

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC

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**Christ's
light**



MAY-JUNE 2025
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Local Catholics bid farewell to Pope Francis

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(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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A journey home

I've always had the itch for pilgrimage. Heading toward a destination, traveling with companions, facing unexpected challenges, participating in something larger than oneself — it's an apt metaphor for life.

Walking the Camino de Santiago is on my bucket list, but I've yet to head to Spain to the tomb of the Apostle James.

But that itch for pilgrimage persists, and I've scratched it occasionally by covering some long distances with friends on city streets and wilderness hikes near and far. The relief is only temporary, and the urge to be a pilgrim remains.

Given that enduring desire, I was thrilled to learn the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage is coming through the Diocese of Fort Worth on June 5-7.

Quick recap: last summer, four Eucharistic pilgrimages began in each corner of the nation on Pentecost and converged on July 16 in Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress.

This year, the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage leaves Indianapolis on May 18 and will cross 10 states and 20 dioceses en route to Los Angeles, concluding June 22, the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

As it passes through the our diocese, Masses, Eucharistic processions, and Adoration are planned. Details are available on fwdioc.org.

This Easter season, we learned of a pilgrim who completed his journey home. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, left this world.

On his earthly pilgrimage, he traveled with the marginalized, seeking out prisoners, migrants, the elderly, the sick, the disabled, and others who have been left behind.

He faced challenges — both personal and public — with grace, tenderness, and even joy.

Although his route changed from when he was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1969, his destination remained the same: to be united with the Risen Christ.

Pope Francis now travels ahead of us, but we pilgrims of hope pray for him and all who have ended their earthly pilgrimage.

May we worship Our Lord together at our heavenly destination.

Susan Moses

EDITOR



Father Victor Manuel Contreras Juarez, CORC, and Deacon Gustavo Garcia are seen through palms during consecration on Palm Sunday, April 12, at St. Matthew Parish in Arlington. (NTC/Ben Torres)



Holy Sig

Bishop Michael Olson receives the Oil of Catechumens for blessing during the annual Chrism Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral on April 15. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Father Sushil Tudu, TOR, washes feet during Holy Thursday Mass at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Carrollton on April 17. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)





THERE'S
MORE



See more photos from Holy Week by scanning the QR code or visiting North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com.

Accompanied by Deacon Isaac McCracken and Deacon Blake Thompson, Bishop Michael Olson prays at the 40th Annual Good Friday Rosary Vigil for Life. (NTC/Susan Moses)

Week hts



Crystal Oczkowski writes her prayer intention on a wooden cross. Each year on Holy Saturday, parishioners at Good Shepherd Church in Colleyville reflect and pray the Rosary while carrying a large wooden cross. (NTC/Scott Wagner)



About 500 watched the Passion Play and live Stations of the Cross enacted by All Saints Church on Good Friday at Marine Park in Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Retreat highlights Christ and community



In 2025, Bishop Olson will confirm more than 3,000 youth

NTC/Juan Guajardo



A young woman prays during the confirmation retreat.

FORT WORTH — Bishop Michael Olson celebrated parish pride yes, but also the bigger picture during the April 12 Source and Summit Confirmation Retreat at Nolan Catholic High School.

Groups of students and teachers cheered enthusiastically as Bishop Olson name checked the various parishes represented at the retreat, which drew about 365 students both from Catholic and public schools throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth.

“You may have known each other only through football games and things like that before today,” Bishop Olson said. “But now you know you have something more in common than your schools, parishes, or age group in high school. You have Christ in the Church in common. That’s what holds you together. Always cherish that.”

This year, what historically had been an annual diocese retreat

providing high school students opportunity to discern their vocation retained that element but otherwise shifted focus to students being confirmed this year, Diocesan Director of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministries Victoria Ramon explained. The change addresses a need identified, she said.

“Several parishes in our diocese, whether for financial resources or manpower are unable to host their own confirmation retreats,” Ramon said. “We saw this as an opportunity to help students who might otherwise not have access to a retreat like this, take the load off those parishes, and put this together for as many students in the diocese as possible.”

This year, Bishop Olson is scheduled to celebrate 67 confirmation Masses throughout the diocese.

— Matthew Smith

Reflect and thank



Eighth Grade Vocation Day builds awareness of God’s call

FORT WORTH — The tradition is time honored, but the experience is always fresh. For all 330 students, the events of Eighth Grade Vocation Day on April 4 were novel, and most had never visited St. Patrick Cathedral before.

The day’s primary objective is to build awareness of religious life as a possible vocation, said Patrice Hall, Catholic schools mission director. The schedule also provides opportunities for students to fellowship and build camaraderie with students from other schools whom they may encounter next August in the halls of Nolan Catholic High School, Cassata Catholic High School, or Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep.

