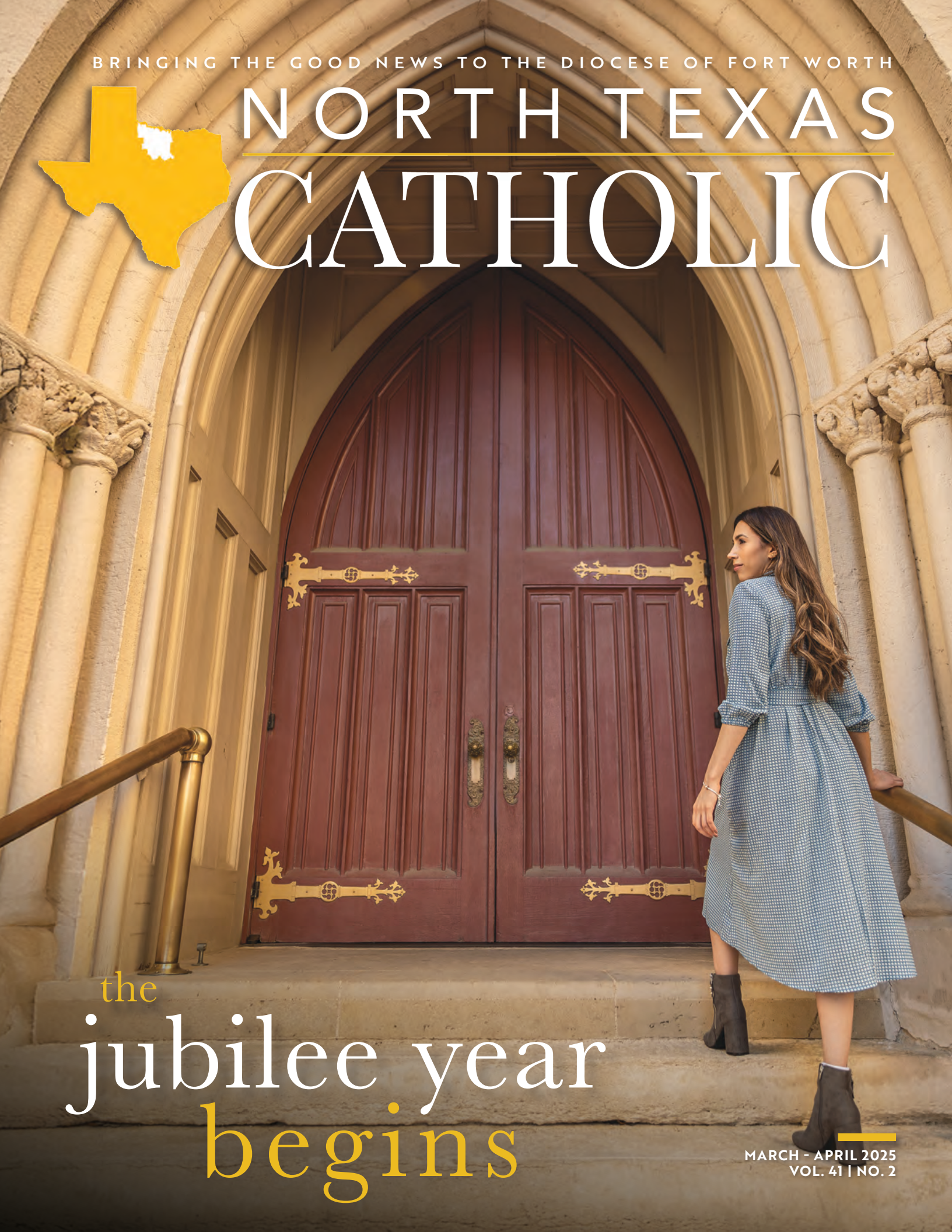


BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



the
jubilee year
begins

MARCH - APRIL 2025
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St. Patrick Cathedral, a designated Jubilee 2025 site
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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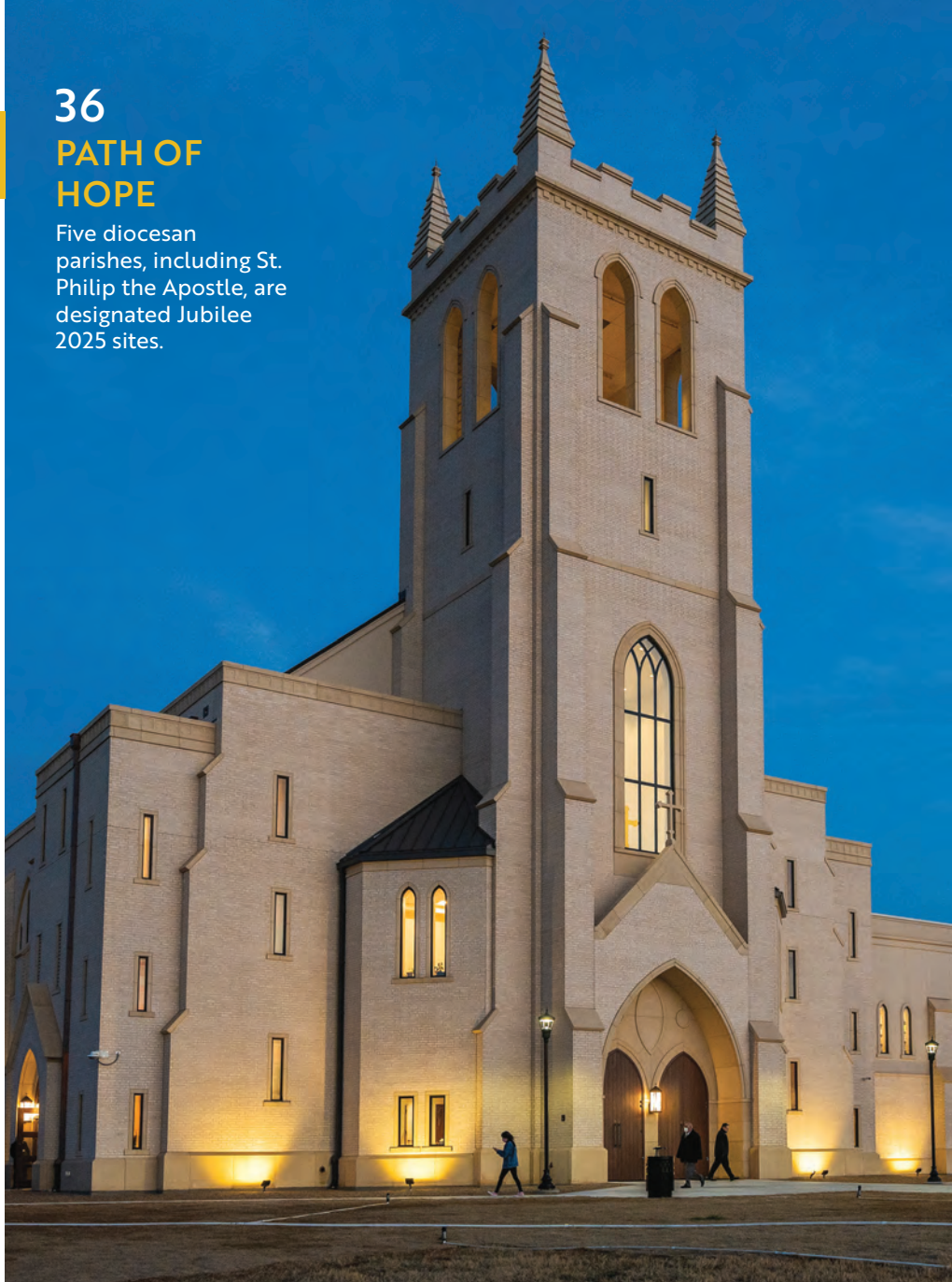
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HAVE A STORY IDEA?

Share it with us! Help us make sure your parish community is seen in the NTC online, in print, or on our quickly growing social media accounts. Submit your ideas and briefs to:
NTC@wdioc.org.

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BISHOP MICHAEL OLSON
is the fourth bishop of the
Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth

 @BpOlsonFW

THE JUBILEE OF HOPE IS A GRACE AND NOT A WISH

For over 700 years, the Holy Father has decreed that a jubilee year be celebrated as a time for pilgrimages to the holy sites of the martyrdom of the Apostles and the earliest saints to seek mercy and conversion won by Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection. These ordinary occasions occur every 25 years and are marked by the unsealing of the Holy Door at St. Peter's in Rome as well as similar doors at the Basilicas of St. Paul, St. Mary Major, and St. John Lateran for pilgrims to pass through and receive sacramental confession and pray for their own conversion and that of the entire world.

This year, Pope Francis has proclaimed that in order to prepare for the 2,000th anniversary of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ in 2033, the Church should focus and reflect on our vocation to be pilgrims of hope. As St. Paul writes in *Romans 5:5*, "Hope does not disappoint."

In order to promote greater ease for many Catholics to receive these graces, the Holy Father has also proclaimed that such pilgrimage sites should be made available in every diocese in the world. In the Diocese of Fort Worth, our pilgrimage sites include St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth, St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church in Flower Mound, Our

Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Fort Worth, Immaculate Conception of Mary Catholic Church in Wichita Falls, and Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Comanche. Please avail yourselves of these opportunities to pray for these spiritual graces.

I would ask all of us to reflect upon this great theological virtue of hope that we are given at baptism and nurtured in throughout our sacramental life. St. Thomas Aquinas taught that the motive for Christian hope is God's omnipotence and more specifically God's mercy. Hope requires that we trust God for whom all things are possible even when we observe in a current set of facts that change seems impossible for us to bring about through our own efforts. It is precisely in our powerlessness where we are most capable to witness on behalf of the virtue of hope.

The situation at our southern border appears hopeless. Our society very much urgently needs us to act faithfully as the Church that Christ intended us to be, a People of Hope. I offer the following quote from St. Augustine. He once wrote, "Hope has two beautiful daughters: Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

Many of us are rightly angry at the injustices involved in this muddled

situation: violent acts perpetrated against the innocent by gangs who are illegally present in our nation; violence suffered by migrants forced to leave their nations because of oppression and threats to children and the elderly; the influx of drugs and human trafficking; the abdication of responsibility of legitimate authority to maintain a secure border from threats of terrorism; the delaying of due process in adjudicating refugees' claims for political asylum; and the exploitation of unaccompanied children who have arrived without supervision, to name a few.

Yet, unfortunately, too many of us too easily become stuck in anger and neglect to seek Hope's second daughter, Courage. The anger that we justly feel must oblige us in Christian Charity to work to change this system that has brought us to this miserable state of affairs. If we hope, God gives us the courage to reform an immigration system to include the rule of law and the recognition of our international responsibilities as a good neighbor to assist those who are persecuted, oppressed, and needing refuge. Anger without courage becomes destructive rage. The time has never been more opportune for immigration reform for the sake of the poor, the vulnerable, and for an ordered peace. "Hope does not disappoint." 🇺🇸

What do we leave behind?

We've been cleaning house at the office. Two massive file cabinets needed to be moved, which necessitated emptying the contents.

Oh, what a time capsule we found. Files upon files, dating back to the late 1980s, included the truly worthless, such as vacation request notices and manuals for office equipment which has since been replaced and replaced again. Some discoveries were insignificant but fascinating, like the \$20,000 receipt for one high-end Macintosh computer and its accessories.

And then we found treasures, such as interviews with seminarians Michael Olson, Daniel Kelley, and Mel Bessellieu. We spotted photos of John Robert Skeldon and Hoa Nguyen as they prepared to enter seminary.

I'm a bit of a numbers nerd, so the most revealing find was a directory of the Diocese of Fort Worth from 1987. Looking at statistics on its yellowed pages reminded me of charting height and weight as a child grows.

In the 38 years since the directory's publication, diocesan geography remains the same: 28 counties comprising 23,950 square miles. But the number of parishes has grown from 83 to 92, and the Catholic population of the diocese has exploded from 123,000 to about 1.2 million.

As stunned as I was by the concrete data of the diocese's growth, I imagine the clergy, seminarians, and lay faithful in 1987 would have been overwhelmed to know the Catholic population of the diocese would increase tenfold in less than 40 years.

In those filing cabinets, we couldn't see the most important piece left behind by those who filled them — their faith. However, their willingness to serve the Lord and His Church reminds me of Jesus' teaching in *Matthew 13:31-32*, that the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, the smallest of seeds that grows into the largest of plants.

In this day and time, may the Holy Spirit fill us and use us to build His Kingdom.

Susan Moses

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Views from the Pews

Parishioners (and clergy) heeded the call to “go in peace to love and serve the Lord” by visiting the imprisoned and witnessing to the sanctity of life, while taking time to celebrate their community and culture.

Christmas Behind Bars. Bishop Michael Olson continued his tradition of visiting prisoners at Federal Medical Center Fort Worth on Christmas Eve, accompanied by seminarians Trent Barton and Paul Trinh and volunteers Jeff Wilson, Phil Luebbehusen, and Reyna Castelán.

North Texas Rally for Life. Parishioners from several parishes, including Our Lady of Guadalupe in Fort Worth, attended the North Texas Rally for Life on Jan. 18 to pray and advocate for the protection of life from conception until natural death.

Lunar New Year. On Feb. 2, more than 3,000 Catholics at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington celebrated the Lunar New Year, also known as *Tet*, with Mass, lion dancing, and gifts of “lucky money” and scrolls of Scripture, among other traditions.

THERE'S
MORE



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NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Annette Mendoza-Smith



NTC/Ben Torres

Titanic ties



Sanctuary lamp at Sacred Heart is a gift for escaping the Titanic's fate

NTC/Bertha Salazar



The sanctuary lamp at Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls.

WICHITA FALLS — Deep in the archives of one of the diocese's oldest churches lies a rich history that ties a sanctuary lamp to the most famous maritime tragedy in history.

In "Sacred Heart Parish: 100 Years of Growth and Service," author Max Kintner explains how the Frank Schnell family donated the antique lamp to the parish in 1916.

A Russian immigrant from Odessa (now part of Ukraine), Schnell came to America in 1881 when he was 21 and ended up in Henrietta, Texas, where he met another young immigrant, Anna Heinen, whom he later married in 1884.

By early 1912, Schnell had saved enough money to return to his homeland in the hopes of finding his two sisters and a brother he'd left behind 30 years earlier. Unfortunately, when he finally arrived, he found that all his relatives had died or moved. To return to his wife and young family, Schnell

booked a passage on an English luxury ocean liner on its maiden voyage.

However, when the Titanic hit an iceberg and sunk in the icy waters of the Atlantic on April 14-15, 1912, Schnell was not on board, having providentially missed the ship's departure.

Upon Schnell's eventual return to Henrietta, he and his wife moved to Wichita Falls.

Four years after the news of the tragic sinking was transmitted to the world, the Schnell family made a donation of gratitude for God's providence that allowed for Schnell's narrow escape from the terrible disaster that claimed the lives of more than 1,500.

The gift, a brass and red-glass sanctuary lamp, was donated just in time for the Sacred Heart church building's dedication in 1916. Today, the lamp still hangs in the parish sanctuary, lighting the way for prayers for the faithful.

— *Jenara Kocks Burgess*

Conversion of heart



Respect Life Mass stresses need for prayer, protection

FORT WORTH — During the Jan. 23 Respect Life Mass held at St. Patrick Cathedral, Bishop Michael Olson said the annual Mass was initially introduced to pray for the repeal of Roe v. Wade and the legal protection for the unborn but is now most needed as an opportunity to pray for the conversion of hearts.

"For we know that it is not the change in a president, the change in justices or courts, the change in laws that brings about peace — peace that can only come from Christ," he said. "But it is our conversion of heart."

True peace, Bishop Olson urged, is only achieved through a conversion of heart, which is accomplished with an honest acknowledgment of one's sins and an understanding that only the mercy and the grace of God "can deliver us from such hateful evils as abortion,



Bishop Michael Olson greets the congregation at the Respect Life Mass on Jan. 23.

the fundamental destroyer of peace in the world."

Santiago Willoughby from St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine hopes more Catholics will educate

themselves beyond listening to "what the world thinks. ... We need to be a light in a world that is in darkness."

— *Christina Benavides*

NTC/Juan Guajardo

Our Mother of Mercy celebrates 95 years of faith

FORT WORTH — La’Wonda Peoples emceed the closing reception on the yearlong commemoration of Our Mother of Mercy Parish’s 95th anniversary.

The president of the parish council opened her introductory remarks by saying, “95 years is a very long time, and while our church has had its fair share of ups and downs, we thank God to still be in existence after 95 years ... and we have no plans to go anywhere.”

“Just to heaven,” yelled someone in the audience.

That someone was Bishop Michael Olson.

Our Mother of Mercy Church in Fort Worth, the only historically African American Catholic parish in the Diocese of Fort Worth, concluded its anniversary festivities on Jan. 19 with Mass celebrated by Bishop Olson, followed by a reception featuring music, dance,



Parishioners of Our Mother of Mercy exchange the Sign of Peace at the anniversary Mass. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

and addresses from parish members and local leaders.

More than a year ago, the parish council began to plan how to mark the milestone anniversary, which was Jan. 14, 2024. Most years during February’s Black History

Month, the parish, located just southeast of downtown Fort Worth, researches and publicly recognizes the contributions of famous Black individuals.

However, last year the parish council realized, “We’ve got history right here in our own

church. Let’s celebrate our own people,” recalled Mary Battle, a 15-year member.

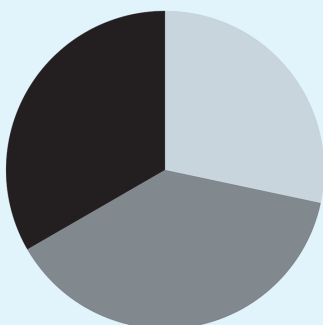
Instead of choosing national figures, Battle interviewed more than 20 members and shared their accomplishments with the parish all year.

#iGiveCatholic Results FOR THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

1,463 donors 

\$891,044 raised

60 gift recipients




17 Schools

20 Ministries

23 Parishes

TOP PARISH

Most Blessed Sacrament, Arlington

\$192,652 raised from 179 donors 



TOP SCHOOL

St. Andrew Catholic School, Fort Worth

\$147,729 raised from 237 donors

Marriage, sacrifice, vocation



Bishop addresses young adults

FORT WORTH — “The shared life of marriage between a husband and a wife requires sacrificial love on the part of each to prepare each other through holiness and virtue for eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven,” said Bishop Michael Olson to nearly 200 young adults at the Young Adult Mass on Feb. 15 at St. Bartholomew Parish in Fort Worth.

In his homily, the bishop explained that God created marriage for eternal purposes through selfless living and loving of one’s spouse.

Bishop Olson advised attendees to prepare “through



About 200 attended the Young Adult Mass at St. Bartholomew Parish on Feb. 15. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

prayer and chaste living to discern the path of married life” and to “trust the selfless and sacrificial example of Jesus in following the path of obedience to His Father that shows the eternal love required for a happy and holy marriage.”

At a dinner following

Mass, seminarian Trent Barton shared his vocation journey. “Discernment is for everyone,” he said. “All people must discern and ask themselves: What is God’s will for me?”

Never replace or supersede your vocation with a profession, Barton counseled.

