación, esfuerzo y el apoyo de sus maestros se graduó con altos honores en el 2023. Fue admitida a su anhelada universidad de Notre Dame y, gracias a sus méritos académicos, obtuvo además una beca que cubrió el 90 por ciento de su matrícula.

◀ Grace Zaucha, graduada en la primavera de 2026 de la Universidad de Notre Dame, en su antiguo salón de clases en el Colegio de St. Peter the Apostle en Fort Worth el 19 de mayo. Estudió en la escuela preparatoria de Nolan Catholic y se acaba de graduar de la Universidad de Notre Dame. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Se graduó con honores y fue galardonada con el premio de excelencia en negocios. Grace obtuvo su Licenciatura en Contaduría en sólo tres años y sirvió en programas de servicio y de honores. Fue servidora del altar con frecuencia en varias de las 160 Misas a la semana que, según ella, se celebran en Notre Dame. Colaboró también como embajadora para conseguir donaciones para la prestigiosa universidad. Cursó un semestre en la Universidad de St. Andrews en Escocia, para lo cual “luchó durante un año” para lograr uno de sólo 7 lugares disponibles.

“Agradecida con Dios, pero también con mi mami”, quien llegó de su natal Querétaro, México, hace 26 años “con dos maletas y 700 dólares”, Grace manifestó. “Todo lo que he logrado no sólo es mío porque nadie puede hacer nada solo; fue un esfuerzo de mi familia y de mi comunidad, y el que ellos puedan estar conmigo es la bendición más grande que Dios me dio”, aseveró.

Grace va a proseguir sus estudios en Notre Dame en el otoño en la escuela de leyes para alcanzar “su sueño desde niña” de ser abogada y poder ayudar a las “madres solteras”, tanto de su comunidad hispana como “de otras nacionalidades que no hablen el idioma inglés”. Su gran deseo es poder ayudarlas gracias a que ella domina los idiomas del inglés, español, italiano y francés; pues ellas tienen muchas necesidades y “que alguien las escuche”, afirmó.

Grace “sólo necesitaba alguien que creyera en ella para simplemente florecer y ser quien realmente estaba destinada a ser” aseguró la profesora Diana Yandell. Resaltó que lo mismo aplica “con cada estudiante”. La Sra. Yandell fue su maestra de religión, matemáticas e historia. Ella sirve actualmente como voluntaria en St. Peter, luego de trabajar 18 años como profesora.

“Pensar que yo hice una pequeña diferencia en su vida me llena de emoción y me sorprende ver cuánto esta escuela aún significa para ella”, comentó entre lágrimas. “Sé que Grace es excepcional porque no tiene miedo o pena de alabar a nuestro Dios”, dijo destacando su continuo servicio, desde la primaria St. Peter hasta la Universidad de Notre Dame. “Es algo que muy rara vez se ve”, añadió.

Rebekah Yarmchuk, M.Ed. y Directora del Departamento de Estudios Sociales de la preparatoria Nolan Catholic, recuerda a Grace como una “estudiante entusiasta y meticulosa”, con un carácter de “líder servicial, que sabe liderar con compasión e inspira a los demás a ser mejor a través de sus propias acciones”, expresó quien fuera su profesora de historia avanzada en el grado 11.

“Sé que ella se acercó a su decisión con mucha oración y con un proceso metódico”, y que iba tanto académica, como espiritualmente preparada para destacarse en Notre Dame, “manejando su tiempo, comunicándose con sus maestros y trabajando eficazmente en grupo,” y la describe como muy positiva, “que demuestra una gran lealtad a las personas que le han ayudado a llegar a donde hoy está,” agregó.

Argelia Zaucha, madre de Grace, que es también contadora de profesión, no se arrepiente de proveer una educación católica a su única hija, porque a pesar de los incontables sacrificios por ser madre soltera, “no estuve sola; de la mano de Dios y de nuestra Madre bendita, pude,” dijo agradeciendo también tanto a los párrocos de St. Peter the Apostle como a los maestros de la escuela parroquial. “Lo volvería hacer, mil veces,” asegura recordando el consejo que “una gran amiga” le dio siendo Grace muy pequeña: “Aunque comas latas de atún todos los días, lleva tu hija a una escuela católica”. 🇺🇸



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SANTOS

que iluminan nuestro camino

Parroquia de St. Rose of Lima de Glen Rose. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Tres santos que vivieron sus vidas llenos de Dios

Por Karla Silva

¿Qué es un santo? De acuerdo con la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos (USCCB), los santos, canonizados oficialmente o no, fueron personas que vivieron heroicamente vidas virtuosas, ofreciendo su vida por el prójimo o siendo martirizados por su fe, y quienes son dignos de imitación.