Highlights of the day included celebrating Mass with Bishop Michael Olson and hearing the vocation stories of diocesan priests, a



NTC/Juan Guajardo

St. Andrew Catholic School students pray before the Eighth Grade Vocation Day Mass.

seminarian, and a consecrated virgin.

“We are here together because Christ has called us by name. He’s asked us to be here today to worship God, to love Him, to thank Him, and

to discern what He is asking us to do with our lives,” said Bishop Olson.

Discernment begins with listening for God’s voice and recognizing the gifts He gave each one of us, he said.

St. Philip breaks ground on parish hall, Adoration chapel

FLOWER MOUND — St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound has broken ground on a new two-story, 24,000-square-foot parish hall that will add additional classrooms and meeting space to the church that moved from Lewisville three years ago.

The new structure will be roughly the same size as the church building, which was dedicated Feb. 22, 2022.

To allow the parish to have more frequent opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration, the new parish hall will feature a dedicated Adoration chapel with a confessional and seating for about 30 people.

Sarah Fritcher, director of communications at St. Philip, said the new parish hall “has, at its heart, a very large assembly room that allows our parish community to gather for functions outside of Mass, which is always a key feature of parish



Bishop Michael Olson, Father Raymond McDaniel, Monsignor Francis Tawiah and others break ground on a new parish hall for St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound on April 10. (courtesy photo/LMP LLC)

campuses across America.”

“When the parish comes together for a single event, this is our opportunity for us to really meet and have fellowship with one another as a community,” she said. “This building

will help us to do that.”


The building has an additional six classrooms upstairs that allow the parish to fulfill its current and future needs for religious education.

The parish raised about

\$11 million to retire its Phase I construction debt and to build the new facility plus an additional 120 parking spaces, an increase of about 40 percent.

— Lance Murray

Portal to piety

 Faithful observe Year of Jubilee at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish

FORT WORTH — With joy and enthusiasm, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth reaffirms the opportunity of bringing hope as a local Year of Jubilee pilgrimage site, feeling “dearly loved by God and by our bishop,” said parish

pastor, Friar Feliciano Torres-Castro, O.F.M. Cap.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, Bishop Michael Olson decreed five pilgrimage sites:

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

Friar Torres-Castro, known as Father Chano to his parishioners, explained that crossing the sacred door is a deeply symbolic act, representing the entrance to a new period of grace. It is “entering the fold of Jesus,” changing our lives and making a commitment. The jubilee year, said the priest, “is a living encounter with Jesus, emphasizing renewal and conversion.”

The Jubilee Year closes Dec. 28, 2025.

— Violeta Rocha



A woman makes the Sign of the Cross as she walks through doors at Our Lady of Guadalupe.

NTC/Juan Guajardo

Good Knight!



Three Denton Knights celebrate 66 years of service

DENTON — Brother Knights of Columbus, their spouses, families, and friends gathered to celebrate the 66th anniversary of Monsignor Charles King Council 4771 with a special Mass at Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton on April 6.

A reception was held following the Mass at the Knights of Columbus Hall.

Special honorees included Brother Knights who have been in the council since its founding in 1959, including Charter Member Sir Knight David W. MacKenna, who was an original member of the council, and Sir Knight



Earnest Stocker, Gene Hartman, and David MacKenna have been Knights since 1959. (NTC/Michael Madsen)

Eugene M. Hartman, who joined within months of when the council was established.

Sir Knight Earnest Stocker, who was also honored, joined Council 4771 in 1968, having transferred from a council in Amarillo, which he joined in 1959 about the

same time as MacKenna and Hartman.

The pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish as well as chaplain of Council 4771, Father Matthew Tatyrek said of the men that “their commitment to the Knights of Columbus is evident that

they continue to live out the call of founder Blessed Father Michael McGivney and the overall mission of the Knights of Columbus.”

He thanked Council 4771 for its enduring support.

— Ron Kuzlik

NTC/Bertha Salazar



Cliff Harney and other Vietnam veterans were honored at a “Welcome Home” program at St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett.

Welcome home



St. Jude Thaddeus Parish honors Vietnam-era veterans on 50th anniversary of war’s end

BURKBURNETT — To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War and to observe National Vietnam War Veterans Day, the Fourth Degree Bishop Gorman Assembly 1108 hosted a “Welcome Home” program to honor Vietnam veterans at St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett.

“It was nice to have it. I appreciated it. It wasn’t necessary, but it is nice any time the military is honored. The Knights did it right. It was

respectful,” said Ernie Puttoff, who retired as a Lt. Colonel after 29 years in the Army and a Purple Heart recipient.