“As Bishop mentioned during his homily, ‘There is eternal significance to your vocation.’”

Barton encouraged the young adults to pursue their vocation to married or consecrated life with courage.

— Jennifer Johnson

An inspiring visit



St. Padre Pio relic travels to 10 parishes in the diocese

WICHITA FALLS —

Parishioners and clergy from 10 parishes were very grateful to be able to venerate a St.

Padre Pio relic, on loan from its permanent home at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in White Settlement recently.

Deacon Bill Archer, a retired Sacred Heart deacon, said he was very moved by the “once-in-a-lifetime experience” to venerate the relic. He said, “It was absolutely incredible. It was very inspiring. It was a moment beyond any kind of explanation.”

Father Kyle Walterscheid, pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Wichita Falls, came by Sacred Heart on Jan. 24 after the noon Mass and later celebrated the closing Mass in the evening.

“It was great to see a church completely filled twice on an ordinary Friday for the two Masses offered at Sacred Heart Parish and to see the large volume of people coming from all over the Wichita Falls area throughout the day,” said Fr. Walterscheid.

The relic has returned to St. Peter the Apostle Parish, but in the future it will visit other parishes and neighboring dioceses.

— Jenara Kocks Burgess



NTC/Juan Guajardo

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

FORT WORTH — In a letter to the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Fort Worth, Bishop Michael Olson reminded parents, students, and faculty members “the mission of education is to unlock and to open these doors of truth, beauty, and goodness. Without these doors to be opened, our students and their parents (and ourselves) remain locked behind the walls of egoism, materialism, consumerism, and hedonism.”

In January, families were invited to visit diocesan schools during Catholic Schools Week to discover the eternal treasure of Catholic education.

DOORS OF TRUTH

Of 4,078 students, 85% are Catholic.

According to the 2024-25 *National Catholic Educational Association Data Report*, of the diocese’s 427 full and part-time faculty/staff, 64% are Catholic and 18 are religious men, women, or clergy. Since 2021-22, enrollment has increased 8.6%, and class sizes average 13:1.

DOORS OF BEAUTY, GOODNESS

9,608 service hours across 17 schools.

Director of Mission Patrice Hall stated that in each of the diocese’s 14 primary (PK-8) and three high schools (9-12), students attend Mass at least once a week and are given opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration and volunteer service.



Students of Immaculate Conception Catholic School in Denton reach for holy water after Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Scan the QR code to watch Bishop Olson visit our Catholic schools and learn more about our diocesan schools by visiting CatholicSchoolsFWDioc.org.

THERE'S MORE



CLERGY ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

REV. JOSÉ RAMÓN JIMÉNEZ LÓPEZ, CORC

New to the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Fort Worth, effective Dec. 11.

REV. BABJI MERUGU, SAC

New to the diocese, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, effective Dec. 17.

DEACON HARRY HEINZ

Previously at St. Michael Parish in Bedford, has retired, effective Jan. 6.



SEEK 2026 in Fort Worth

(courtesy photo/Midwestern State University)



MSU students at SEEK 2025.

SALT LAKE CITY —

Screams and cheers erupted from the hundred diocesan attendees at SEEK 2025 when conference officials announced the Diocese of Fort Worth as one of three locations selected to host SEEK 2026.

The conference is scheduled for Jan. 1-5, 2026, and will be held at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center in Grapevine.

A YEAR WITH St. Vincent de Paul

St. Philip the Apostle Parish's new SVdP conference meets community needs in Flower Mound and Lewisville

By Lance Murray

In its first year, the new St. Vincent de Paul conference at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound has grown significantly and helped many of their neighbors in dire need.

"We had a gentleman call us and — talk about divine intervention, because he's not calling a phone number that's being picked up right away, he's leaving a message. He left a message, and I think within 30 minutes, our person on hotline duty happened to call and retrieve that message," said Mary Beth Fitzgerald, president of the St. Philip Conference.

"This guy was standing outside in August, you know 106 degrees or whatever it was, under a tree on the grounds of a weekly motel. He had his 10-month-old and his 10-year-old with him. And he needed help. He needed a place to stay," Fitzgerald said.

"We were able to help him, and we all wound up really, almost falling in love with this little family. And we really tried to help him as much as we could," she said.

Another example, Fitzgerald said, was

a woman who was a parishioner.

She was married, had a 5- and 10-year-old, and woke up one morning to discover that her husband had left her and taken the couple's only working car.

She was working full-time as a teacher's aide, Fitzgerald said, but now as a single earner, wasn't making a living wage.

The woman and her children were assigned to husband-and-wife Vincentian members.

"They went above and beyond. They just, again, fell in love with her and her family, and they wound up driving her and her children to work/school, because she worked in the school, for four weeks while we got the car repaired," Fitzgerald said.

"Literally, who knows, I could have been sitting next to her in the pew the weekend before," Fitzgerald continued. "You never would have known.

"There's some situations that are just so overwhelming that it almost brings you to your knees. And first of all, that somebody's living in a particular situation, let alone within our parish boundaries. We serve Flower Mound and Lewisville,



NTC/ Kevin Bartram

Mary Beth Fitzgerald, right, and volunteers (from left) Diane Jones, Pat Laubacher, and Paul Carter prepare to go out on home visits on Jan. 30.

which is kind of a nice little bubble-like community for the most part. Most of us are doing pretty well here, only to realize the struggles that go on could be next door,” she said.

A LARGER PURPOSE

The St. Philip Conference began serving the parish on Feb. 1, 2024. Now, the conference has about 30 members, up from the 15 founding members.

For Fitzgerald and others, working at the conference has great meaning.

“It’s like I have found my home, my place, my ‘what I was supposed to be doing,’” Fitzgerald said.

St. Philip joins 12 other parishes with conferences in the Fort Worth Diocesan Council, totaling about 400 members.

Vincentians make home visits to neighbors who request financial assistance for rent, utilities, and emergencies. They offer spiritual and emotional support; distribute free food and other goods; and provide a micro-loan program to relieve high-interest payday and title loans.

Continued on Page 12

In 2024, the 13 conferences of St. Vincent de Paul in the Diocese of Fort Worth gave:



\$553,798 in rent assistance



\$596,513 in utility assistance



\$1,040,263 value in food



\$4,000,000 value in medications

Almost 40,000 individuals were helped.

From Page 11

Recently, Fort Worth diocesan Vincentians began assisting with expensive prescription medications as part of a program that started in the Diocese of Dallas.

Victor Craig, president of the Fort Worth Diocesan SVdP Council, said he sees a clear challenge for the organization.

“I think homelessness prevention is our main point that we try and assist with people in their homes, bring stability to the families, hope, and that they continue to move forward without a lot of disruption, because once you leave home, then it’s a bunch of chaos after that,” Craig said. “Five years ago, a lot of groups were helping with rent, but rent takes a lot and some have gotten out of the game.”

NEIGHBORS IN NEED

The conference has what Fitzgerald called a “warm line,” an unmanned phone number that people can call to leave a message.

A parish Vincentian checks the message and calls the person back to get more information, find out what the need is, and if there is a time frame associated with it.

“If it’s rent, is there an eviction notice? If it’s a utility bill, is there a shut-off notice? Those are the two big things that we help with, but also, we’ve helped with car repairs and medical bills and certainly food and household goods,” Fitzgerald said. “At that point, we set up a home visit, and we go out in pairs, and we go and meet with the neighbor in their home.”

The home visit brings them to a unique place in the life of the person seeking assistance.

“That’s a privilege to be invited into that space with somebody, because it’s not a conversation I’m going to have on the street,” Fitzgerald said. “So you feel you’re doing God’s work, doing what He wants us to do, being the hands and feet of Jesus, bringing light and hope to our neighbors — to be able to connect and to see in their eyes,” she said.

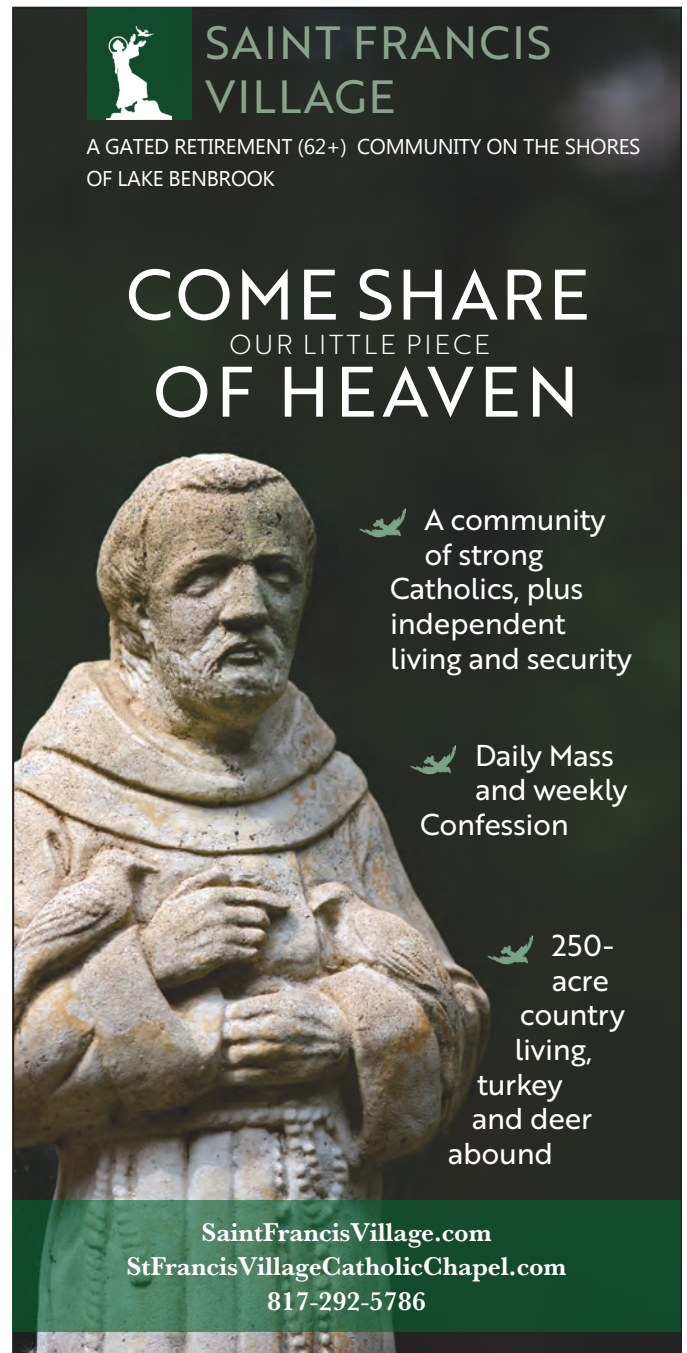
Fitzgerald said it’s not easy for people to ask for help.

She said that callers sometimes tell them, “You’re the only ones that called us back. You’re the only ones that seem to care.”

Fitzgerald said when a Vincentian does a follow-up, clients are “amazed, and they’ll tell us horror stories about other places and social service agencies where they’ve tried to get help, and they can’t even get an appointment. Or they sit there in an office in the waiting room all day and then can’t even be helped.”

If they could, the St. Philip conference would help everybody, but funds are limited.

“If I had that big, big magic pot of money and a magic wand, I would help everybody. I would give everybody what they need. But, you know, we have to be discerning and be good stewards of our money,” Fitzgerald said. 🇺🇸



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Members of the Knights of St. Peter Claver pose for a photo after the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Mass at St. Joseph Church in Arlington on Jan. 18. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

COURAGE FOR conversion

39th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Mass

By Jennifer Johnson

Many words can be used to describe the exemplary attributes of a leader like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Courage, defined as “strength in the face of pain or grief,” is certainly one of them.

On Jan. 18, Bishop Michael Olson called on the faithful to demonstrate courage during the 39th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Mass for the Preservation of Peace and Justice at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington.

During his homily, Bishop Olson recalled Dr. King’s own remarks about our need as Americans to resist cowardice even when acting alone: “Courage is an inner resolution to go forward despite obstacles. And there comes a time when we must take a position that is neither safe, nor politically correct, nor popular, but one we must take because it is right.”

“Time does not heal all wounds, only love heals all wounds,” added Bishop Olson. “What is needed by us for conversion and healing is the courage ... to change our ways by following Jesus in word and deed on His way of the Cross.”

The MLK Memorial Mass was organized by a committee comprising 18 parishioners from six parishes. Marian Sims, who assumed the role of chairwoman four years ago, has served on the committee since 2018. Her goal is to help the diocese remember the great works of Dr. King and bring his efforts to mind each year.

“I would like visiting parishioners to return to their home parishes with a sense of hope and inspiration,” Sims said. “Feeling hopeful about the potential for change and realizing that they have to do their part for a change to happen. And inspired to take action to strive for a more just society.”

Music was provided by nearly 20

choir members and musicians from Our Mother of Mercy Parish in Fort Worth and St. Joseph. Many of the songs featured a musical style that would have been familiar to Dr. King. Those in attendance watched reverent dancing during the Presentation of the Gifts and clapped along during some of the songs.

Josephine Obe, a parishioner of St. Joseph since 2015, believed it is important to “remember where the struggle began and what people ahead of us went through.” In doing so, one can “see how far we have come, what we have achieved, so that we will be in one accord and celebrate together,” she said. “We all have a dream, and we can’t let that dream die.”

Before the final blessing, Bishop Olson announced Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory will be the homilist for next year’s 40th MLK Memorial Mass. “It gives me warm feelings,” Sims said about the announcement. “I am super excited for him to come and speak to us.” 🇺🇸

LEARN, SERVE, LEAD

The Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement helps children grow in faith

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen



American teenagers growing up in 2025 face a myriad of issues from cyberbullying to navigating complex family relationships. When something troubles Kindly Nguyen, the 15-year-old finds support and guidance in a faith-based organization that fosters not only spiritual growth but life skills needed to become a productive, compassionate member of society.

The high school sophomore joined the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement (VEYM) in kindergarten and spends Sunday afternoons learning how to model Jesus while her peers go to the movies or play video games. She doesn't consider attending the meetings a sacrifice.

"It's more of a privilege to me. I like to go," claimed the young Our Lady of Fatima in Fort Worth parishioner. "It

really helps me connect with kids who have the same faith and pushes you to do more spiritually."

The bond that forms with like-minded young people and leaders helps her manage the challenges that come with growing up in a stress-filled, secularized world.

"You think you're going through something alone then realize other kids have the same problem and you get to talk about it in a faith environment," Nguyen added. "We're growing up together with God."

Trina Cao, the teen's mother, never had the opportunity to join a VEYM group, but she wanted her daughter to have the experience.

"It allows her to have a foundation of faith, meet friends, and help the community," said Cao, a spiritual supporter of the organization. "It's a good way for teens to build good morals and values they can take into everyday life."

A STORIED HISTORY

The Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement can trace its history to 1844 when the Apostleship of Prayer was started by a French priest who wanted to encourage his Jesuit students to have deeper devotion to prayer. His ideas about daily prayer and

A member of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement stands at attention. (NTC/Ben Torres)



NTC/Ben Torres

Members of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement stand at attention, some wearing scarves, as they say a pledge during a meeting.

sacrificing for the needs of the Church soon spread across the French countryside, influencing St. Therese of Lisieux who became a member.

A youth branch of the Apostleship of Prayer, the Eucharistic Crusade, was established in 1915 and later was renamed the Eucharistic Youth Movement. As the Eucharistic Youth Movement grew internationally, French missionaries brought it to Vietnam.

When Vietnamese refugees arrived in the U.S. after the fall of Saigon in 1975, they brought their faith and dedication to the organization with them.

Today, there are more than 130 VEYM parish-sponsored chapters across the U.S. with approximately 2,500 youth leaders and more than 25,000 youth members. The VEYM also has a presence in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, and Norway.

MORE THAN BOOK WORK

“It’s essentially a worldwide youth group,” explained Anna Vu, chapter

president at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington. “Our goal is to make sure kids understand their faith. We want them to understand the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of our religion. As they grow older, we expose them to more service projects.”

Children participating in the ministry range in age from 7 to 17 and are divided into the Seedling division (ages 7 to 9), the Search division (ages 10 to 12), the Companion division (ages 13 to 15), and the Knight of the Eucharist division (ages 16 to 17).

“Once they turn 18, a member can stay and train to become a youth leader,” said the Texas native who first joined the movement as a 10-year-old living in Austin. “Our leaders are 18 to 65.”

The VEYM supplements the parish’s standard religious education and sacramental preparation programs.

“Children are exposed to more than just theory and book information. We give them examples of how they can live their faith in the outside world — not just in a ‘bubble’ or classroom,” Vu insisted.

NURTURING VOCATIONS

Father Linh Nguyen credits his parents and childhood in the VEYM for strengthening a prayer life that led to his vocation to the priesthood. He joined the organization as a 6-year-old parishioner at Christ the King, advanced to youth leader at the age of 18, and continues to support the ministry’s events as a member of the clergy.

“The four pillars of the organization — prayer, communion, sacrifice and apostolic work — feed everything we do: our activities, involvement, training, development, and growth in faith,” said the pastor of St. George Parish, recalling his years of wearing the distinctive VEYM scarf. “When we talked about prayer, we’d go to Adoration. We also learned different prayers and methodologies and how to integrate them into our prayer life.”

Time spent in front of the Eucharist helped cultivate a relationship with Jesus.

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“I was able to hear and discern His call and then put it into practice by serving my brothers and sisters and seeing Christ in my neighbor,” added Fr. Nguyen, who was ordained in 2021. “I knew the priesthood was what I wanted to do.”

Mutual respect between leaders, discipline, and the willingness of youth to participate explains the organization’s success. Dedication is another factor.

“Perhaps the most unrecognized part of the organization is the commitment of our young people who are youth leaders,” he enthused. “They are willing to make that sacrifice every weekend and three or four days during the week to prep lessons, train, and devote themselves to educating future generations. That’s always been the core of the organization.”

A DIFFERENT FORMATION

Serving as the new chapter president of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement at Our Lady of Fatima Parish requires time and commitment, “but it’s worth it,” Kim Nguyen told the *North Texas Catholic*.

The UTA academic advisor was teaching religious education at the parish when friends encouraged her to join the VEYM 18 years ago.

“It definitely made my faith stronger,” Nguyen said. “I learned to love more, sacrifice more, and do more acts of service than when I was a Sunday school teacher. It’s a different formation.”

Once a month, the entire chapter of 150 children and 45 leaders attend Adoration together. Summer camps, retreats, and lock-ins augment opportunities for prayer, instruction, and charitable service. Leaders remind their young



Anna Vu leads a group of young adults in uniform participating in the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington on Feb. 15. (NTC/Ben Torres)

charges to sacrifice something extra during Advent or Lent and find a way to incorporate the pope’s monthly intention into daily life.

“I’ve seen kids grow in faith, but they may not realize it until they’re older,” Nguyen suggested. “We help them be better people. That’s part of our motto — not just to have faith but, as good citizens, go out into the world to do good deeds.”

MAKING SAINTS

Growing up a cradle Catholic, Phuong Mai went through the motions during liturgies.

“As I grew older and more mature, I saw there was a gap in my understanding of the richness of the faith,” said the Vietnamese Martyrs parishioner.