Éste es el caso de Santa Rosa de Lima, Santo Tomás Apóstol y San Bartolomé, a quienes celebramos entre los meses de julio

y agosto. Sus vidas reflejan las palabras que el Papa Francisco utilizó para describir a los santos: “Personas llenas de Dios, incapaces de permanecer indiferentes ante las necesidades del prójimo y testigos de caminos luminosos, posibles también para nosotros”.

SANTA ROSA DE LIMA: AMOR, SACRIFICIO Y ENTREGA A DIOS

“Jesús, que estés siempre conmigo”, fue la frase que Santa Rosa de Lima repitió varias veces durante su renovación de votos religiosos poco antes de su muerte el 23 de

El Diácono Humberto Serrano posa con una estatua de Santo Tomás en la Parroquia de St. Thomas the Apostle en Fort Worth. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

agosto de 1617.

Santa Rosa de Lima, la primera Santa canonizada del continente Americano, nació en Lima, Perú, en 1586, con el nombre de Isabel Flores de Oliva. Debido a su gran belleza, su madre comenzó a llamarla Rosa, nombre que adoptó durante su confirmación.

Se caracterizó por una vida de penitencia, sacrificios, servicio a los demás y un inmenso amor a Dios. Desde temprana edad deseaba consagrarse a Dios y, al leer sobre Santa Catalina de Siena, decidió seguir su ejemplo. A pesar de las objeciones de familiares y amigos comenzó a ayunar frecuentemente, vestía ropa áspera y buscaba ocultar su belleza para vivir con humildad y entrega total a Dios.

Frente a la oposición de sus padres de entrar al convento, Rosa decidió permanecer “virgen en el mundo” y, a los 20 años ingresó a la Tercera Orden de Santo Domingo. Sus penitencias se hicieron cada vez más fuertes, incluso utilizaba frecuentemente una corona de espinas con rosas. Todo esto lo ofrecía por las ofensas contra Dios, la idolatría de su país, la conversión de los pecadores y las almas del purgatorio.

Cuando no estaba ayudando económicamente a su familia tejiendo, atendía a los enfermos y necesitados desde la casa de sus padres, donde también dedicaba largas horas a la oración.

La parroquia de St. Rose of Lima ubicada en Glen Rose, fue dedicada a esta santa el 1993 por el Obispo Delaney. El párroco, Padre Brandon LeClair, expresó que Santa Rosa de Lima es un gran ejemplo para todos nosotros de cómo tomar control de nuestros deseos y ofrecerlos al Reino de Dios: “Tomará sacrificios y entrega a Dios, pero es algo que vale la pena. En medio del caos de este mundo, nos ayudará a enfocarnos



en lo que realmente importa: Dios en nuestras vidas”.

SANTO TOMÁS APÓSTOL: DE LA DUDA A LA FE

“No se conoce cómo Tomás fue llamado por Jesús a ser apóstol, pero las intervenciones que tiene en la Biblia lo convierten, en mi opinión, en el santo patrono de todos nosotros”, comentó el Diácono Humberto Serrano, de la

Parroquia de St. Thomas the Apostle en Fort Worth.

La intervención más conocida de Tomás es su duda cuando Jesús resucitado se aparece por primera vez a los demás apóstoles. “Todos, en algún momento, hemos dudado de nuestra fe”, explicó el diácono. Por eso, muchos santos consideran que la duda de Tomás

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La estatua de San Bartolomé en la parroquia que lleva su nombre. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

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fue por causa divina. San Gregorio Magno decía: “Más provechosa nos ha sido para nuestra fe la incredulidad de Tomás, que la fe de todos los discípulos”, porque al tocar las heridas de Cristo, ayudó a confirmar la fe de generaciones enteras.

Otra intervención importante ocurre cuando Lázaro, el mejor amigo de Jesús, muere. Al saber que Jesús iría a verlo, Tomás dijo: “Vamos todos a morir con Él”. Lo que se hizo una realidad, ya que, después de la ascensión de Jesús, Tomás predicó y evangelizó en la India, donde finalmente murió martirizado.

El diácono Serrano señaló que hoy también muchos cristianos “mueren” por el Evangelio al enfrentar rechazo, burlas o persecución por vivir su fe, pero están llamados a seguir adelante con valentía.

La festividad de Santo Tomás se celebra el 3 de julio y la Parroquia de St. Thomas the Apostle de la diócesis de Fort Worth, fundada en el 1937, la celebra con una Misa y una cena. El diácono compartió que, “tanto el clero

como los feligreses son partícipes de esta celebración, recordando las palabras de Santo Tomás: “Señor mío y Dios mío”, y reconociendo que después de la duda, viene la certeza, gracias a la misericordia de Dios”.

SAN BARTOLOMÉ: “VEN Y LO VERÁS”

San Bartolomé, conocido también como Natanael en el Evangelio de Juan, fue uno de los doce apóstoles elegidos por Jesús, que dio su vida defendiendo su fe.