Knights of Columbus from six councils in the northwest deanery attended the program.

“Holy Mother Church has strong support for her sons and daughters who serve in the Armed Forces, both current military and veterans,” Father Joseph Moreno, pastor of St. Jude Thaddeus Parish, said.

— Jenara Kocks Burgess

🌐 Healing and hope



About 300 attended the Mass of Reparation at St. Philip the Apostle Parish. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

FLOWER MOUND — In his homily for this year’s Mass of Reparation for Victims of Abuse, Bishop Michael Olson stated the unique and sacred purpose of the April 5 Mass — to pray for healing of sexual abuse victims and survivors; to make reparation for the sins of bishops, priests, and superiors who actively or passively colluded with abusers; and to make reparation for those sacrilegious sins which deeply offends God.

“Reparation is a teaching of the Catholic faith connected with the doctrine of atonement and satisfaction for sins committed,” Bishop Olson said.

“We believe that we are redeemed, and this injustice is satisfied only through the Precious Blood of Christ,” he added.

Safe Environment staff, parish

facilitators, and volunteers attended the Mass at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound.

Sandra Schrader-Farry, director of Safe Environment, said her department organizes the Mass each year in April, which is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. The Safe Environment office has two primary purposes: to help those affected by abuse to heal and to prevent abuse from happening, she explained.

“We have programs in place for victim assistance,” she said. “The other half of what we do is having training, vetting, and policies in place and making sure we have investigations if there’s a violation.”

– Mary Lou Seewoester

🌐 Joy for consecrated life

FORT WORTH — In a celebration of hope and service, consecrated religious men and women gathered at Holy Family Church on March 28 for vespers and fellowship.

Spanish, Vietnamese, and English antiphonal prayer filled the sanctuary as the gathered religious participated in the Liturgy of the Hours.

In his homily, Bishop Michael Olson expressed appreciation for the consecrated religious and for the hope they provide the faithful of the diocese, especially in this Holy Year of Jubilee.

Carrying out love to God’s people, especially those who live in ignorance and who are left on the fringes of society, is at the heart of consecrated life, he said.

– Christina Benavides



Father Albert
Frances
Kanjirathmkal,
HGN



NTC/Christina Benavides

🌐 Art for the ages

FORT WORTH — Students, parents, and art teachers from schools across the diocese gathered on March 6 at Nolan Catholic High School for an Art Gallery Night.

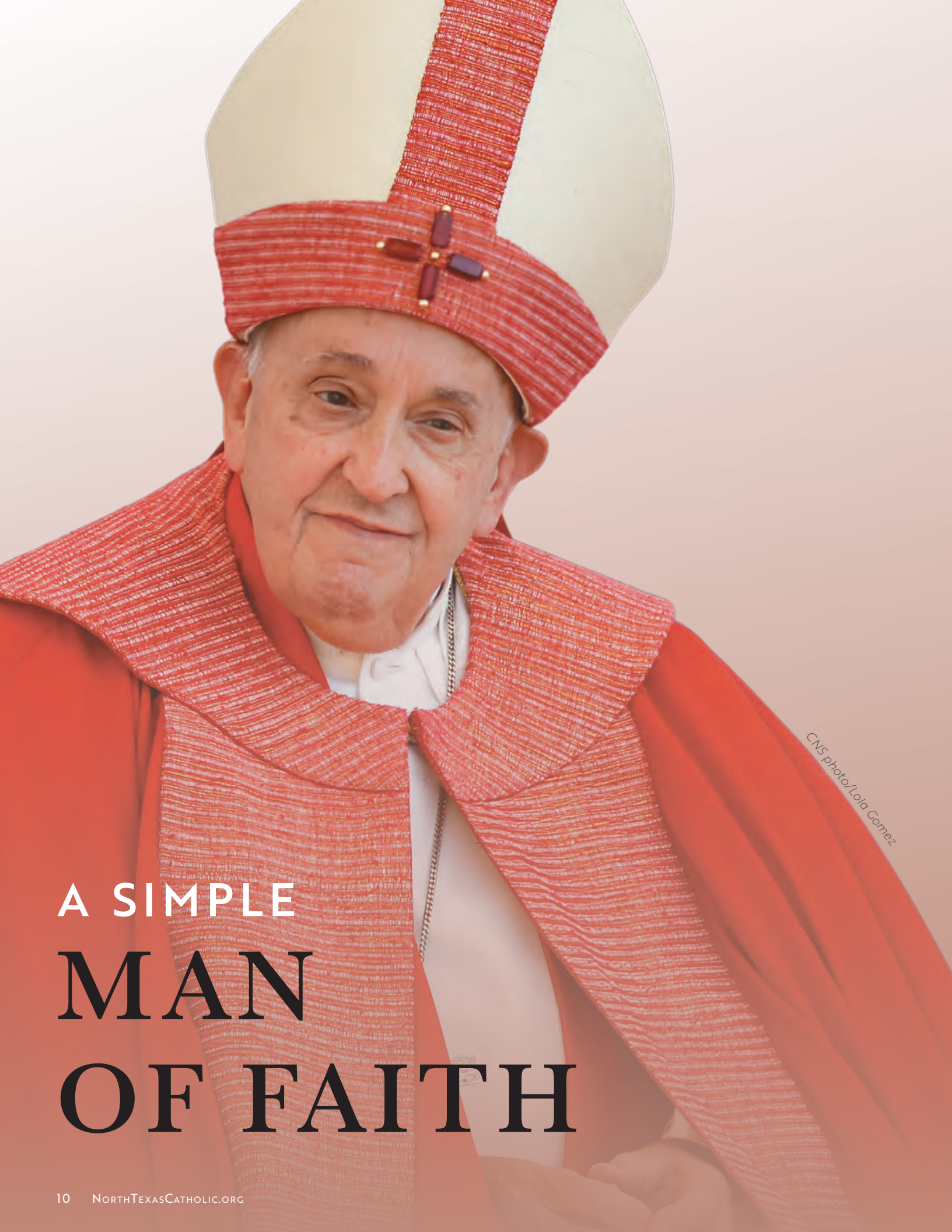
More than 175 students representing nine diocesan schools participated in the competition, available to all the diocese’s Catholic sixth to 12th graders using their medium of choice.