Years spent in the VEYM awakened her spiritually and introduced a coterie

of faith-filled people who enhanced and reinforced her beliefs.

“I grew passionate about the faith. The more I learned, the more I loved, and now I try to build that into our children,” added Mai, the wife of diaconate candidate Hoang Do. “You not only have to live your faith inside the church but outside as well.”

It’s a message she shares with her own four children who are now members of the parish’s VEYM.

“I drill into my children that if you are going to be in any faith-based activities, society, or group, the best place is one grounded in the Eucharist,” explained the human resources professional. “I try to bring morality and the beauty of the Church into every aspect of their life. My job is not to make them a doctor or professionally successful. My job is to make them a saint.” 🇺🇸



Inmates attend Eucharistic Adoration during a Kolbe prisoner retreat at Bridgeport Correctional Center.

where JUSTICE meets MERCY

Clergy, chaplains, and trained parish volunteers share the Gospel, friendship, and Catholic faith with incarcerated men and women

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen
Photography by Juan Guajardo

The first time someone invited Myles Jacob Miller to visit a local prison, he quickly dismissed the idea.

“I was really coldhearted,” admitted the cradle Catholic who was living in San Antonio at the time. “My thoughts about inmates were they screwed up, got caught, and now they’re getting what they deserve.”

Over the years his heart and attitude softened. So when parishioner Howard Biel asked if he would help with

a Kolbe prisoner retreat at the Bridgeport Correctional Center, the now permanent deacon responded with an enthusiastic and immediate yes.

“It’s really been a blessing,” said Deacon Miller, who was ordained in 2000 for the Diocese of San Antonio. “Jesus tells us to visit the people in prison and that’s what we do. We bring Christ to the forgotten.”

Clergy, chaplains, and trained parish volunteers share the Gospel, friendship, and truth about the Catholic faith with incarcerated men and women in 15 correctional facilities across the Diocese of Fort Worth. Depending on a location’s

restrictions, people involved in prison ministry provide one-on-one pastoral care, Catholic Masses, Communion services, sacramental preparation, prayer opportunities, Bible study, and retreats.

And the need for spiritual services to the imprisoned continues to grow.

Texas has the highest incarcerated population in the United States. According to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, there were 134,668 inmates in Texas prison facilities in September 2024. Of the roughly 40,000 Texans released from state prisons every year, nearly half

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Father Anto Carlose, SAC, hears an inmate's confession during a Kolbe prisoner retreat at Bridgeport Correctional Center.

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are rearrested within three years. Between 15% and 20% return to prison.

Faith-based rehabilitation can make a difference.

“The rate of recidivism is [close to] 50%. That drops down when inmates get their heads wrapped around a job or life skill,” Dcn. Miller said. “For the ones that become stronger in their faith, it goes down to less than 20%. If they attend a spiritual retreat, there’s less than a 10% chance of them returning.”

The retired Air Force veteran is part of a team that organizes a Kolbe prisoner retreat twice a year — one in English and one in Spanish — at the Bridgeport prison.

FINDING FAITH

Named to honor St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Franciscan priest who died in place of a fellow prisoner at the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II, the three-day retreats were started in 2009 by a group of Catholic men from the Texas Hill Country. They modeled the spiritual exercises after the adoration, community, theology, and service of the “ACTS” retreat experience. Known today as Kolbe Prison Ministries, the effort to help the incarcerated in Texas heal and find their faith has expanded to prisons in Louisiana, Oklahoma, Florida, and Kansas.

“To be perfectly honest, they come for the food. We feed them physically

but spiritually, as well,” explained Raul Soto, who coordinates volunteers for the Bridgeport event from the tri-parish communities of St. John the Baptizer in Bridgeport, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Decatur, and St. Mary in Jacksboro. “They receive strong teaching on everything dealing with the sacraments, Rosary, Mass, Eucharistic Adoration.”

Typically, 50 men gather in the prison’s gymnasium from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. for the retreat, which is organized with help from 25 parishioners who provide meals, testimonies, and do other outreach.

“We ask the men to make the Lord the center of their life because He’ll stick with you,” said the St. John the Baptizer parishioner. “We all change, but the Lord will never change. The guys take that to heart.”

Regular prison ministry includes weekly Bible lessons, OCIA, and a Rosary class. On Thursdays, the priests assigned to the tri-parish communities, Father Sam Ferix Antony Jesu Antony, SAC, or Father Anto Carlose, SAC, celebrate Mass at the correctional center.

Soto remembers when a non-Catholic inmate, an accomplished cellist, performed for the liturgies. “It was bittersweet when he was paroled because it was such a blessing to have him with us,” the volunteer said. “He sent me a note to say what an impact playing during Mass made in his life. It touched my life as well.”

When visitors come to the prison, inmates “light up,” maintains the bilingual Texan, who communicates with

Spanish-speakers from Mexico and South America.

“We’re not trained counselors or professionals, but we can listen to their stories and concerns,” he added. “Some of them are really lonely and get no visitors. Seeing how they react to a friendly hug makes what I do so worth it.”

GIVING HOPE

Some inmates haven’t had a visitor in months — even years.

“Their families are far away, or they’ve burned bridges and are alienated from relatives,” Biel pointed out. “Prisons are depressing, and the conditions aren’t good. Just walking in with a smile can change the whole outlook of the day for someone.”

Biel, an Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parishioner, began assisting Deacon Eldon Gray with Communion services at the Bridgeport Correctional Center more than eight years ago.

“He took me to the prison, and I fell in love with helping the guys,” said the 77-year-old retiree. “It’s a wonderful opportunity to get to know somebody and share with them the love of Jesus Christ.”

An inmate he met in his early days of ministry let Biel know the prison lacked a Catholic presence. Faith-oriented books available at the prison were written from a Protestant perspective.

“I realized this was something I could help with, so we started a Catholic Bible study and brought in materials explaining the fullness and truth of the Catholic

faith,” Biel continued. “At church I talked about how good I felt helping people at the prison and others joined me. That’s how our ministry grew.”

The Holy Father designated 2025 as a Jubilee Year marked by hope.

“Pope Francis wants us to become tangible signs of hope for people in difficult situations,” he emphasized. “To me, prison ministry is that. When you visit the imprisoned, you’re doing what Jesus said. These are people often abandoned by family and viewed by society as dangerous and morally flawed. You give them hope.”

OFFERING ENCOURAGEMENT

Gustavo García became passionate about prison ministry long before he was ordained a permanent deacon in 2020. The former St. Jude parishioner began visiting inmates in 2014 and continues to go to the Sanders Estes Unit in Venus three Mondays a month to pray the Rosary, distribute Communion, and preach.

“Men start coming just to get out of their cells and have someplace to go,” the deacon said candidly. “But some really get involved in worship, start singing in the choir, and play instruments.”

The convicts he meets learn to appreciate their faith and begin to see themselves from a different perspective. Sanders Estes is a re-entry unit so Dcn. García offers encouragement to the men returning to society. “One of the men told me he used to come to services just to kill time but then he began to think of God in a different way and drew closer to Him,” he explained. “When I hear those stories, I know God is working through me to accomplish that.”

Phil Luebbehusen described a similar feeling when he visits inmates at the Federal Medical Center prison.

“It’s the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done in a religious framework,” said the Good Shepherd in Colleyville parishioner. “They’re just human beings who need a chance to seek redemption. If you talk to them in a way that gives them hope, it’s a good thing.”

Limited to one-hour visits since the COVID pandemic, Luebbehusen assists chaplain Father Richard Collins with Sunday Mass at the prison, using the remaining minutes to talk with the 35 to 40 men who come to the liturgy.

“There are guys who come from Catholic families, and we help reacquaint them with the sacraments,” he said, recalling two inmates who died within a year of returning to the faith. Both asked for Communion on their deathbeds. “That tells me we’re in the right place at the right time.”

SHOWING MERCY

Parishioners interested in reaching out to the imprisoned are always welcome to “come and see,” Biel said, uttering the same persuasive words he once heard. The new volunteer had no experience with inmates the first time he visited a prison.

“These people made a mistake,” Biel pointed out. “It’s not who they are. It’s what they did. Not helping them would be like Jesus dispensing justice and not mercy.” 🇺🇸



Inmates participate in praise and worship during a Kolbe prisoner retreat at Bridgeport Correctional Center.



Inmates and volunteers attend Eucharistic Adoration.



An inmate expresses his gratitude toward prison ministry members.

A school resource officer, Jeremy Hart, is shown in a blue tactical vest with 'GUARDIAN' written on it. He is wearing sunglasses and has a beard. He is smiling and high-fiving several children who are also smiling. The scene is outdoors, likely at a school, with a wooden fence and a building in the background.

‘Here for a REASON’

Jeremy Hart, a school resource officer at Immaculate Conception Catholic School in Denton, high-fives kindergartners.

School resource officers provide protection while growing in faith

By Sandra Engelland
Photography by Juan Guajardo

After almost 12 years serving in the United States Marine Corps with tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, followed by about eight years as a Lewisville police officer, most recently on the SWAT team, Tony Barletta retired from the force last fall and became director of campus safety and emergency management, which also includes the role of school resource officer, at St. Martin de Porres Catholic School in Prosper.

Honestly, he said he was a little bored at first and missed the adrenaline rush of his former roles. But his perspective changed on Veterans Day. He received heartfelt letters from all 400 of the school's students thanking him for his service.

"I realized, 'You're here for a reason. You're supposed to watch over them and protect them just in case something evil ever happens,'" Barletta said. "God's got me here for a reason."

Now he views it as the most enjoyable job he's ever had. "The kids make my day," he said. "It's awesome hanging out with them."

He also gets positive feedback from staff and parents who appreciate having another strong male role model on campus.

Some days he plays football with students at recess or can encourage a young student to quit throwing a tantrum.

'LET ME BE THE BUFFER'

Every day, Barletta and the other SROs in the diocese focus first and foremost on school safety. They walk the campus and check all doors throughout the day, keep an eye on security cameras, monitor visitors, and often assist at arrival and dismissal and watch over students at recess and in the cafeteria.



Officer Rick Castro helps a student with an art project at St. Rita Catholic School in Fort Worth.

All of them are armed and trained to handle active shooter situations.

Barletta recalled two recent school shootings were at Christian schools.

Mark Hesselgrave, who is in charge of security at Holy Trinity Catholic School in Grapevine, prefers to call himself a school guardian rather than an SRO. He is a personal protection officer with the highest level of training commissioned by the Texas Department of Public Safety but doesn't have a background in law enforcement.

In 2019, he helped start the guardian program at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville and ran it as a volunteer until 2023, when the church brought him on staff as the coordinator of safety and security.

Last year Mike Short, director of security for the Diocese of Fort Worth, announced the need for armed security in all the schools in the diocese. Hesselgrave said, "I jumped at the opportunity."

He calls working in a Catholic school environment a blessing. As a product of public schools growing up, Hesselgrave appreciates the difference. "It has strengthened my faith," he said.

They start and end each day with prayer, and he enjoys attending Mass with the school community — students, staff, and parents who are available to attend — on Wednesday mornings.

Hesselgrave said he is reminded daily of "my whole entire reason" for working in school security.

"I want staff and students to not worry about anything but Catholic school.

Let me be the buffer," he said. "I want this to be a safe space where they can do what they're here for and just get a good education."

'CULTURE BUILDERS'

Short said he and other diocesan staff began to push for armed security in schools three years ago. At that time, they started with active off-duty police officers. A year later, the state of Texas passed a law requiring public schools to have security officers in place.

Since then, Short has focused on hiring retired police officers like Barletta and highly trained, vetted security officers like Hesselgrave who become school employees.

"They are culture builders," Short said. "They identify vulnerabilities and focus on teaching staff and students."

Many of them also assist the associated parish in building guardian programs.

Some schools still hire uniformed off-duty police officers, so there is a mix across the diocese, Short said.

The diocese is currently raising funds for SROs for the continued safety of its students, he added.

Andrea Gahler, principal at Immaculate Conception Catholic School in Denton, said the school's SRO Jeremy Hart has quickly become an integral part of the campus community.

"Jeremy has served as a positive role model for our students," Gahler said. "He has a really engaging personality."

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School Resource Officer and Fort Worth Police Detective Maria Orand patrols the halls at Nolan Catholic High School.

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While the school had safety protocols and drills in place before he came last year, Hart took security to a higher level.

A former SWAT officer, he taught school staff ways to make the campus more secure. He also helped encourage more parents to become Safe Environment trained so they could volunteer. The school now has almost 100% of parents properly trained, Gahler said.

Hart also oversees the school’s safety patrol, a group of older students who assist young students at drop-off and pickup times.

“It just shows all the collaboration

he has with our families,” she said. “He’s really added a strong, positive presence on campus.”

‘THEY HELP ME WANT TO BE BETTER’

Fort Worth Police Detective Maria Orand is one of the off-duty police officers providing school security. She works every Friday at Nolan Catholic High School where her son is a junior.

This is the second year she has been a member of the Nolan SRO team.

Orand has worked in the Fort Worth Police Department for 20 years. She started in patrol and became a detective in 2017. She’s now part of the human

trafficking unit, an experience she uses to help coordinate the Safe Environment program in the diocese.

Before she was an SRO at Nolan, she was “a band mom,” so many of the students knew her in that role.

“I wanted to work on Fridays because it worked better for band,” she said. “I brought clothes to change from cop mode to mom mode.”

Orand said she truly treasures her time working at the school.

“The kids are so good here. They’re typical teenagers, but they’re kind and they’re welcoming,” she said. “And the staff here is great.”

In the past, she served as an SRO in a public school for a short time. Now she appreciates going to Mass and Holy Days of Obligation and “seeing my son’s faith grow.”

He attended Holy Family Catholic School which helped him learn about the faith, but now he’s maturing as a faithful Catholic, along with his peers.

“I love seeing kids this age going to Mass, praying before and after school,” she said. “We keep Christ at the center of everything we do.”

She said she was surprised by the profound impact in her own life working with students every Friday.

“It makes me want to be better. It makes me want to be an example,” Orand said.

She often sees students when she’s at a restaurant or shopping at Target.

“You never know who’s watching,” she said. “They help me want to be better in my faith and what I do every day.” ✨



\$1.5 MILLION

This is the estimated cost to maintain armed security personnel as a visible presence on campus during regular school hours.

Help us keep our Catholic schools safe by donating directly at [AdvancementFoundation.org/Catholic-School-Security-Donate](https://www.advancementfoundation.org/Catholic-School-Security-Donate).

Watch how Officer Tony Barletta (left) and other SROs help bolster our diocesan Catholic schools’ security by scanning this QR code:

THERE’S MORE



Noteworthy Musicians

Talented music leaders inspire, uplift, and share the Good News using their musical gifts

By Matthew Smith and Joan Kurkowski-Gillen



Joanne Werner (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

Sacred music enhances unity, deepens prayer, and adds to the solemnity of the Mass. Here, two choir directors who usually express themselves through music explain the power of song to lift voices and souls to God.

GIFT FOR MUSIC

Be it religious or secular, musician Joanne Werner has always considered music among God's greatest gifts.

"For me, music is just part of my soul," Werner said. "I grew up with and always had a huge appreciation of it. Music can take you to a different place, and sometimes we all need to escape a little bit into some beauty and loveliness."

Such has informed Werner's life-long passion for music of all stripes.

"I'm more of a classically oriented person, though, like others, I grew up during the Beatles, and they were my thing, too," Werner said. "My mother was also a musician, a piano teacher. So music was all around as I grew up and always very important to me."

It's through serving the Church, however, that Werner made her true musical mark.

She recently retired from St. Michael Parish in Bedford after 22 years having served as director of liturgy and music among other responsibilities during her time there. Previous to that, she served long musical stints at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Carrollton and St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound.

Along the way, Werner served

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Donna Renay Patrick plays accompaniment and leads the choir at Our Mother of Mercy Church on Jan. 19. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

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with the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, as both part of the director of music ministries board and chair of the board of directors. Known nationally as a clinician for cantors, Werner has led more than 50 cantor workshops across the U.S.

Under her direction of St. Michael's Adult Liturgical Choir, she has organized and overseen international trips with the choir to Italy, Hungary, and other locales, including a performance before Pope Benedict XVI at a general audience.

Born and raised in Great Falls, Montana, Werner underwent Catholic education throughout college, which led to her musical career.

"In sixth grade, one of the sisters, bless her heart, decided I should play organ for morning Mass," Werner said. "We went to Mass every morning before school, which was still in Latin. So I

played the organ and sang the chants, and that's how it all started."

A music degree from Holy Names University in Oakland, California, followed as did a master's degree in vocal performance and piano.

Marriage brought Werner to Texas where she landed at and volunteered to help with the choir at St. Catherine, leading to part-time then full-time employment.

"I grew a lot [at St. Catherine], left after 10 years, and went on to St. Philip, which was another wonderful experience," Werner said. "I've just had wonderful opportunities and couldn't say no to the liturgy."

Attending a regional convention at St. Patrick Cathedral in 1989 opened opportunities for participation in national organizations, working with cantors and musicians throughout the country, and in 2002, her position as director of liturgy and music at St. Michael.

MORE THAN MUSIC

The enjoyment factor of music is important, of course, but, from a worship perspective, it's deeper than that, Werner stressed.

"It's so important that the Church wrote a document just on music," Werner said. "On how music should be done for liturgy. That's how important and integral it is to the celebration of the Eucharist."

It's important that music during Mass complement but never distract or become the focus of the celebration, Werner added.

"The goal is for people to be aware and paying attention to the music but realize it's prayer, not entertainment," Werner said. "They're not there for a concert. Which is why I've always been very intentional in looking at the Scriptures to determine how the music can amplify and fortify those messages.

"Music puts me in a different place,"



Donna Renay Patrick, background, can be seen leading the choir as Frederick Bob, a parishioner of Our Mother of Mercy Church, sings a solo during the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Mass at St. Joseph Church on Jan. 18. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Werner said. “If there’s one thing I’m sure about heaven, it’s that we’re going to have music there.”

THE POWER OF GOSPEL

Donna Renay Patrick began taking piano lessons at age 7 and played for the choir at her Baptist church by the time she was 11. But being a skilled musician and trained worship leader isn’t what kept the native of Decatur, Illinois, in music ministry most of her life.

“It’s not just something I know how to do. It’s my calling,” stressed the new music director at Our Mother of Mercy Parish in Fort Worth. “I want people to understand why I’m so passionate about leading people into God’s presence and setting the right atmosphere for worship on Sunday morning.”

Our Mother of Mercy, the only historically African American Catholic parish in the Diocese of Fort Worth, offered Patrick the job of directing its acclaimed Gospel choir a year ago.

Since then, the 15-member ensemble helped the parish celebrate its 95th anniversary and performed a rousing rendition of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” during the 39th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Mass in January.

“The choir members are very committed to ministry and Our Mother of Mercy,” said the director, remembering

the warm welcome she received. “I was so proud of them during the MLK event this year. They worked for months to prepare for that and executed so well.”

During her career, the author of two award-winning devotionals has worked with Baptist congregations across the Metroplex.

Her introduction to Catholic liturgy came with a learning curve.