Diane Etzel, una de las primeras feligreses de la parroquia de St. Bartholomew in Fort Worth, expresó que San Bartolomé nos recuerda que, “si realmente buscamos y deseamos conocer a Dios, Él siempre encuentra la manera de acercarse a nosotros”.

Natanael conoció a Jesús por medio de Felipe, sin embargo, al conocer que Jesús era de Nazaret, dudó que fuese el Mesías. Felipe lo invitó a tener un encuentro personal con Jesús con la frase: “Ven y lo verás” (*Jn. 1, 46*), a lo cual Natanael accedió.

Al ver Jesús a Natanael, le dijo “he

aquí un auténtico Israelita, en quien no hay engaño” (*Jn 1, 47*). Al reconocer estas palabras como ciertas, Natanael le preguntó a Jesús cómo lo conocía y Jesús respondió que lo había visto antes, debajo de la higuera. Al escuchar esto Natanael reconoció a Jesús como el Hijo de Dios (*Jn. 48-49*).

“El Señor nos encuentra de la manera que sea necesaria, tal como lo hizo con Natanael. Él dudó, pero Jesús salió a su encuentro, y así también lo hace con nosotros”, compartió Etzel.

Después de la resurrección de Jesús, se conoce que San Bartolomé fue a evangelizar a las regiones orientales y murió desollado en Armenia. Por esta razón, las imágenes de San Bartolomé lo muestran sosteniendo un cuchillo y una “tela”, que en realidad es su piel, representando así la manera en que fue martirizado.

“La fiesta de San Bartolomé se celebra el 24 de agosto y es un recordatorio de pedir la intercesión de este santo para ser valientes en defender nuestra fe y ser firmes en ella, así como lo fue él”, concluyó Etzel. 🇺🇸

Devoción Sagrada

El Obispo Olson se une a los demás obispos del país para consagrar los Estados Unidos al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús

Por Matthew Smith

Los fieles de la Diócesis de Fort Worth tendrán diversas oportunidades en junio para conocer mejor y vivir más profundamente la devoción al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús.

La devoción al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús se remonta al siglo XI. El mes de junio se ha dedicado a esta devoción desde el 1856, año en que el Papa Pío IX estableció su fiesta litúrgica en la Iglesia. La Solemnidad del Santísimo Sagrado Corazón de Jesús se celebra en los Estados Unidos el viernes siguiente a la Solemnidad del Corpus Christi. Dicha solemnidad se celebró este año el 12 de junio.

Con motivo de la conmemoración del 250º aniversario, el semiquincentenario, de la firma de la Declaración de Independencia, la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos decidió el pasado mes de noviembre consagrar el país al Santísimo Corazón de Jesús. El Obispo Michael Olson consagró la diócesis el 21 de junio junto con sus hermanos obispos en la Parroquia de Sacred Heart de Comanche, para que coincidiera con el 250º aniversario de los Estados Unidos y con la consagración nacional realizada por los obispos de todo el país.

La devoción al Sagrado Corazón nos recuerda que el centro de nuestra fe no es un conjunto de normas abstractas, sino el amor ardiente e infinito de una persona: Jesucristo, señaló el Obispo Olson. “Al consagrar nuestra diócesis a su Sagrado Corazón, encomendamos públicamente nuestras parroquias, familias, clero y comunidades civiles a su cuidado misericordioso”.

El Obispo Olson exhortó a los fieles de toda la diócesis a participar en la consagración, ya fuera en persona o mediante la oración en sus hogares o comunidades parroquiales.

Animó también a los sacerdotes de la diócesis a “hacerse eco de esta consagración en sus parroquias ese domingo para que el mensaje del Evangelio y la caridad de Cristo brillen con fuerza ante todos”.

UN SÍMBOLO DE SACRIFICIO Y AMOR

El Padre Matthew Sanka, SAC, párroco de la Parroquia de Sacred Heart de Comanche, se unió a la invitación que el Obispo Olson dirigiera a todos los fieles de la diócesis.

Una estatua del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús se puede ver en la Parroquia de St. Philip the Apostle en Flower Mound el 11 de junio durante una Misa de vigilia. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



“El Sagrado Corazón de Jesús representa la esencia misma del sacrificio de Jesús por nosotros”, dijo el Padre Sanka. “Por tanto, consagrar nuestra diócesis al Sagrado Corazón es reconocer el sacrificio de Jesús y el rescate que pagó por nuestros pecados. Es también un símbolo del amor de Dios hacia nosotros”.

El Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, como un símbolo profundo y de larga tradición en la Iglesia, representa el “inmenso amor y la misericordia de nuestro Señor Jesucristo”, según Catholic.com. La devoción al Sagrado Corazón se centra en el corazón de Jesús, que representa su sufrimiento redentor por el mundo entero. 🇺🇸

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