“It was a new environment for me,” Patrick admitted. “I had to learn the responsorial psalms and all the parts of the Mass, so it was a big adjustment.”

When it came to gospel music though, “I’ve always done that so there was no transition,” she added. “Gospel is part of my life.”

With deep roots in the African American experience, gospel music always served as a way to express hope and resilience during times of hardship. The genre centers around announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ. Lyrics come from Scripture and convey messages of hope, love, and personal connection with God. Powerful vocals add to the imagery and emotion.

“Gospel music is special because of its message and rich heritage,” said Patrick, calling Thomas Dorsey, the father of gospel music, one of her favorite artists. “It runs through the very thread of African American culture.”

Over the years, a myriad of artists shaped the genre, creating memorable songs like “Total Praise,” “How Excellent Is Thy Name,” and “Peace Be Still.”

“I have so many favorite artists I can’t name them all,” continued the music enthusiast and popular convention speaker on purposeful worship. “Gospel music is what I love. I started playing for the church when I was just a young girl. I love it now as much as I did back then.”

Although an integral part of the African American Christian community, the influence of gospel music extends beyond church doors. It inspired leaders of the Civil Rights Movement and impacted the development of soul and R&B music as well as other areas of popular culture.

The goal of gospel music is to share it.

“We don’t sing on Sunday morning for us. We sing so the world might be changed and understand there is real salvation in Jesus Christ,” Patrick emphasized. “That’s accomplished through song. We sing about Jesus, and His saving grace.”

It’s a universal message meant to transform lives. No one should come to church depressed and leave depressed.

“If the music ministry can help uplift somebody, that’s what we should be doing,” the choir director pointed out. “We want to uplift people and give them hope through music.” 🇺🇸

School, Spirited

Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep students spend four days in class, one day at work, and each day with Christ

By Christina Benavides
Photography by Juan Guajardo

At Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Preparatory in Fort Worth, the school's unique work-study program places students in one of 70 different professional settings, where they work five days a month.

In addition to academic and business pursuits, students receive a firm foundation in the Catholic faith. Three Cristo Rey students share their spiritual growth and its effects in their work-study placements and in the classroom with the *North Texas Catholic*.

PUT TO THE TEST

Junior Christopher Avelar feels fortunate his work-study placement is with Alliance Airport.

"It's not like an office job. I'm out with the planes, so it was very cool to get that kind of job and stick with it throughout high school," he said.

The teenager said, "I don't communicate too much with my co-workers because I just want to get my job done, and when the topic [of religion] does come up, I am more reserved."

He recalled one lunch encounter with an older co-worker, a Protestant preacher, who questioned him about Mary and his prayer life.

"I started thanking my teachers because I put my knowledge to the test and started answering these questions," he said.

It was nerve-racking, but the



experience helped Avelar realize how he'd grown since he entered Cristo Rey.

"As a kid, I did pray at night, but I never found the meaning behind praying until I got here and realized that prayer is essential to having a good relationship with Christ," he admitted.

Avelar entered the Catholic school with reluctance, having attended public school through eighth grade.

"I wasn't really interested in the faith," he said. "When my mom talked to me about Cristo Rey, I did not want to go there. I wanted to go to a public school with my friends."

He recalled feeling daunted about taking theology and speaking with others outside his immediate family about his relationship with God. With time, he opened up in the welcoming school environment and has come to grow in his prayer life.

"Now that I have a good — well, a decent — relationship with God, I'm able to have a better life, and I've seen a noticeable difference from how I acted before I came here and how I'm acting now," Avelar shared.

Upon graduation, Avelar hopes to attend Texas Christian University and study

journalism or political science. In the meantime, he hopes to grow in communicating his faith with others, including his friends.

“How I communicate is a reflection of God and being a Catholic,” he said.

CHANGE IN PLANS

Sophomore Giselle Madrigal began her time at Cristo Rey with a very clear vision.

“I wanted to attend Texas A&M and pursue a career as an immigration attorney because it’s a very important topic for me, and I felt very passionate about it,” the 16-year-old said.

When she learned about her placement at Texland Petroleum, she was excited to work alongside the corporation’s legal staff. However, after nearly two years, Madrigal’s plans may change.

“I’m still trying to discern my calling, but overall, my personal road map through life is possibly taking me to University of Dallas to study theology and enter the convent,” she said.

The St. George Catholic School alum explained her time in the corporate environment, where she and her co-workers handle “more than 1,100 wells across the entire south of the United States,” is very demanding.

Her experience in the workplace has helped her reframe her priority to grow in a relationship with Christ instead of pursuing financial wealth.

“My main goal right now and for years to come is to become a better representation of Christ,” she said. “To not only use words to spread the Gospel but with actions.”

Looking back, Madrigal would remind her younger self to always trust in the Lord.

“Everything has a purpose, and that purpose is always good.”

STRENGTH IN ADVERSITY

Although her plans for future studies are still in the works, 17-year-old Kera Worobiec is well on her way to finding a



Giselle Madrigal



Kera Worobiec

balance that will lay a solid foundation for the rest of her life.

The high school junior started with a placement with Tarrant Regional Water District before moving to the communications and marketing departments at General Motors Financial during the spring semester of her sophomore year.

“At first, I was kind of afraid,” Worobiec said. “A lot of times I was very hesitant, and I didn’t know what I was doing, but I kept going and telling myself it’s okay, it’s all new.”

“Some days, I only got through it because I was praying the whole time,” Worobiec admitted. “It was a whole

learning experience simply being at a corporation, and it taught me a lot.”

Juggling classes and work-study and other aspects of school hasn’t always been smooth sailing, but the St. John the Apostle Catholic School alum finds the adversity she’s encountered has made her stronger.

Moving forward, she hopes to share her faith with more confidence.

“I’ve had this dream recently of wanting to spread the word of God among the students,” Worobiec shared, expressing an interest in starting an apologetics study group at school. “That’s something I’ve had in my heart for a while.” 🇺🇸



from Airmen to Knights

Four Vietnam veterans who served at the same base in Thailand reunite many years later at Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls

By Jenara Kocks Burgess

In 1968, four men served in the Air Force at Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base during the Vietnam War.

Twenty years later, their Catholic faith brought them together again. The four men were parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls and realized they served together at that base more than 8,000 miles away.

In Thailand, the men were acquaintances serving their country. Now, their friendship has been cemented by serving the Church.

“God has a sense of humor. He pulled us all together here, and we got to know each other. It’s a blessing to me,” said Jim Wise, a Sacred Heart parishioner who was a 28-year-old Air Force captain and services squadron commander in Thailand in 1968.

Bob Butterfield, who was a 23-year-old helicopter mechanic in Thailand, agreed.

Chuck Herrmann, then a 39-year-old CH3 “Jolly Green Giant” helicopter pilot and lieutenant colonel, said, “We were all Air Force. We all knew of each other but didn’t realize our lives would intersect 20 years later.”

A FAMILIAR READER

Herrmann, who with his family joined Sacred Heart in 1971, recalled how he reunited with fellow Vietnam veteran Wise

one day after Mass.

“One Sunday morning, lo and behold, Jim [Wise] was a reader. I got up right behind Jim [as he exited the church] and whispered in his ear, ‘Naked Fanny,’” Herrmann remembered as he laughed. “His head spun.”

Herrmann explained that “Naked Fanny” was a humorous name many servicemen called the base at Nakhon Phanom.

“It’s a small world. I mean — literally halfway around the world,” Herrmann said. “Needless to say, Jim [Wise] was surprised, and I got a kick out of his reaction.”

Later, Herrmann realized that he and Wise were both recognized for awards in the same edition of the base newspaper in Thailand, the NKP News. Herrmann has a copy of this newspaper in his family scrapbook that his wife, Janie, put together.

Wise was awarded the Air Commendation Medal for work at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona before he was sent to Thailand, and Herrmann was awarded a Silver Star, the third highest military medal.

After 11 years of service, Wise left the Air Force and moved to New York. In October 1974, he took a job in civil service managing transient housing at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, where he

was joined by his wife, Lori, and their two children. After 28 years and three more children, he retired from civil service at Sheppard.

Herrmann retired after 20.5 years in the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel while he was stationed at Sheppard. He and his wife, Janie, raised four children in Wichita Falls.

STATIONED AT SHEPPARD

Butterfield, a staff sergeant, and Herrmann ran into each other when they first returned from Thailand because they were in the same squadron, stationed at Sheppard AFB. Herrmann quickly recognized Butterfield as one of the mechanics on his helicopter in Thailand.

“I tell people the reason I’m sitting here today is because [Butterfield] did his job,” Herrmann said. “He was one of our mechanics. They called it a maintenance flight when an aircraft needed repairs. They made the repairs, and then I had to certify that the repairs had been made on the aircraft. These guys like him were very dedicated, and they weren’t making big bucks by any means.”

“I don’t think anyone was,” said Butterfield, who serves on the Sacred Heart Parish pastoral council. Butterfield and Herrmann have also served on the Catherine Cooney Scholarship Committee



From left: Sacred Heart parishioners Bob Butterfield, Chuck Herrmann, and Jim Wise look at the Herrmann family scrapbook, which includes articles from their years together at the Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand. (NTC/Bertha Salazar)

at Sacred Heart for many years.

Upon Herrmann's reunion with Wise, the two made quick work of reaching out to Butterfield to reminisce on their years of service.

"I'd known Bob, but we had just never gotten to talk about things we did in the Air Force," Wise said.

Butterfield and his wife, Irene, were married at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in 1970. Butterfield converted to the Catholic faith after they married. He left the Air Force after seven years of service, and he and Irene raised two children in Wichita Falls together.

FOUR KNIGHTS

The late John "Jack" Miller, a retired chief master sergeant in the Air Force, had been stationed at Sheppard and Nakhon

Phanom in Thailand. He had served in Thailand from 1968 to 1969, just like the other three men.

A parishioner at Sacred Heart, his widow Roberta "Bobby" Miller recalled how she and her husband of 57 years were stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base from 1970-1975.

They lived in nearby Iowa Park and attended Mass at the base chapel. The father of three sons served in the Air Force for 28 years before retiring and then worked for a contractor. The family returned to Wichita Falls in 2017 because they had kept in touch with several local families.

Before his death, Miller joined Butterfield, Herrmann, and Wise as active members of the Knights of Columbus at Sacred Heart. While their service in the

Knights may not resemble their service in the Air Force, it does represent the same selfless generosity of time and effort for the benefit of others.

The four men and their wives would reminisce about their time in Thailand before Miller passed in 2020.

At a recent gathering, Butterfield, Herrmann, and Wise discussed the unforgettable experience of living through Thailand monsoons — remembering a record rain in one 24-hour period — never being able to stay dry, seeing giant rice bugs and giant locusts, and eating lots of rice.

"That seems like a lifetime ago," Janie Herrmann said.

A lifetime of God's providence, a lifetime of faith, a lifetime of service, and a lifetime of friendship. 🇺🇸



DEEPER IN Lent

Lenten practices to slow down and grow spiritually during the days leading up to Easter

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

What are you giving up for Lent? Cradle Catholics — especially those who went to Catholic school — remember that topic of conversation in the days leading up to Ash Wednesday. Chocolate, dessert, and television were always popular sacrifices.

Denying ourselves a splurge is one way people prepare their hearts and minds for Easter. It's a spiritual practice, used for centuries, as a way to exercise self-discipline and draw closer to God.

In the Catholic tradition, there are three pillars of Lent: prayer to renew our relationship with God; abstaining from meat every Friday plus fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday; and almsgiving through service or providing for those in need.

MAKING SPACE

"Lent is an opportunity to go deeper into the Word of God and praying with the Scriptures is a beautiful way to encounter Jesus," said Laura Nelson.

The diocesan director of faith formation recommends trying the traditional monastic practice known as *Lectio Divina* (Latin for "Divine Reading") as a way to find God's presence in daily life. *Lectio Divina* involves three steps: reading a short passage of the Old or New Testament, meditating on what's been read, and responding to that reflection.

"You're meditating on the Word of God prayerfully and not just studying it in an academic way," Nelson explained. "Applying God's word to every aspect of life helps you take your faith out into the world."

The seasoned catechist suggests using daily Mass readings as a resource and

entering into the process with a slow, methodical approach that may take more time.

"Lent is a great season for slowing down," she continued. "We need to divest ourselves from the periphery and remove things from our life that are distractions or temptations in order to focus more deeply on Christ and what He's done for us."

Practicing self-denial through fasting or giving up luxuries allows for deeper reflection and spiritual growth during the weeks leading up to Easter. Lent is an opportunity for mindfulness, said Nelson, recalling a time when she was speeding through life both literally and figuratively.

"A few years ago, I noticed I was exceeding the speed limit more than I should when driving," she admitted. "And it wasn't just the speed limit. My life was going fast all the time. My calendar was crammed full."

For Lent, the mother of three made a conscious effort to make space in her life to breathe. She gave herself more time to get places and reduced commitments.

“Speeding was a symptom of what was going on spiritually,” she said. “In a moment of clarity, I saw what was going wrong in my life. I had to slow my heart down so I could be present with the Lord.”

FIND QUIET MOMENTS FOR PRAYER

Growing up in Boston, Massachusetts, Sister Mary Angelica Neenan’s parents took Lent very seriously. Every morning during the penitential season, the family woke early to attend daily Mass.

“I loved it,” recalled the member of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia. “It was this morning prayer time that was so peaceful.”

The Boston native continued the practice during her college years. Today, the assistant professor of theology at the University of Dallas urges her students to find their own moments of quiet meditation during Lent.

“Do anything in your life that can help you grow closer to God,” Sr. Mary Angelica said. “Sit in a chapel and talk to God. Ask Him, ‘what should I do for you?’”

Reducing time spent surfing the internet is a Lenten sacrifice the educator recommends. Her students report spending as much as eight hours a day on their phones.

“It requires a lot of virtue to not satisfy the need to know ‘right now’ by constantly searching the internet,” Sr. Mary Angelica pointed out. “One of the biggest problems is addiction to the internet and social media. Anything that takes us away from God is not good.”

Praying the Rosary, visiting a chapel for Adoration, and volunteering time or talent to help others are powerful ways to grow spiritually during Lent.

“Ultimately, Lent helps us enter into the passion and resurrection of Christ,” she asserted. “People think Lent is only an external practice like giving up chocolate or ice cream, but the external is only symbolic of what we should be doing internally. We have to reach deep into the human heart to give ourselves to the Lord.” 🇺🇸



Transitional Diaconate Ordination



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ALL IN

Priests, parents, teachers, and lay faithful are called to encourage and support priestly vocations

By Matthew Smith



Seminarians stand as they are introduced to members of the St. John Paul II Shepherd's Guild during an Advent event on Dec. 21, 2024, at St. Patrick Cathedral. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



Helping men hear the call of Jesus Christ as they discern a vocation to the priesthood is a necessity, and not solely the responsibility of priests and Church officials but of all parishioners as well.

“The fostering of vocations cannot be considered a marginal activity, but must be incorporated fully into the life and activity of the community,” Pope St. John Paul II said.

Bishop Michael Olson, during a Jan. 25 Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, reiterated that thought, stating, “The ministry for vocation fostering belongs to everyone.”

Such calls are not simply between God and the called, Bishop Olson added.

“It always involves the people of God in the Church,” Bishop Olson said. “It’s only there that prayer and gratitude can come to root for a deeper understanding to receive the light that the Lord offers us and offers those called.”

VOCATIONS MINISTRY

In hopes of increasing vocation awareness and support, numerous priests, seminarians, Serra Club members, and parishioners from throughout the diocese attended a vocations ministry workshop following the Jan. 25 Mass at the Keller parish.

One goal of the workshop is to establish a vocations ministry team at each parish in the diocese.

It’s a goal in line with Pope Benedict XVI’s thoughts on the matter.

“Particularly in these times, when the voice of the Lord seems to be drowned out by other voices and His invitation to follow Him by the gift of one’s own life may seem too difficult, every Christian community, every member of the Church, needs consciously to feel responsibility for promoting vocations,” Pope Benedict XVI said.

“It is important to encourage and support those who show clear signs of a call to priestly life and religious consecration, and to enable them to feel the warmth of the whole community as they respond ‘yes’ to God and the Church,” he continued.

Closer to home, Father Brett Metzler, diocesan director of vocations, reminded attendees the priesthood is not a job in the same way a doctor, teacher, or other careers are, but rather it is a supernatural calling from God.

Fr. Metzler spoke of the need for fostering vocations on a macro level.

“This is [all of us] helping young men who are called to the priesthood to be more open to God’s voice,” Fr. Metzler said. “Because I think way more young people are called to vocation than are saying ‘yes.’ Because they’re scared or there’s not a culture that they can stand up and say ‘yes.’”

Rectifying that requires prayer for vocations both on an individual and parish level, Fr. Metzler said.

“Then second, fostering a culture of vocations [throughout parishes and the diocese] that offsets the anti-vocation culture,” Fr. Metzler said.

FROM COACH TO CLERIC

Trent Barton, a seminarian serving his pastoral year at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington, spoke of how his family and parish encouraged his vocation.

“I grew up very Catholic,” Barton said. “Mom made my brothers and I pray every night before bed. My grandmom’s sister became a nun. We grew up with a love of family and church and were close to priests, so they were never foreign to me.”

Barton, all the same, earned a degree in education from Hardin-Simmons University and went on to become a college coach.

In time, the culture of prayer instilled by his mother brought him around to consideration of a priestly vocation.

“Entering the priesthood took an extreme act of courage, but our Blessed Mother helps and the best way to discern being called to the priesthood is by listening.”

Barton said his initial call gave shock and pause.

“It blew my mind that God was calling me,” Barton said. “I’m not some super academic guy. But I realized that God doesn’t only call super perfect people, and vocations can literally come from anywhere. It’s not just one type of guy who can become a priest. God calls from everywhere.”

Which, Barton said, is where the responsibility to foster vocation falls on all.

“If someone comes to you and says they love serving, talk to them and encourage that service,” Barton said. “Just listen and be there for them.”

Continued on Page 34

Father Raymond McDaniel presents at the Parish Vocations Ministry Workshop on Jan. 25 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Keller. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

From Page 33

Barton joked that while he still loves football, he takes joy in the fact that rather than being responsible for 30 to 40 players, he soon, by God’s grace, will have the opportunity to help thousands of people as a priest.

“I’ve found I’m most happy and fulfilled in becoming who God created me to be,” Barton said.

PRIESTLY EXAMPLE

Fellow seminarian Paul Trinh, serving a pastoral year at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound, said witnessing the example of the priests at Fort Worth’s Christ the King Parish growing up sparked the call of vocation for him.

“Witnessing how they lived out that call from Christ led me to discern and determine I wanted to be a priest with the people of God,” Trinh said.

Father Joseph Moreno of Burburnett’s St. Jude Thaddeus Parish said, “God is calling many of these young men. The problem is many of them are not hearing the call either because they haven’t learned they have a vocation, or they haven’t learned to listen for it or don’t know how to listen for it.”

Fr. Moreno added priests have a duty to actively involve themselves in priestly and other religious vocations among their parishioners.

Father Raymond McDaniel of St. Philip the Apostle Parish called vocation “our destiny and beautiful opportunity as Catholics.”

Renée Underwood, president of the Fort Worth Serra Club, added that five of the diocese’s current 26 seminarians grew up in Fr. McDaniel’s parish.

“Vocations do not come by chance, nor can we make them by human effort alone,” Fr. McDaniel said. “They come to us out of the mercy of God. If we do not pray to obtain them, they will not be given to us.”

Fr. McDaniel, and others during the workshop, detailed practical ways through which parish members can help



Attendees share their ideas at the Parish Vocations Ministry Workshop. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

foster vocations as well as the importance of access and availability to priests and other church officials for those discerning vocation calls.

LAY SUPPORT

At the workshop, Underwood explained the purpose of the worldwide Serra Club, which consists mainly of members of the

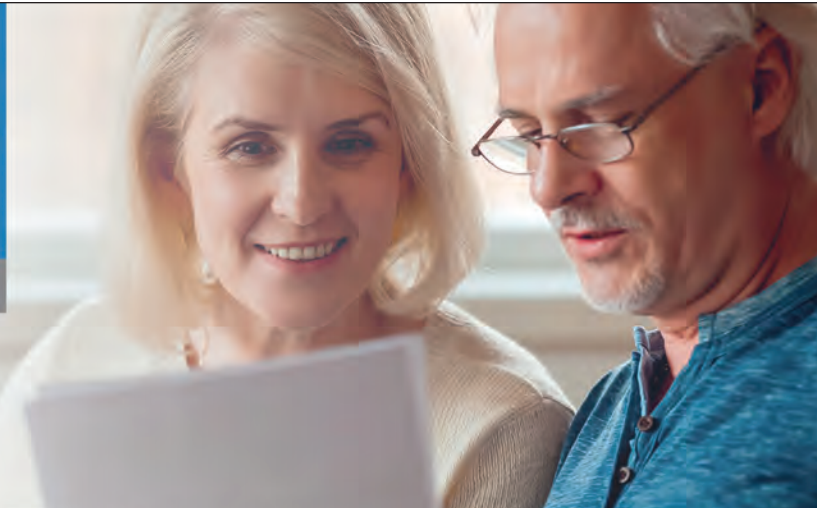
laity, and how it helps foster vocations on the diocese and parish levels.

“We’re committed to working to increase vocations to the priesthood and consecrated religious, life and, here in the diocese, we’re fortunate to have three active Serra Clubs,” Underwood said.

Underwood discussed discernment events held in conjunction between the

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clubs and the diocese as well as appreciation dinners and other events for seminarians, priests, and other religious.

“An advantage as Serrans is that we get to know our seminarians very well,” Underwood said.

Fellow Serra Club member Roseanne Taylor-Hunt spoke of hopes of establishing a presence in every parish in the diocese.

Serra Club “exemplifies the importance of all Catholics to support vocations,” Taylor-Hunt said.

Taylor-Hunt also spoke of discernment events for those who feel called at the University of Dallas and club member efforts toward adopting seminarians and supporting diocesan priests and religious.

Underwood and Taylor-Hunt stressed that the ranks of Serra Club and parish vocations ministry teams need more people.

Patty Bransford, vice president of vocations with Fort Worth Serra Club,

stressed the importance of discussing vocations in Catholic schools with students from a young age and the importance of priests and other religious participating in such efforts.

Underwood, after the fact, reported that 152 people from 30 parishes within the diocese attended the workshop. The plan is to host additional workshops to further vocation awareness and support, she and Bransford said.

Fort Worth Serra Club president-elect Bruce Mallory summed the workshop up as exceptional.

“It was hard in advance to know what to expect,” Mallory said. “But, I think everyone involved did a good job of communicating not only the need for all of us to foster vocations but also the steps of how we get there. I enjoyed all the speakers as well, especially the seminarians who brought it down to the relatable of going from this worldly life to answering the call.” 🇺🇸

MORE PHOTOS



See the entire photo gallery by scanning the QR code or visiting North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com/Parish-Vocations-Ministry-Workshop.



A woman enters the doors of St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth, which has been designated a Jubilee site. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

the Path of Hope

What you need to know about the
Ordinary Jubilee of 2025, in seven questions

By Susan Moses

As we walk as disciples of Christ, the Church presents special opportunities to remember God's mercy and to receive God's graces to comfort and strengthen us on our journey toward our heavenly home.

Some of these opportunities for grace are frequent, such as the Holy Mass and reconciliation, and others less so — such as the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025.

Here, in a nutshell, are the basics of this Holy Year dedicated to growing in hope and bringing the hope of Christ to others.

What is a jubilee?

A jubilee is an ancient tradition of a special Holy Year proclaimed by the pope to experience a “lively experience of grace and hope” through pilgrimage, indulgences, the sacrament of reconciliation, and acts of love and service.

A pilgrimage, whether to Rome or closer to home, is a central component of every jubilee. “Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life,” Pope Francis stated.

“For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus,” Pope Francis said in his proclamation of a Holy Year.

(Source: “*Spes non Confundit [Hope does not Disappoint]*,” the Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025)

Continued on Page 38



Pilgrims enter St. Peter's Basilica through the Holy Door a day after Pope Francis opened it to start Jubilee Year 2025. (Alberto Pizzoli/AFP/Getty Images)



Pope Francis presides over a Mass for the Jubilee of the Armed Forces in St. Peter's Square on Feb. 9. (Stefano Costantino/SOPA Images/LightRocket/Getty Images)

What is happening in Rome and the Holy Land?

Pope Francis has designated the four papal basilicas and 16 other Roman churches as Jubilee churches, as well as some unexpected sites: Rebibbia Prison in Rome and the chapel of the Italian naval ship “Amerigo Vespucci.”

Visitors to Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem will find a basilica chosen as a Jubilee site in each location, as well as churches in Jordan, Cyprus, and North Cyprus.

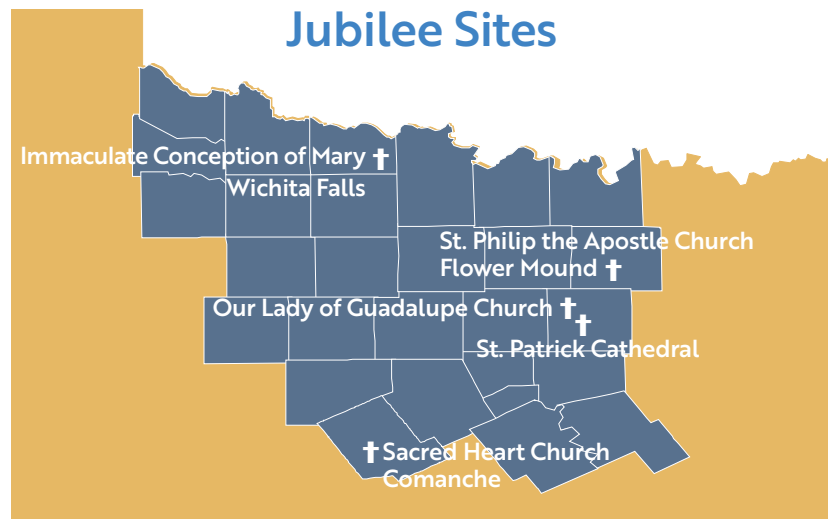
The Vatican has planned Jubilee gatherings with liturgies, speakers, and papal audiences for more than 30 special groups, including deacons, health care workers, and teenagers, which will coincide with the Mass for the canonization of Blessed Carlo Acutis on April 27.



When is the Jubilee?

Pope Francis inaugurated the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025 by opening the Holy Door of the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican on Christmas Eve, 2024.

The Jubilee will close in churches in the Diocese of Fort Worth on Dec. 28, 2025, and Pope Francis will close the Holy Door of St. Peter on Jan. 6, 2026, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.



“Within these sites, the faithful may obtain the jubilee indulgence individually and in groups. ...

Through the establishment of these pilgrimage sites, may we all experience renewal in the faith and

‘God’s forgiveness, which knows no bounds’ ”

- *Bishop Michael F. Olson*
Decree of 2025 Jubilee Sites

Be sure to read
“The Jubilee of Hope is a Grace and Not a Wish”
 by Bishop Michael Olson
 on page 3



Pope Francis opens a Holy Door and celebrates Mass for prisoners in the Rebibbia Prison on Dec. 26, 2024, in Rome. (Vatican Media/Vatican Pool/Getty Images)

What can I do in the Diocese of Fort Worth?

If you aren't one of the estimated 35 million pilgrims expected to visit Rome during the Jubilee of 2025, Bishop Michael Olson has designated five churches in the Diocese of Fort Worth as sacred Jubilee sites for reconciliation, Holy Mass, or Eucharistic Adoration:

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

The faithful can obtain a jubilee indulgence for devout visits to sacred sites.

Check the diocesan (fwdioc.org) or parish websites for other information, including Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and reconciliation schedules.

Continued on Page 41

The Jubilee Prayer

Father in heaven, may the faith You have given us in Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Brother, and the flame of charity enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit reawaken in us the blessed hope for the coming of Your Kingdom.

May Your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.

May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, Your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the Earth.

To You our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever.

Amen



A brief jubilee timeline

1299

Seeking relief from war and disease, groups of Christians made pilgrimages to the tombs of Sts. Peter and Paul to ask for their intercession.

1300

Impressed by the numbers and faith of the visitors to Rome, Pope Boniface VIII proclaims the first Christian jubilee, and more than 2 million faithful, including the poet Dante Alighieri, travel to Rome.

1390

Pope Urban VI declares jubilees should take place every 33 years, the human lifespan of Jesus.

1750

More than a million pilgrims visited Rome during this holy year, which was when Pope Benedict XIV instituted the Way of the Cross tradition at the Colosseum on Good Friday.

1625

Due to the plague, Pope Urban VIII extended the jubilee indulgence to those unable to travel to Rome, including prisoners and the sick.

1950

During the Jubilee celebrations, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption into heaven of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

1983

St. John Paul II called for an Extraordinary Jubilee to celebrate the 1950th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

2033

An Extraordinary Jubilee of Redemption is planned for 2033, which is 2,000 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

2025

For the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025, Bishop Michael Olson will lead a sold-out pilgrimage to Rome. Several parishes in the Diocese of Fort Worth are also organizing pilgrimages. Five churches in the diocese have been designated jubilee sites.

The origins of jubilee stem from the *Book of Leviticus*. Every 50 years, the Jewish people had a year of liberation in which slaves were freed, debt was forgiven, and they returned to their ancestral land in recognition that all property belongs to God.

In 1300, Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed the first Christian jubilee, a holy year to emphasize liberation from sin and reconciliation with God and each other.

1470

Pope Paul II establishes jubilees every 25 years to allow every person to make a pilgrimage during their lifetime. He named as pilgrimage sites the basilicas of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John Lateran, and St. Mary Major in Rome.

1500

Pope Alexander VI implemented the tradition of opening a Holy Door, based on Jesus' words in *John 10:9*. "I am the door, whoever enters through me will be saved."

2000

During the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, St. John Paul II celebrated World Youth Day in Rome with more than 2 million young people.

2015

Pope Francis declared an extraordinary jubilee — "A Year of Mercy" — to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. Our Mother of Mercy Parish served as the primary Holy Doors in the Diocese of Fort Worth.



What is the theme of the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025?

In a word — hope.

Pope Francis titled the proclamation of the Holy Year, "*Spes Non Confundit*," which means "Hope does not disappoint," as stated by St. Paul in *Romans 5:5*.

In the proclamation, he stated, "For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's word helps us find reasons for that hope."

"Now the time has come for a new Jubilee, when once more the Holy Door will be flung open to invite everyone to an intense experience of the love of God that awakens in hearts the sure hope of salvation in Christ," he continued.

The logo represents our resolute hope in Christ. It depicts four figures, which represent humanity from the four corners of the Earth. Standing on waves, they hold onto a cross, the base of which is an anchor, to symbolize that amid the troubled waters of life, we must hold fast to Jesus Christ, our stability and security. The cross bends toward the figures to illustrate that God reaches out to us.

At the bottom of the image is the motto for the Holy Year: Pilgrims in Hope.

Continued on Page 42

What is an indulgence?

After sin has been forgiven through the sacrament of reconciliation, the effects of sin can still remain. This is known as temporal punishment, and purification from temporal punishment can occur in this life or in purgatory.

The Church identifies penance, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, good works, and sacrifices as means to satisfy temporal punishment. Another way is an indulgence, a special grace to free oneself from temporal punishment.

An indulgence, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is “a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church” (1471).



NTC/Juan Guajardo

In his announcement of the Jubilee year, Pope Francis declared the gift of the indulgence is “a way of discovering the unlimited nature of God’s mercy. Not by

chance, for the ancients, the terms ‘mercy’ and ‘indulgence’ were interchangeable, as expressions of the fullness of God’s forgiveness, which knows no bounds.”

What indulgences can be obtained in the Jubilee?

To obtain a plenary, or full, indulgence for yourself or a faithful departed in purgatory, the individual must be in a state of grace and:

- Have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin.
- Receive the sacraments of reconciliation and Holy Eucharist within 20 days before or after receiving the indulgence.
- Pray for the pope’s intentions.
- And make a pilgrimage to attend a liturgy or Eucharistic Adoration at a sacred Jubilee site or participate in works of mercy and penance.

By practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, Catholics are “tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind,” according to Pope Francis.

The jubilee plenary indulgence may

also be obtained through penitential acts, recommending that the penitential nature of Friday be observed through abstaining from entertainment and social media or from excessive consumption and donating a proportionate sum of money to the poor.

Those who cannot participate due to illness, imprisonment, or advanced age can obtain the jubilee indulgence through prayer and offering up the hardships of their life.

Typically, only one plenary indulgence is allowed per day, but “the faithful who have carried out an act of charity on behalf of the souls in purgatory, if they receive Holy Communion a second time that day, can obtain the plenary indulgence twice on the same day, applicable only to the deceased. ... Through this double act, a praiseworthy exercise of supernatural charity is carried out, through that bond by which the faithful still journeying on this Earth are united in the mystical Body of Christ with those who have already completed their journey.”

(Source: “Decree on the Granting of Indulgence during the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025 called by His Holiness Pope Francis”) 🇺🇸



NTC/Juan Guajardo



Parents listen to a presentation by Catholic Charities at Cristo Rey College Preparatory in Fort Worth on Feb. 2. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

Are virtual client services effective?

By Mary Lou Seewoester

On Feb. 1, Catholic Charities Fort Worth embarked on a unique four-year randomized control trial (RCT) designed to accomplish two crucial goals at once: 1) to better serve rural communities in its 28-county diocesan area, and 2) to determine whether virtual client services are as effective as in-person services.

CCFW will partner with the University of Notre Dame's Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO) for this research, which is groundbreaking because it has never been done before — by anyone.

"According to our conversations with LEO, there have not been any randomized control trials around case management services in a virtual setting. This would be the first of its kind," said Jennifer Strand, PhD, head of CCFW internal research and analytics.

The study will measure client outcomes in the agency's LIFT program which serves low-income individuals

through resource connection, financial coaching, and strategic financial assistance.

Cindy Casey, head of CCFW client services, said the RCT will answer the question: Can we provide our unique model of holistic case management services virtually with the same engagement and efficacy as our in-person services?

She added the impact of the LIFT trial will reach far beyond CCFW, offering incentive for other nonprofits and government agencies to increase their outreach into rural areas.

As primary researcher, LEO will evaluate the program and write all research reports. However, Strand's research and analytics team is responsible for the program's design and implementation and will collaborate closely with client services which oversees the daily operations of LIFT.

Strand said this RCT also is unique because there will not be a control group which receives no services. Every eligible client will receive services, whether randomized into the virtual service group or the in-person group.

During the next three years, LIFT will employ up to 10 case managers and enroll 1,352 clients for the trial — 676 clients in person and 676 virtually.

"Normally in randomized research we look for differences," Strand explained, "but in this, we're looking for similarities."

Instead of acquiring clients primarily from St. Vincent de Paul Society referrals and the agency's community partners, the program will recruit most clients directly.

"We'll be reaching out to parishes to conduct LIFT financial workshops," Casey said. "We'll share great techniques to create a budget or help your credit score and say, 'If you need to take this a step further, come join our program.'"

"We're here, through LIFT, to help people meet their financial freedom," she added. "When you come into services with us, after six to 12 months, you'll be in a much healthier place financially than you were when you came in the door." 🗝

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





Life on Purpose

Dr. Philomena Ikowe’s mission begins at home and extends to her parish, diocese, and homeland

By Susan Moses

Philomena Ikowe is a physician and busy wife and mother of three sons, but on Sundays she is really on the go.

“Sunday is my busiest day, and I love it. No complaints,” she said with a broad smile.

A sacristan, she arrives at St. Joseph

Parish in Arlington early to set up for the 11 a.m. Mass, and she often serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at the Mass. Afterward, she and whichever sons are available begin their rounds of bringing the Eucharist to the homebound.

“Depending on how many homes we

have to visit, and sometimes we go to the hospitals, we don’t get home until 4 or 4:30,” she said.

But it’s not a sacrifice.

“It gives me joy that I’m able to carry the Lord, and you see the joy in them when they see you. They’re not just seeing you — they see the Church,” she said,

adding that she usually brings a bulletin and sometimes a prayer card.

Ikowe has served on her parish pastoral council and helps launder the altar linens — and that’s just the beginning. She also serves on diocesan committees, volunteers at her local homeless shelter, and makes annual medical mission trips to her homeland of Nigeria.

AN EARLY START

Some of Ikowe’s earliest memories are helping clean her local parish in the Diocese of Ogoja in southeast Nigeria. As she and her five surviving siblings grew older, their responsibilities increased, and they would fetch firewood and water for the elderly in the community.

Her father, the late Sir Gabriel Opipe, was devoted to the Catholic faith and instilled that in his children. Ikowe recalls a structured childhood, with bells ringing to divide the day into time for prayer, for chores, for school, and for church.

She recalled, “As a growing child, I remember I consistently was going to church and leading the holy Rosary. I was about 7 or 8.

“I’m from a traditional Catholic home, and I’ve been Catholic all my life,” she continued. “My dad was one of the best philanthropists and a great teacher. I call him my hero. He led us in the faith.”

A Grand Knight of St. John International (a Catholic men’s fraternal organization dedicated to growth in faith, hope, and charity), her father involved his children in service to the church. Ikowe has adopted that practice with her sons, now in their teens and early 20s.

“I try to get them involved as much as possible because my dad did that for us. ... I’m not going to be here for the rest of their lives, so whatever I have taught them,

I want to be impactful,” she explained.

Her mother died of heart failure when Ikowe was three (her father remarried), and she lost one sister to measles and another to malaria. Those experiences instilled a desire to pursue a career as a physician.

After graduating from medical school in Nigeria, she practiced as a primary care physician and continued to volunteer at her local parish, offering a free medical clinic each Saturday.

Since immigrating to the U.S. in 2008, Ikowe has earned a master’s degree in public health and currently serves as a medical safety officer evaluating oncology medications.

She travels to Nigeria for two to three weeks each year, volunteering in a medical mission offering screenings, health education, preventive care, and minor surgery to the underserved, especially the elderly and orphans. She’s also done medical missions in the U.S. and Guatemala.

“My involvement with Catholic missions throughout my life has given me an insight and a good understanding of just how much the Catholic Church serves the underserved communities in this world. Nothing gives me more joy than to serve the underprivileged freely,” she said.

She and her siblings have set up an education and health foundation in memory of their late father. And to honor his commitment to the Catholic faith, the foundation provides a Mass kit to each priest in the diocese upon his ordination.

LIFE ON PURPOSE

Ikowe’s heart for service extends beyond Sundays and the annual medical mission trip she takes to Nigeria.

She’s been on the Diocesan Mission Council for seven years, and she also serves on the Texas Mission Council. Plus,

she serves on committees for the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Mass, the All-African Mass, and the bimonthly Nigerian Catholic Community Mass.

She explained her persistent efforts, saying, “We are here on Earth, not by our own grace, but by the grace of God. And He has given us the opportunity to be here at this point in time. Not because we deserve it, but because He wants to use us for a purpose. So every single day I do something to live that purpose.”

One of those “every single day” things is a reflection on the Mass readings, a saint’s biography, and prayers that she sends to friends and family.

Winning the “World Changer” award in 2024 from Global Missions Now did not signify that her work was done. Her latest dream is to purchase and equip a mobile medical clinic for her home state in Nigeria.

“I really want to be able to touch as many lives as possible. A mobile clinic where I can actually go to the patient, instead of having them come to me,” she said quickly as her enthusiasm rose.

She pointed out transportation can be a barrier for some patients, and other medical professionals could use the mobile clinic when she is home in Texas.

“All through the year, we can keep helping people. I have this vision of so many things I can do, but I’m just handicapped. But I know the God I serve, He’s a faithful God. I believe in prayer,” she said.

Time, accompanied by prayer, will tell whether her goal of a mobile medical clinic can be accomplished, but in the meantime, Ikowe spends Sundays in the Diocese of Fort Worth, traveling to those unable to attend Mass and bringing joy and the healing presence of the Lord in the Eucharist. ✚



The grace of second chances

In the beauty of the domestic Church, one finds the Lord, says Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*. The spirituality of family, the pope writes, is made up of “thousands of small but real gestures. In that variety of gifts and encounters which deepen communion, God has His dwelling place” (315).

With their blended family of nine, Jessica and Alvaro Celaya of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford built a life of faith from the ground up for the betterment of their family. Together, the couple provides their combined seven children and six grandchildren with an example of how to develop a love for Jesus and Mary with their everyday practices of devotion.

RETURN TO THE CHURCH

Alvaro and Jessica met in 2000 while working as correctional officers in El

Centro, California.

“We had a lot of things in common,” Alvaro said, sharing they both had children from previous relationships. The two got married civilly and raised their kids, their youngest a set of twins born in 2009.

“But we were not actually, when we got together, living our Catholic faith. We had kind of fallen away. It wasn’t until 2014 that Jessica and I discussed trying to do things differently,” Alvaro explained.

“We were having a rough spell, and then with the babies, it was a lot of work,” Jessica added.

They decided to make a change for the sake of their family and visited their local Catholic priest.

Alvaro recalled thinking, “Let’s do this with God and see where it leads us.”

While Jessica completed RCIA to receive her confirmation, the two also

took marriage classes and their union was convalidated by the Catholic Church in El Centro on May 30, 2015.

“From then, everything just kind of started working. God was working in our lives,” Alvaro reflected. “No family is perfect, and we have our share of struggles and everything, but we keep ourselves grounded with our faith, and we always come back to that.”

Even as their older children started their adult lives in different parts of the country, Jessica and Alvaro continue prioritizing their faith.

“We’ve had a lot of wonderful experiences everywhere we’ve been, and our faith has grown, and so has our church community,” Alvaro said.

FAMILY BONDING TIME

The Celaya family moved to San Diego before they arrived in Weatherford

◀ Alvaro and Jessica Celaya of St. Stephen Parish in Weatherford and their twin daughters, Olivia and Sofia, pose for a photo inside the parish on Feb. 10. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

in June 2023. But Alvaro and Jessica determined no matter where they relocated, a few family practices would remain constant.

“Anywhere we go, we try to get involved in our parish,” Alvaro said.

“We all have to do something,” Jessica added, sharing that her twin girls have been serving in the Church since they were 5. “Every parish we’ve been to, everyone had to do something, that was our thing.”

The practice started at their first parish in El Centro when Alvaro became a Knight of Columbus, Jessica joined the choir, and their 5-year-old twins attended catechesis, eventually becoming altar servers.

“We knew as soon as we got here [to Weatherford], we were not going to buy a home if we weren’t close to a Catholic church. And sure enough, we got to St. Stephen right away.”

This time, their girls decided to help with the choir while also beginning their confirmation preparation.

“We said, well, let’s do it as a family, so we are in the choir, plus I transferred my Knights of Columbus membership here,” Alvaro said. “We help with anything. I mean, we just know that if God asks us to serve, we’re going to serve.”

PROUD OF THE FAITH

The Celaya twins, Olivia and Sofia, are sophomores in the local public high school. Sometimes, they see some of the friends they’ve made at church at school, but for the most part, Catholic students attending Weatherford High are in the minority.

On one occasion, Olivia’s classmate took offense to the Virgin Mary, insinuating that Catholics worship her.

“We pray to her, and we ask for her intercession, and we ask for graces from her — we don’t worship,” Olivia

recalled explaining to him.

“I was really proud of her,” Alvaro said. “It’s tough nowadays not only just to be a teenager, but then to have to defend your faith at that age is tough.”

LOVE FOR THE ROSARY

The Celayas take pride in their everyday family traditions, like wearing their scapulars, praying together before school, and saying grace in public.

“Livie [Olivia], my dad, and I have been wearing our scapulars since we were like 5 years old,” Sofia shared with a smile.

“When you’re ready, and it’s time, you’re going to wear it, and there’s not going to be any ifs, ands, or buts,” Jessica said, sharing that she’d initially struggled to wear her scapular until she fell in love with the Virgin Mary after attending a Cursillo retreat.

“It just changed everything,” she said.

Alvaro also has a devotion to the Virgin Mary and to Our Lady of Guadalupe, which began when he started getting involved with 40 Days for Life.

“That’s how we got started praying the Rosary, and then it trickled into becoming a weekly family event, if not more often, like when we’re on a road trip and begin praying the Rosary,” he said.

ADVICE FOR PARENTS

Get involved with your parish, Alvaro urged. “It’s the most rewarding thing you can do, especially when you see your kids blossoming in the different things that you’re involved in.” Start with one thing, one ministry, that you can do as a family, he said.

“And just say yes,” Jessica added. “It’s not always easy, but once you’re there, you’ll be glad you came.” 🇺🇸

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To Report Misconduct:

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

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

To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

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

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

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



Pump up the virtue

Each year in Lent, we give up things like soda, coffee, social media, and television. Sometimes, we even add things like times of prayer, serving the poor, spiritual reading, and going to Mass more often. All of this is added to the fasting that the Church requires on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and Friday abstinence from meat throughout the 40 days.

But we might wonder, why are we sacrificing?

Many reasons, among them that we mirror Jesus' 40 days of fasting and being tempted in the desert. We sacrifice to be united to Jesus' suffering and death on Good Friday. Our Lenten promises are also a way to enter the "apprenticeship of self-mastery."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church uses the phrase *apprenticeship in self-mastery* when it teaches about growing in chastity (2395). It also refers to self-mastery when it talks about growing in human virtues, stating they "make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life," and that "moral virtues are acquired by human effort" (1804).

Thus, the effort we put forth via our Lenten practices serves the purpose of helping us grow in virtue. As with most things, the amount of human effort put forth directly correlates to the amount of growth in virtue achieved.

When contemplating this year's Lenten plans, it is worth some deeper thought about our weakest virtues and ways we might put in some serious effort to grow in them.

These ideas may help you grow in specific virtues:



Jeff Hedglen

FAITH: Supernatural gift of belief in the unseen God. Pray more. However much you pray currently, add to that. Ideas: Pray the Rosary; prayerfully read Scripture, maybe the daily readings; attend Mass more than usual; go to confession at least once; pray a Humility or Sacred Heart of Jesus litany, or any of the many others to choose from.

HOPE: Wait for the goodness of God in the land of the living and anticipate heaven. Pray the Litany of Trust, the Prayer of Abandonment, the Jesus Prayer, or the Act of Faith and Act of Hope. Also, take time to just daydream about heaven, the ultimate object of our hope. Maybe even ask for the intercession of the saints or your loved ones who have gone before you.

CHARITY: Will the good of the other. Pray the Act of Love; read *1 Corinthians 13* and replace "love" with your name, then replace it with the name of Jesus; find ways to put your love into action by serving others.

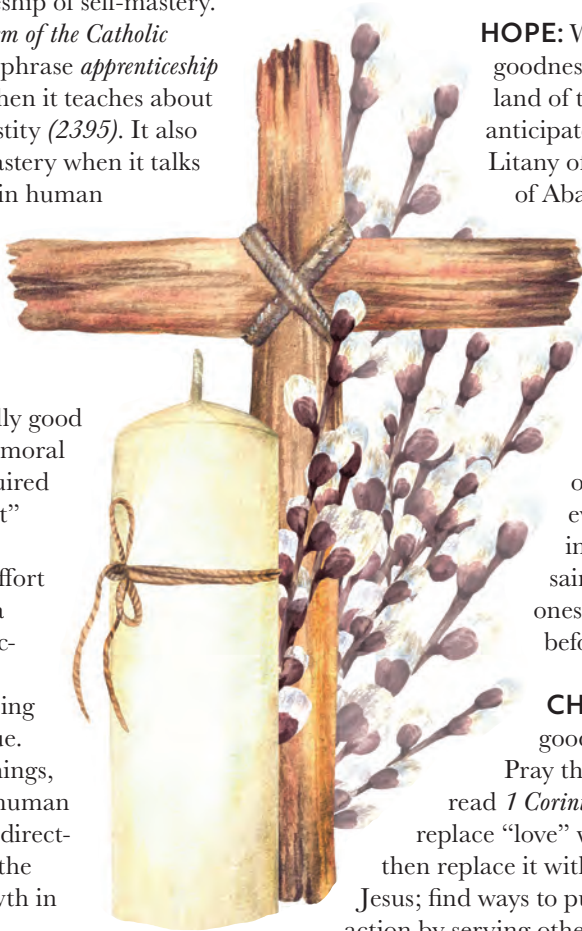
PRUDENCE: The wisdom to make the right choices in life. Do a daily Examen Prayer; reflect deeply before making a decision; start a decision journal to keep track of your decisions and how they go. If you are an over-thinker, practice making snap decisions on smaller things. Work to develop your conscience while reading the *Catechism*, starting at paragraph 1776 (or listen to Fr. Mike Schmitz's *Catechism in a Year*, starting at episode 238).

JUSTICE: Give what is due to God and to others by choosing what is right. Look up and study Catholic Social Teaching principles; review times you were dishonest and work to repair the damage; take stock of your life and be sure things are in proper order: God first, family, work, neighbor.

FORTITUDE: Moral courage. Calm your frustration when you are in traffic or in a long line; practice patience and just be content. Avoid the temptation to be mediocre — aim for greatness in how we treat our family and friends, in the quality of our work, in our participation at Mass.

TEMPERANCE: The virtue of self-control and moderation. This is the virtue we usually work on in Lent when we give up certain foods and drink. But maybe this year, add language, negative attitudes, gossip, complaining, and other internal passions that can get out of control.

If we can work on even one of these virtues, our apprenticeship of self-mastery might just progress to journeyman someday; and with time and dedication, someday we might be masters of our passions. ✚



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



Lent, the desert, and Fridays

Why do Catholics celebrate Lent? Why is this season marked by “giving something up” and various penitential acts? Because, in the 40 days of Lent, “the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 540). When our Blessed Lord encountered Satan, He was doing something quite deliberate, His aim being to “recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert” (538). Jesus, as the new Adam, remained faithful where Adam had fallen and, in contrast to the Israelites who provoked our Lord, Jesus fulfills Israel’s vocation. In this, Jesus “is the devil’s conqueror: He ‘binds the strong man’ to take back His plunder” and, in His victory, anticipates the victory achieved at His Passion (539). In our Lenten practice, therefore, we can unite ourselves, both individually and corporately, to His victory over the enemy.

In other words, the mystery of Christ in the desert has a salvific meaning, for in this, He atones for our disobedience through His obedience. All He did, said, and suffered “had for its aim restoring fallen man to his original vocation” (518). In all aspects in which we have failed, He fulfilled and gained magnificent victory. In uniting ourselves to His atoning acts,

we can participate in making expiation and restitution not only for our own misdeeds, but those of others as well.

In *Matthew 4:1-11* and *Luke 4:1-13* (as well as *Mark 1:12-13*), we find the Gospel accounts of Christ’s temptations in the desert. Lenten practice aims at penitential practices which aid us in uniting ourselves to His actions. This is why, in this time of year, we are reminded of the “acts of religion” — fasting, prayer, and almsgiving — acts which give pious expression to our contrition (1434, 1969).



Jason Whitehead

Lent, however, should never be a season closed off unto itself.

Rather, it should serve to spring us to new life with a renewed vigor which reverberates into the rest of the year.

To this end, we are reminded of the days of penance the Church gives us outside of Lent, notably “each Friday in memory of the death of our Lord” (1438, *Code of Canon Law* 1250). Yes, you read that right. Every Friday (aside from solemnities). In short, “Friday should be in each week something of what Lent is in the entire year” (*NCCB, Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence*, no. 23 [Nov. 18, 1966]).

Most Catholics are familiar with “no meat on Fridays during Lent” and have keen memories of their parish fish fry. What is not so familiar is the universal norm of every Friday of the year (aside

from solemnities) being a day of penance set apart in celebrating the memory of our Lord, specifically through abstaining from meat (*CIC* 1251; *Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence*, no. 18-28). Of course, outside of Lent, the Catholic is free to abstain from some other food. This being the case, our bishops still “give first place to abstinence from flesh meat” (*Pastoral Statement*, no. 24).

Why should we bother with practices which may seem, to some, to be trivial? In short, because it helps us prioritize God. The worship of God, separated from concrete practice, becomes abstract, and we have difficulty with the abstract. Possessing composite natures of soul and body, we need the practicalities of the physical to ground us. When you center your weekly schedule around Sunday Mass, it orients you toward prioritizing your time. When you center your grocery list around Friday, it helps keep your mind on the things of God and the purpose of every week: the worship and glory of God.

How well are you prioritizing God these days? To do so is to achieve the union our Lord seeks of you. ✚

Jason Whitehead is the diocesan director of evangelization and catechesis. He entered the Church in 2012 and subsequently received a master’s degree in theology.

Serving God and country

NTC/Juan Cuatrecasas

HE IS: Father Jason Allan, pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Pilot Point. He also served as parochial vicar at Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton.

LOCAL LIFE: Raised in Keller, Fr. Allan increased his involvement at his home parish of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton when he needed service hours. Through altar serving, he came to know Monsignor James Hart, Father Dennis Smith, and Father Jim McGhee and admired their spirituality.

A DISCERNING MIND: After graduating from Keller High School, Fr. Allan put aside earlier plans to join the U.S. Navy and entered seminary.

After his third year of seminary, he began to question his call to the priesthood. Father Jonathan Wallis advised him, “It’s impossible to have certainty of our call to the priesthood. There’s always some element of a leap of faith. Rely on your trust in the Lord.”

ORDAINED AND COMMISSIONED: Two days after his ordination as a transitional deacon on March 19, 2020, Fr. Allan was commissioned into the Navy as a chaplain candidate.

He has completed basic training and the initial chaplaincy school, and

Lieutenant Allan spent a month of each of the last three summers serving in the military.

After working as a parish pastor for several years, he and Bishop Michael Olson will evaluate the option of becoming an active-duty chaplain.

PRIESTHOOD: May 22, 2021, at Vietnamese Martyrs Church in Arlington.

NAVY BLUE: Fr. Allan’s father is a retired naval officer, which prompted his childhood desire to join the Navy. His summer naval assignments confirmed his desire to be a naval chaplain. Young sailors are “trying to figure out what to do with the rest of their lives. Given the nature of the military and the presence of the possibility of death, they are more likely to ask some of those big questions. Being a priest in the middle of that is a powerful encounter.”

BEST PARTS OF PRIESTHOOD: “Being able to celebrate Mass is always very profound, but I didn’t realize how much I would appreciate some of the sick calls.

“Someone approaching the end of their life, or having a serious health concern, is definitely reaching out for something. ... That’s an opportunity to hopefully be that mediator for the

encounter between them — them and God, them and the Church.”

STAYING FAITHFUL: The breviary — or the Liturgy of the Hours, the universal prayer of the Church — “since ordination has been especially fruitful for me. I’m praying a psalm of rejoicing or of lamentation or sadness ... I can think of a parishioner who can relate to that psalm ... and lift up that person in prayer.

“Solitude is a necessary part of the priesthood. Our primary source has to be the Lord, and that comes from our own private prayer and the sacraments as well.”

ANTICIPATION: Advent, especially Advent hymns, are a favorite. “To some extent, our whole life is like Advent as we’re waiting for the return of the Lord, and we’re waiting to meet Him in our death. That anticipation that we’re intentional about in Advent is present throughout the whole year.”

THE TAKEAWAY: “Ultimately our faith is about establishing a relationship with the Lord. When we are teaching the *Catechism* or exhorting something in the moral life, it’s never for its own sake, but it’s always for us to have that deeper relationship with Christ and His Church.” 🇺🇸

Discerning in community

NTC/Juan Guajardo

Discerning God's will can seem like a difficult and challenging process. Young men considering a priestly vocation weigh many questions.

How do I know what God wants from me? How do I know if what I am experiencing is the calling of God or just my own thoughts? How do I handle the internal and external pressures of making such a big decision that others may not support? Will I ultimately have the strength to do this?

In seminary, every man studying to become a priest must take a class on Trinitarian theology. This is the study of God as the Trinity (Three persons, One God).

The first point of importance for us as bearers of His image is that God, in His essence, is a communion of persons. Even God is not alone. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the three persons in God's unity.

What does this tell us? It tells us that it "is not good for man to be alone" (*Genesis 2:18*). We need other people. We are not meant to exist and make decisions in an isolated vacuum. We need the help of others: our friends, our parents, our community, and our priests to help illuminate the difficult road ahead.

The Vocations Office for the Diocese

of Fort Worth has recently launched an opportunity for parishes to have vocations ministry teams. These teams of four to five people are designated by the pastors to spearhead promoting vocations in each parish. (See pages 32-34 for more information.) Responsibilities of the team range from making sure proper advertising is in place for upcoming events, as well as reminding the faithful in our diocese just how important religious vocations are — that they are not merely another job among jobs.



Fr. Brett Metzler

A vocation is the calling within which God establishes a person's path to know, love, and serve Him best. The priesthood is thus a vocation, a supernatural calling to a young man to follow Christ as the Good Shepherd for His people.

These teams need your help. To foster and increase vocations in our diocese, we need a community to reawaken in our people the dignity of the priesthood, its value, and the tremendous honor it brings to a family that God would choose their son for this glorious and awe-filled adventure. This honor does not originate in ourselves, but it is a calling that comes forth from God Himself.

St. John Vianney, the patron of diocesan priests, once said, "If I were to meet

a priest and an angel, I should salute the priest before I saluted the angel. The latter is the friend of God; but the priest holds His place."

At the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every Sunday, the priest in a special way stands in *persona Christi*. As he says the words of consecration over the bread and wine, Jesus is speaking in and through him. The result is the Bread of Life, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, our spiritual food, the nourishment of our souls, and union with God Himself.

Without this bread from heaven, we have no life within us.

Let us pray for more priests, not only to come from other places, from other families, from other parishes, but from our own, so that one day, at the end of our lives, when a priest forgives us our sins, anoints us, and offers us the Eucharist as food for the journey to heaven, maybe we can experience the added gift of knowing that this priest came from our own community, and now stands between heaven and Earth as a bridge for us to arrive to our true and eternal homeland. ✝

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



ARREPIÉNTETE Y CREE EN EL EVANGELIO

La Iglesia nos invita al Miércoles de Ceniza

Por Violeta Rocha

El tiempo litúrgico de Cuaresma comienza en unas semanas. Este período consiste en cuarenta días en los que “la Iglesia nos invita a reflexionar, corregir nuestro camino y acercarnos a Dios”. Por eso, es importante que conozcamos y entendamos el significado del inicio de esta especial invitación, que se realiza el Miércoles de Ceniza, “símbolo de penitencia que nos recuerda que, al final de nuestro camino por esta vida, tenemos la esperanza de que Dios nos espera”, expresa la Hermana Susana Islas, MCSH. “Tenemos la oportunidad de reflexionar durante este tiempo y prepararnos para un gran acontecimiento que es la muerte y resurrección de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, que es nuestra salvación”, comparte la Hermana Islas, que sirve su apostolado en la Parroquia de Immaculate Heart of Mary de Fort Worth.

Ricardo Romero, originario de Toluca, México, ha sido feligrés de la Parroquia St. Francis of Assisi de Grapevine desde el 2015 y actualmente

es catequista. Además, es candidato al Diaconado y está asignado a la Parroquia de St. Philip the Apostle of Flower Mound.

Romero reconoce que a través de su servicio dedicado adquirió “mayor entendimiento” del Miércoles de Ceniza, pues lo veía antes “como una tradición”, pero “al acercarme más a mi fe, fui tomando más conciencia de lo que verdaderamente implica”, asevera. “Es reconocer nuestras faltas y ver la oportunidad de sanar heridas, renovar nuestra fe; comenzar un camino de transformación hacia la alegría de la Pascua”, y, en definitiva, acercarnos día a día al amor de Dios que sabemos es infinito”, agrega.

Recibir la bendición de la señal de la cruz en la frente con cenizas no es un sacramento, sino un sacramental que puede recibirse aún sin estar en estado de gracia; y, por otro lado, si no se recibe, tampoco es causa de falta. No obstante, “sí, es importante porque marca el inicio de los cuarenta días, en los que se nos pide ratificar nuestra relación con Dios con verdadero propósito de conversión,” destaca el Padre Ariel Muñoz-Sánchez,

CORC, párroco de St. Matthew de Arlington.

Antiguamente, los judíos se llenaban la cabeza de ceniza y hacían oración, explica el Padre Muñoz-Sánchez. “Era un acto penitencial por los pecados del pueblo”. En la Iglesia Católica “es una invitación al arrepentimiento”. Por eso, se nos dice “acuérdate que eres polvo y en polvo te convertirás”; y al mismo tiempo, nos llenamos de esperanza al escuchar “arrepíentete y cree en el Evangelio”. Así se inicia “un período cuaresmal”, en el que con el Sacramento de la Confesión, la oración y los actos penitenciales como el ayuno, la abstinencia y la caridad, “podemos encontrar conversión, para que el día de la Resurrección del Señor, el Día de Pascua, lo reciban alegres y felices,” enfatiza el Padre Muñoz-Sánchez. Solidarizamos con quienes pasan hambre y con los necesitados. “Esto nos ayuda a quebrantar este corazón duro por el pecado y nos ayuda a alcanzar nuestra salvación. Además, es “imitar a Jesús, ya que para iniciar su vida pública, ayunó cuarenta días y cuarenta noches”, añade, y señala que la abstinencia se recomienda a partir de los 14 años y hasta las



personas menores de 59 años.

El Padre Muñoz-Sánchez, que llegó a la Parroquia de St. Matthew en el 2017, se alegra de reconocer que cada año, tanto en las misas como durante las diferentes celebraciones de Liturgia de la Palabra se suman hasta 5 mil personas. Se debe añadir que el aumento, aunque a una menor escala, también se refleja en los días subsiguientes. Por esta razón, “entonces sí hace mella el Miércoles de Ceniza, y se puede ver que algunos captan el mensaje y dicen ‘ya es tiempo de cambiar’”.

Algunas parroquias incluso preparan las cenizas quemando los ramos secos, que feligreses llevan del Domingo de Ramos del año anterior, así como los misales que ya no se usan. Algo verdaderamente muy importante es que las cenizas deben ser bendecidas. Por lo general, se hace durante la primera misa del Miércoles de Ceniza.

SER TESTIMONIO DE FE

“Con nuestros propios actos y, a través de charlas, se ayuda a concientizar a otros sobre este acto

piadoso, y que no se quede en un solo día” apunta la Hna. Susana Islas, pues “el amor de Dios es tan grande y maravilloso, que siempre nos busca; y la Iglesia cada año nos lo está recordando”. Por eso, señala que entre amigos y familia, “podemos tener juntos un propósito”, ya sea ir a Misa juntos todos los domingos, rezar el Rosario, ir al Viacrucis todos los viernes de Cuaresma o acompañarse al ir a confesarse. “Una sola cosa que se haga, ya es un paso a la conversión. ¿Por qué no incluir a alguien más?”, comenta la Hermana.

Roberto Romero apunta que hemos de compartir con otros nuestro “compromiso cuaresmal”, de forma que, aunque ellos no estén aún tomando el compromiso, “sean testigos y observadores de mi transformación y crecimiento espiritual”. Se pueden dar también charlas sencillas en las que “nuestro crecimiento avive en los demás esa chispa que los haga interesarse en profundizar y los lleve a reconocer que Dios siempre tiene sus brazos abiertos a todos nosotros” concluye diciendo. ✝

AMBIENTE SEGURO

Para Reportar Mala Conducta Sexual:

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

- ▶ Llamar a la Línea Directa de Asistencia a Víctimas: (817) 602-5119.
- ▶ Llamar el Director Diocesano de Ambiente Seguro: (817) 945-9334 y dejar un mensaje.
- ▶ Llamar al Canciller de la Diócesis: (817) 945-9315.

Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha de Abuso:

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

- ▶ Si alguien está en peligro inmediato, llame al 911
- ▶ Llame al Departamento de Servicios para la Familia y de Protección (DFPS) de Texas al (800) 252-5400.
- ▶ Reporte inmediatamente el presunto abuso a su supervisor, sacerdote o director, y presente el Aviso Confidencial de Preocupación con la información requerida por DFPS.

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





CULTIVANDO líderes de la fe

Estudiantes de Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Preparatory reflexionan sobre la fe y el trabajo

Por Christina Benavides

El exclusivo programa de trabajo y estudio de la escuela Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Preparatory cuenta con la oportunidad de colocar a sus alumnos en uno de 70 entornos profesionales diversos, en los que trabajan cinco días al mes.

Además de las actividades académicas y comerciales, los estudiantes reciben una base sólida

de formación en la fe católica. Tres de los alumnos de Cristo Rey conversan con *North Texas Catholic* acerca de su crecimiento espiritual y los efectos que imparte a sus prácticas de trabajo y estudio, y en el aula.

A PRUEBA

Christopher Avelar, estudiante de tercer año de secundaria, se siente afortunado de que su puesto de trabajo y estudio sea en Alliance Airport.

De izquierda a derecha: Giselle Madrigal, Christopher Avelar y Kera Worobiec posan en la sala de clases de teología en Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep el 21 de enero. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

“No es como un trabajo de oficina. Estoy afuera con los aviones, así que fue genial conseguir ese tipo de trabajo y mantenerlo durante toda la escuela secundaria”, expresa con entusiasmo.

El adolescente añade: “No me comunico mucho con mis compañeros de trabajo porque sólo quiero hacer mi trabajo, y cuando surge el tema de la religión, soy más reservado”.

Se acuerda de un encuentro durante la hora de almuerzo con un compañero de trabajo mayor y predicador protestante, que le preguntó sobre María y su vida de oración.

“Comencé a agradecer a mis maestros porque puse a prueba mis conocimientos y comencé a responder sus preguntas”, dijo.

La conversación fue estresante, pero la experiencia ayudó a Avelar a darse cuenta de cuánto había crecido desde que ingresó a Cristo Rey.

“De niño, rezaba por las noches, pero nunca encontré el significado de la oración hasta que llegué aquí y me di cuenta de que la oración es esencial para tener una buena relación con Cristo”, comenta.

Avelar ingresó a la escuela católica con cierta resistencia, pues había asistido a la escuela pública desde pequeño hasta el octavo grado.

“Realmente no me interesaba la fe”, dijo. “Cuando mi madre me habló de Cristo Rey, no quería ir allí. Quería ir a una escuela pública con mis amigos”.

Recuerda que se sentía intimidado al tomar las clases de teología y hablar sobre su relación con Dios con otras personas fuera de su familia inmediata. Según fue pasando el tiempo, comenzó a abrirse en el acogedor ambiente escolar y siente que creció en su vida de oración.

“Ahora que tengo una buena — bueno, una decente — relación con Dios, puedo tener una vida mejor y he visto

una diferencia notable en cómo actuaba antes de venir aquí y cómo actúo ahora”, comparte Avelar.

Una vez que se gradúe, Avelar espera asistir a Texas Christian University (TCU) para estudiar periodismo o ciencias políticas. Mientras tanto, espera mejorar en la comunicación sobre su fe con otros, incluidos sus amigos.

“La forma en que me comunico con los demás es un reflejo de Dios y de ser católico”, afirma.

CAMBIO DE PLANES

La estudiante de segundo año de secundaria Giselle Madrigal comenzó su tiempo en Cristo Rey con una visión muy clara.

“Quería asistir a Texas A&M y seguir una carrera como abogada de inmigración porque es un tema muy importante para mí y me apasionaba mucho”, asevera la joven de 16 años.

Cuando se enteró de su colocación en Texland Petroleum, estaba emocionada de trabajar junto con el personal legal de la empresa. Sin embargo, al cabo de casi dos años, los planes personales de Madrigal podrían cambiar.

“Todavía estoy tratando de discernir mi llamado, pero en general, mi jornada a través de la vida posiblemente me lleve a la Universidad de Dallas para estudiar teología e ingresar al convento”, añade.

La exalumna de la Escuela Católica St. George explica que su experiencia en el entorno corporativo, donde ella y sus compañeros de trabajo manejan “más de mil cien pozos por todo el sur de los Estados Unidos”, es muy exigente.

Su experiencia en el lugar de trabajo la ha ayudado a redefinir su prioridad de crecer en su relación con Cristo en lugar de buscar riqueza financiera.

“Mi objetivo principal ahora y en los próximos años es convertirme en una mejor representación de Cristo”, explica.

“No sólo usar palabras para difundir el Evangelio, sino también con acciones”.

Al mirar hacia atrás, Madrigal le recordaría a su yo más joven que siempre confiara en el Señor.

“Todo tiene un propósito y ese propósito es siempre bueno”.

FORTALEZA EN LA ADVERSIDAD

Pese a que sus planes de estudios futuros todavía están por definirse, Kera Worobiec, de 17 años, está en camino de encontrar un equilibrio que sentará una base sólida para el resto de su vida.

La estudiante de tercer año de secundaria comenzó con una pasantía en Tarrant Regional Water District antes de pasar a los departamentos de comunicaciones y marketing de General Motors Financial durante el semestre de primavera de su segundo año.

“Al principio, tenía un poco de miedo”, dijo Worobiec. “Muchas veces me sentía con muchas dudas y no sabía lo que estaba haciendo, pero seguí adelante y me decía a mí misma que estaba bien, que todo era nuevo.

“Lo superaba algunos días, pues rezaba todo el tiempo”, admite Worobiec. “Fue toda una experiencia de aprendizaje el simple hecho de estar en una corporación y me enseñó mucho”.

Combinar las clases, el trabajo y el estudio y otros aspectos de la escuela no siempre ha sido fácil, pero la exalumna de la escuela católica St. John the Apostle descubrió que la adversidad la hizo más fuerte.

Ella espera que en el futuro pueda compartir su fe con más confianza.

“Hace poco tuve el sueño de querer difundir la palabra de Dios entre los estudiantes”, revela Worobiec, mientras expresa su interés de iniciar en la escuela un grupo de estudio de apologética. “Eso es algo que he tenido en mi corazón desde hace un tiempo”. 🇺🇸

la REALIDAD del TRÁFICO HUMANO

Feligreses aprenden cómo identificar y prevenir el tráfico humano durante una asamblea realizada por la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro

Por Karla Silva

“**L**a Iglesia debe tener conciencia y concientizar a la sociedad sobre el mal de la trata de personas para proteger a los más vulnerables de los depredadores”, declara el Obispo Michael Olson de la Diócesis de Fort Worth. La concientización y la transparencia son los mejores desinfectantes para erradicar el crimen del tráfico humano, señala el Obispo.

“Cuando se habla de la trata de personas solemos imaginar secuestros y traslados forzados de un país a otro. Sin embargo, esta penosa realidad es mucho más cercana y compleja. En Fort Worth, el 39% de las víctimas son traficadas por su pareja y el 46% por un familiar”, explica Elenie Howard, oficial de la Unidad de Tráfico Humano de la Policía de Fort Worth, mientras hablaba sobre el tráfico de personas el 1 de febrero en la Parroquia de St. Joseph de Arlington. Se abordaron temas clave como la realidad de la trata humana en Texas, las medidas de prevención y las formas de denunciar este crimen.

“El tráfico o trata de personas es conocido como la ‘esclavitud moderna’, ya que conlleva el uso de la fuerza, el fraude o



Elenie Howard, del Departamento de Policía de Fort Worth, dirige una presentación sobre la trata de personas el 1 de febrero en la Parroquia de St. Joseph en Arlington. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

la coerción para obtener beneficios a través del trabajo forzado o la explotación sexual. Además, cualquier acto de explotación comercial en que la víctima sea menor de 18 años se considera trata de personas, incluso si no hubiera fuerza, fraude o coerción”, manifiesta Howard.

Los traficantes podrían ser o no personas cercanas a la víctima. Se encuentran en las redes de delincuencia organizada; y podrían ser también empleadores, conocidos o familiares. No

hay un perfil único: pueden ser hombres, mujeres o jóvenes. Estos delincuentes son, a menudo, expertos en aprovecharse de la vulnerabilidad de sus víctimas. Utilizan diversas tácticas de reclutamiento y recurren a amenazas psicológicas, violencia física o la confiscación de documentos para controlar a sus víctimas. Al principio, muchas víctimas no se dan cuenta de que están siendo engañadas; sino más tarde, pero entonces ya están atrapadas en la explotación, apunta Howard.



Un feligrés hace una pregunta el 1 de febrero en la Parroquia de St. Joseph de Arlington durante una asamblea sobre prevención de la trata de personas que fue organizada por la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro y la Oficina de Escuelas Católicas de la diócesis. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Por otro lado, las víctimas suelen ser personas vulnerables con un historial de maltrato físico, abuso de sustancias o experiencias adversas en los hogares de refugio.

Los datos muestran que el 100% de las víctimas entrevistadas por la Unidad de Tráfico Humano de la Policía de Fort Worth sufrió abuso sexual en la infancia; el 73% de las víctimas de tráfico laboral son personas indocumentadas; y el 85% de los casos involucran a jóvenes y mujeres. De este último grupo, el 50% son menores de 16 años y la edad promedio de las víctimas en Texas es de tan sólo 14 años, destaca Howard.

“Por eso, es muy importante reconocer las señales del tráfico humano, tanto en jóvenes como en adultos”, señala Howard. Según el Centro Nacional de Niños Extraviados y Explotados (NCMEC, por sus siglas en inglés), entre las señales de tráfico en jóvenes están el ausentismo escolar, huir de casa, falta de interés en actividades que antes le interesaban, cambio de grupo social, modificación de su manera de hablar o vestir, posesión de artículos de lujo que no corresponden con sus circunstancias de vida, ocultar moretones, cicatrices, marcas o tatuajes y tener múltiples teléfonos. En el caso de los adultos víctimas de tráfico, las señales pueden incluir cambio frecuente de vivienda, falta de control sobre

su identificación personal, dinero o documentos y trabajo en industrias donde es común ser presionado para realizar actos sexuales a cambio de dinero.

“Entonces, ¿qué se puede hacer para prevenir este crimen, especialmente con nuestros hijos e hijas?”, pregunta Mónica Martínez, una de las asistentes a la asamblea. La detective Orand respondió que es primordial estar al tanto de las aplicaciones que los jóvenes usan en sus celulares, ya que más del 65% de las víctimas son reclutadas a través de las redes sociales. Explica que el tráfico sexual infantil comienza frecuentemente con la captación en estas plataformas. “Es muy importante recordar que ustedes, como padres, son los dueños de los celulares de sus hijos y tienen derecho a supervisar cómo los utilizan”, agrega Chávez. Destaca que construir una relación de confianza con los hijos es fundamental para prevenir estas situaciones.

“Si usted sospecha de este crimen o es víctima de éste, no dude en denunciarlo. En caso de emergencia, llame al 9-1-1. Si no es una emergencia, llame al 817-392-4222. Si prefiere no hablar con la policía, puede llamar a la Línea Directa Nacional Contra el Tráfico Humano al 1-888-373-7888”, informa Howard. “Es importante mencionar que la Unidad de Tráfico Humano de Fort Worth no solicita documentos de estatus migratorio ni

reporta esta información a otras agencias. Así que no tengan miedo de llamar para denunciarlo”.

Alma García, coordinadora de Ambiente Seguro, enfatiza que “esta asamblea es uno de los muchos esfuerzos que la oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la diócesis realiza para promover la educación y concientización sobre este crimen, que ocurre con más frecuencia de lo que imaginamos”.

Esta iniciativa comenzó en abril del 2024 para brindar charlas y conferencias sobre el tema a través de la diócesis. La organización Unbound Now se unió a este esfuerzo en enero del 2025 con el fin de visitar escuelas como Cassata y Nolan High School para educar a los estudiantes y maestros sobre las realidades del tráfico humano, cómo mantenerse a salvo en línea y dar a conocer los recursos disponibles para ayudar a posibles víctimas, comparte Sandra Schrader-Farry, Directora de la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro.

Por su parte, el Diácono Rigoberto Leyva, Director de la Oficina Diocesana de Ministerio Hispano, resaltó la importancia de que la comunidad se involucre activamente, comparta este conocimiento con otros y asista a eventos como éste, que promueven la concientización sobre crímenes que violan el derecho humano a la vida, dignidad y libertad. 🇺🇸

en DEFENSA de la VIDA

Iniciativas provida, desafíos y el llamado a voluntarios en la comunidad hispana

Por Karla Silva

“Es un error pensar que el aborto o la falta de respeto a la vida no ocurren en las comunidades hispanas o católicas en general. Esta percepción es incorrecta y refleja un problema significativo que debemos abordar”, señala Terri Schauf, Directora de la Oficina de Respeto a la Vida de la Diócesis de Fort Worth. Esta oficina sirve a las parroquias y comunidades mediante la oración, la educación, el cuidado pastoral y la acción cívica, desarrollando iniciativas que promueven la dignidad de la vida humana desde la concepción hasta la muerte natural. Sin embargo, a pesar de las numerosas iniciativas, se necesitan más voluntarios, especialmente dentro de la comunidad hispana.

Proyecto Gabriel, Rachel Ministries, Envejeciendo con Gracia, Caminar con Mamás Necesitadas y Adoración por la Vida son sólo algunas de las muchas iniciativas que la Oficina de Respeto a la Vida promueve en las comunidades parroquiales de la Diócesis.

Proyecto Gabriel es un programa que apoya a las mujeres con embarazos inesperados, acompañándolas desde el inicio de su embarazo hasta que su bebé cumple el primer año de vida. Las madres son entonces referidas a otros recursos que puedan seguir apoyándolas, describe Kristine Williams, Directora de este programa. A cada mujer embarazada que llega al programa se le asigna un ‘Ángel Gabriel’, una voluntaria que, a

través de la oración, la amistad y el aliento, brinda apoyo continuo para que la madre elija la vida para su bebé. “Este programa está abierto a todas las mujeres, sin importar su situación civil, étnica o religiosa. El Proyecto Gabriel no intenta convertir a estas mujeres al catolicismo, si no de caminar con ellas, hacerles saber que no están solas y ayudarlas a enfrentar cualquier situación que vivan”, explica Williams.

Rachel Ministries ofrece un espacio seguro para encontrar sanación emocional y espiritual tras una experiencia de aborto. Esto se lleva a cabo mediante un retiro de sanación diseñado para mujeres que han tenido uno o más abortos; aunque también pueden participar hombres que apoyaron a su pareja a tomar esa decisión, destaca Schauf.

Envejeciendo con Gracia, es un taller dirigido a personas mayores y sus cuidadores. Su propósito es compartir las enseñanzas de la Iglesia sobre las decisiones médicas éticas, la santidad de la vida y la preparación de documentos, como un testamento. “Aunque el movimiento provida se relaciona más directamente con el aborto, en realidad abarca desde la concepción hasta la muerte natural. Este taller ayuda a entender otro aspecto del respeto a la vida”, comenta Schauf.

Caminar con Mamás Necesitadas y Adoración por la Vida son iniciativas a nivel parroquial. Caminar con Mamás Necesitadas es un grupo de personas de la comunidad parroquial que conoce





Una joven sostiene un cartel a favor de la vida durante el North Texas Rally for Life el 18 de enero. (NTC/Annette Mendoza-Smith)

los recursos disponibles en la Diócesis para ayudar a las mujeres embarazadas.

“Su propósito es referir a quienes necesiten apoyo y educar a los feligreses sobre estos recursos”, explica Schauf. Adoración por la Vida es otra iniciativa en donde la comunidad parroquial dedica una Hora Santa para orar por el respeto a la vida.

Aunque estas iniciativas son para toda la comunidad, la falta de voluntarios que hablen español limita su implementación en las comunidades hispanas, explica Schauf. Ella añade que la demanda de servicios relacionados con el respeto a la vida sigue creciendo entre los hispanos. “Sin voluntarios bilingües, es difícil cubrir estas necesidades”, señala.

“Por ejemplo, los retiros de sanación de Rachel Ministries no se han

podido ofrecer en español por falta de voluntarios. Envejeciendo con Gracia también se canceló por no contar con suficientes personas que difundieran la información, y aunque deseamos que todas las parroquias tengan un ministerio de Caminar con Mamás Necesitadas, no siempre es posible”, explica Schauf.

“Una de las principales causas por las que muchas personas deciden no ser voluntarios es el compromiso de tiempo que requiere. Sin embargo, en muchos ministerios e iniciativas, como es el caso del Proyecto Gabriel, sólo se necesitan entre 5 a 10 horas a lo largo del mes”, menciona Williams. Éste es el caso también de la organización 40 Días por la Vida, donde los participantes rezan una hora frente a centros de aborto durante 40 días, explica Clara Uribe, que trabaja

como voluntaria de este ministerio desde hace dos años.

“Pensar que estas iniciativas ya no son necesarias porque el aborto ha sido prohibido en Texas es un error. Seguimos necesitando voluntarios, hombres y mujeres para defender la vida. Si sienten el llamado, los invitamos a responder”, enfatiza Schauf.

“El impacto que podemos tener en la vida de estas personas va más allá de lo que imaginamos. Lo mejor es que no toma mucho tiempo hacer una gran diferencia. Cada acto de apoyo, por pequeño que parezca, puede salvar una vida, sanar un corazón y transformar comunidades enteras. Todos podemos ser instrumentos de esperanza y amor para infundir el respeto a la vida”, concluye Williams. 🇺🇸



PATRIMONIO DE LA FE

Los abuelos son un modelo a seguir
para sus nietos al compartir su sabiduría y fe

Por Christina Benavides

En su autobiografía que fue publicada recientemente, “Esperanza”, el Papa Francisco comienza con un reconocimiento detallado de las luchas y los éxitos de sus abuelos inmigrantes.

De su *Nonno* Giovanni, aprendió empatía y perspectiva; y de su *Nonna* Rosa,

determinación y religiosidad sincera.

“Es importante que los jóvenes puedan recuperar de sus abuelos, de sus padres y sus madres aquella memoria y aquellas raíces, para que no haya un vacío o para que no se cometan los mismos errores”, escribe el Papa (26).

Asimismo, Marina González hace todo lo posible por compartir con sus tres hijas y tres nietos las raíces de su amor por Dios.

“Por mi parte, aprovecho las

Marina González posa con sus tres nietos (Samantha, 13, Ella, 2, y Matthew, 9) al frente de una estatua de la Santísima Madre en la Parroquia de Most Blessed Sacrament de Arlington. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

oportunidades que tengo para dejarles saber de Dios”, expresa la feligresa de St. Matthew de Arlington. “Llevo a mis nietos a la escuela todos los días y, de camino, aprovecho para decirles que hay que dar gracias a Dios y hay que pedirle a Dios por la familia”.

Sus nietos rezan con ella por los sacerdotes de la Diócesis, por sus maestros, sus amigos y por el mundo. González comparte con ellos su fe en Dios para que encuentren el mismo consuelo que ella aprendió a encontrar cuando era chiquita.

“Mis hijas y nietos sí han pasado momentos difíciles, pero les he dicho y espero inculcarles que con Dios, todo es posible”, comenta González. “Si estás con Dios, Él te ayudará. Siempre saldrán cosas buenas de algo malo que suceda porque así es Dios de bueno y generoso”.

González recuerda a su propia abuela como muy devota, pero también se recuerda que nunca tuvo la oportunidad de sentarse a rezar junto a ella. Sin embargo, la verdadera modelo para compartir las tradiciones de la fe fue su madre, que nunca pasó un día sin rezar el Rosario mientras cuidaba a sus 13 hijos.

“Ella ha sido mi modelo en todo, una gran señora”, asevera la abuela González. “Pero pienso que lo que vi con mi madre, y lo que trato de inculcarles a mis hijas y nietos, es mi anhelo más grande – que ellos sigan sabiendo que Dios existe; que le debemos todo a Él; y, sobre todo, que hay que orar, hay que orar”.

ABRAZAR LAS RAÍCES

En la *Carta de Santiago*, se brinda al pueblo de la Iglesia un mensaje de esperanza y consejo, que dice: “Feliz el hombre que soporta pacientemente la prueba, porque, después de probado,

recibirá la corona de vida que el Señor prometió a los que lo aman” (1, 12).

Esta corona de vida, apunta el Padre Tim Thompson, puede ser el resultado tanto de la edad como de la sabiduría.

“Con la edad vienen muchas experiencias de vida y, al menos, algunas de las trampas que existen. Uno se espera poder transmitir eso a los nietos”, observa el párroco de la Parroquia de All Saints.

Muchos abuelos de su parroquia de Fort Worth han tomado la iniciativa de asegurarse que sus nietos reciban educación religiosa, señala el Padre Thompson. Su vigilancia desempeña un papel crucial cuando los padres están ocupados con el trabajo o alejados de la fe.

Es también una triste realidad para muchas familias de su parroquia poderse quedar cerca uno del otro entre sus familiares inmediatos, comenta el sacerdote. Esta separación impulsa el aislamiento de todos, lo que provoca una falta de conexión y aprendizaje.

“He visto mucha separación en la comunidad”, asevera el Diácono Alfonso Ramírez de la Parroquia de Immaculate Conception de Denton. “He visto a niños separarse de sus padres y, por supuesto, también de sus abuelos”.

Sin embargo, un momento de alegría para el diácono es cuando ve que los feligreses enfatizan la devoción a los sacramentos, en vez de honrar simplemente una tradición vacía.

“Sí, tenemos que inculcarles el amor de Dios, ésa es la fe primordial, y nuestra vida siempre debe estar acompañada de obras”, dice el diácono. “Y la obra principal que nosotros, como abuelos, como padres, inculcamos a nuestros hijos es escuchar la Palabra de Dios”.

No obstante, hay un delicado

equilibrio que uno debe tener en cuenta al cumplir con esta obra, advierte el Diácono Ramírez, quien también es abuelo. “A veces, exageramos nuestra manera porque obligamos a nuestros hijos a seguirnos, en lugar de invitarlos. Y eso es lo que podemos hacer, invitar, no obligar, ¿verdad?”

DEMOSTRAR UN DELICADO EQUILIBRIO

Hace unos dos años, la nieta de González estaba ocupada con un torneo de voleibol. Mientras tanto, su nieto, que tenía 7 años en ese momento, se quedó con ella y la acompañó para asistir a una Misa vespertina en St. Matthew.

González se recuerda que su nieto se sentó en el primer banco y que estuvo muy atento, mientras la miraba participar en la liturgia como lectora. Después de la Misa, el joven le empezó a hacer varias preguntas sobre la parroquia.

“Grandma, ¿sabes qué? Creo que siempre debo venir a esta Misa porque esta iglesia se llama St. Matthew y yo también me llamo Matthew”, recuerda González que le dijo.

Ella le recordó que la iglesia a la que él asistía con su madre no estaba muy lejos, la Parroquia de Most Blessed Sacrament de Arlington.

Sin inmutarse, él le aseguró: “Un día, vendré aquí cuando sea sacerdote”.

Al escuchar esto, González cuenta cómo le erizo las manos y que le respondió: “Sí, mi niño, que Dios te oiga”.

Para esta abuela, su deseo es que algún día Dios se lo conceda y que ella y su familia puedan verlo.

“Seguimos rezando para que se cumpla”, afirma González. 🇺🇸

Una Iglesia, unida y hermosa

Por Christina Benavides

Al enfrentar momentos difíciles, ¿te has preguntado qué haría Jesús en tu lugar? Otra pregunta igual de importante sería: ¿Qué harían sus discípulos?

Nuestra diócesis y nuestra Iglesia católica necesitan que demos un paso adelante y nos convirtamos tanto en líderes como en seguidores. Algunos necesitarán seguir los pasos de Jesús y otros, los de Pedro.

En enero, asistí a una conferencia presentada por el Director Asistente de Asuntos Hispánicos de la USCCB, Alejandro Aguilera-Titus, sobre el Plan Pastoral 2023 para el Ministerio Hispano/Latino. Este proyecto surgió de lo que el Papa Francisco describió como el proceso más sinodal que se haya visto en la historia de la Iglesia. El plan aborda las áreas de crecimiento identificadas durante el V Encuentro del 2018 y con su implementación, se culmina el proceso del Encuentro que comenzó en el 1972, indicó Aguilera-Titus.

Llegó el momento de que la Iglesia ponga en acción el plan diseñado.

El Arzobispo Gustavo García-Siller de la Arquidiócesis de San Antonio nos instó en la Misa de apertura a recordar que ni Jesús ni sus enseñanzas deben permanecer estáticos; no se trata simplemente de lecciones para aceptar o ignorar. Más

bien, Jesús es una presencia viva dentro de nosotros, que nos llama a la acción y nos desafía en cada momento a vivir el Evangelio.

Todos tenemos la misma oportunidad de responder a este llamado, enfatizó el prelado. Si bien el Plan Pastoral detalla cómo los líderes de la Iglesia deben trabajar junto con su rebaño para evangelizar, su éxito depende también de la capacidad de los fieles para lanzarse al liderazgo y discipulado al que todos somos llamados.

Aguilera-Titus apuntó durante su ponencia que los fieles hispanos tienen la bendición de una cultura arraigada profundamente en los valores y tradiciones católicas.

El Plan Pastoral anima a la Iglesia a abrazar la cultura católica hispana, repasar sus fortalezas y aprovecharlas al máximo.

Nuestra diócesis tiene mucho que celebrar. Cuenta con una Pastoral Juvenil siempre activa; un Departamento de Ministerio Hispano dedicado y financiado a nivel diocesano; la presencia de cuatro órdenes religiosas hispanas que sirven en nuestras parroquias; cinco seminaristas hispanos locales; un número creciente de diáconos y catequistas hispanos; y un obispo que habla nuestra lengua y se esfuerza por conocernos.

Aún así, queda mucho por hacer. Necesitamos que más de nuestros hijos se unan al seminario y que más hijas discernan

la vida religiosa; necesitamos una formación sólida para adultos; y necesitamos, sobre todo, una mayor reverencia hacia la Eucaristía.

Al igual que muchos hispanohablantes, considero que mi lengua materna es la raíz de mi identidad católica. Mientras crecía, rezaba, asistía a misa y celebraba las tradiciones católicas en español. De adulta, mi lengua dominante es el inglés, pero todavía siento que vuelvo a casa cuando asisto a una misa en español. El matiz y la belleza de las oraciones de mis padres están ahí y la calidez del Espíritu Santo es profundamente vibrante y presente.

Como católica bilingüe, he cosechado los beneficios de participar con nuestras comunidades de fe en español e inglés; y como reportera diocesana, he tenido el privilegio de asistir además a hermosas celebraciones de la Eucaristía en una variedad de idiomas diferentes: lengua de señas, ghanés, latín, coreano, igbo, tagalo y vietnamita.

Hay mucho que aprender y disfrutar acerca de Cristo en estas variadas comunidades de fe. Esta exhortación se refleja en el Plan Pastoral. Se nos recuerda que nuestra celebración multicultural de la Eucaristía nos une y que es nuestra responsabilidad compartida evangelizar sobre este maravilloso don, sin importar el idioma.

El momento de buscar a Jesús en las perspectivas de nuestros hermanos y hermanas, de acogerlo y adorarlo en todos sus colores y lenguas es aquí y ahora. 🇺🇸



Christina Benavides



NUESTRO PASTOR HABLA

Obispo Michael F. Olson, STD, MA

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

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EL JUBILEO DE LA ESPERANZA ES UNA GRACIA Y NO UN DESEO

El Santo Padre ha decretado por más de 700 años que se celebre un año jubilar como un tiempo de peregrinaje a los lugares sagrados en que los Apóstoles y los primeros santos fueron martirizados para buscar la misericordia y la conversión ganadas por la pasión, muerte y resurrección de Cristo. Estas ocasiones ordinarias ocurren cada 25 años y están marcadas por la apertura de la Puerta Santa de San Pedro en Roma, así como puertas similares en las Basílicas de San Pablo, Santa María la Mayor y San Juan de Letrán, para que los peregrinos acudan a estas iglesias y reciban la confesión sacramental, y oren por su propia conversión y la del mundo entero.

El Papa Francisco ha proclamado este año que, para prepararse para el bimilenario de la muerte y resurrección de Jesucristo en el 2033, la Iglesia debería centrarse y reflexionar sobre nuestra vocación de ser peregrinos de esperanza. Como escribe San Pablo en *Romanos 5, 5*: “La esperanza no defrauda”.

Para facilitar que muchos católicos reciban estas gracias, el Santo Padre ha proclamado que dichos lugares de peregrinación deberían estar disponibles en todas las diócesis del mundo. En la Diócesis de Fort Worth, nuestros lugares de peregrinación incluyen la Catedral de St. Patrick de Fort Worth, la Parroquia de St. Philip the Apostle de Flower Mound, la Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de

Guadalupe de Fort Worth, la Parroquia de Immaculate Conception of Mary de Wichita Falls y la Parroquia de Sacred Heart de Comanche. Aprovechen estas oportunidades para orar por estas gracias espirituales.

Quisiera pedirle a todos que reflexionemos sobre esta gran virtud teológica de la esperanza que se nos da en el bautismo y que se nutre a lo largo de nuestra vida sacramental. Santo Tomás de Aquino enseñó que el motivo de la esperanza cristiana es la omnipotencia de Dios y, más específicamente, Su misericordia. La esperanza exige que confiemos en Dios, para quien todo es posible, incluso cuando observamos que el cambio en la situación actual parece imposible de lograr por nuestros propios esfuerzos. Es precisamente en nuestra impotencia donde somos más capaces de dar testimonio de la virtud de la esperanza.

La situación en nuestra frontera sur parece ser desesperada. Nuestra sociedad necesita urgentemente que actuemos fielmente como la Iglesia que Cristo quiso que fuéramos, un Pueblo de Esperanza. Ofrezco la siguiente cita que escribiera San Agustín: “La esperanza tiene dos hermosas hijas: la ira y la valentía. La ira por cómo son las cosas y la valentía para lograr que no permanezcan como están”.

Muchos de nosotros estamos enojados con razón por las injusticias ocurridas en esta confusa situación: los actos

violentos perpetrados contra inocentes por pandillas que se encuentran ilegalmente en nuestro país; la violencia sufrida por migrantes obligados a abandonar sus países debido a la opresión y las amenazas a niños y ancianos; el flujo de drogas y el tráfico de personas; la abdicación de la responsabilidad de la autoridad legítima de mantener una frontera segura frente a amenazas de terrorismo; la demora del debido proceso en la adjudicación de las solicitudes de asilo político de los refugiados; y la explotación de niños no acompañados que llegan a la frontera sin supervisión, por nombrar sólo algunos.

Sin embargo, lamentablemente, muchos de nosotros nos quedamos fácilmente atrapados en la ira y descuidamos la búsqueda de la segunda hija de la esperanza, la valentía. La ira que sentimos con razón debe obligarnos, por la caridad cristiana, a trabajar para cambiar este sistema que nos ha llevado a esta miserable situación. Si tenemos esperanza, Dios nos da la valentía para reformar un sistema de inmigración que incluya el estado de derecho y el reconocimiento de nuestras responsabilidades internacionales como buen vecino para ayudar a los que son perseguidos, oprimidos y necesitan refugio. La ira sin valentía se convierte en rabia destructiva. Nunca antes ha habido un momento más oportuno para una reforma migratoria por el bien de los pobres, los vulnerables y una paz con orden. “La esperanza no defrauda”. 🇺🇸



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