CLERGY ASSIGNMENT

BY MOST REV.
MICHAEL OLSON

REV. BHASKARA RAO NANDURI, SAC

New to Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed the **Parochial Vicar** of Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls, effective March 4.



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

A SIMPLE MAN OF FAITH

Pope Francis' enduring legacy

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Moments after Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected the 266th leader of the Roman Catholic Church on March 13, 2013, fellow Cardinal Claudio Hummes from Brazil leaned over to comfort his friend and then urged, “Don’t forget the poor.”

Taking those words to heart, the new pontiff chose a name that honored St. Francis of Assisi, “the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation,” he later explained to a gathering of journalists who came to the Vatican for the conclave and papal election.

Pope Francis, who died April 21 at the age of 88 from a cerebral stroke and heart failure, is being remembered by the world’s 1.3 billion Catholics as a man who exemplified the patron saint’s radical devotion to Christ, God’s creation, and the poor and marginalized.

In a statement to parishioners, Bishop Michael Olson called Pope Francis “a



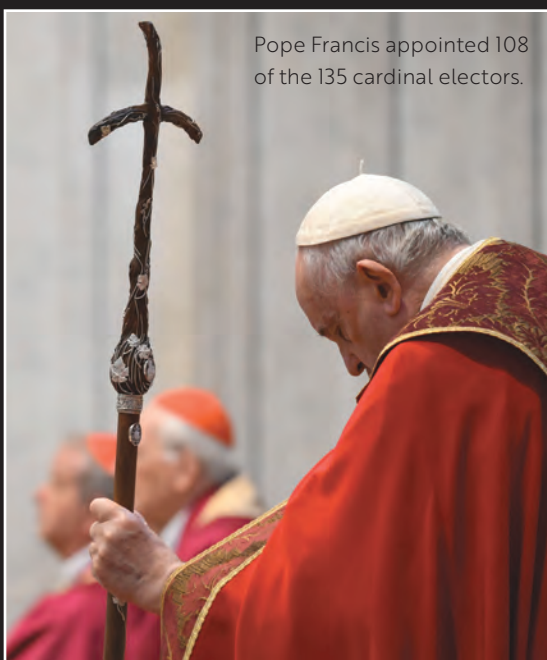
Bishop Michael Olson offers Pope Francis a gift during an *Ad Limina Apostolorum* visit on Jan. 21, 2020. (Vatican Media)

simple man of faith in the Resurrection” whose last public words, “Happy Easter,” were spoken with great effort and suffering before a crowd of supporters in St. Peter’s Square on Easter Sunday. The late pope recently spent five weeks in the hospital for treatment of life-threatening double pneumonia.

“His entire pontificate, from his first decision at the age of 76 to be called ‘Francis’ after St. Francis of Assisi, was dedicated to mindfulness for the poor, those most overlooked, our responsibility to be stewards of the ecology, and the

Continued on Page 12

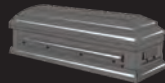
CNS photo/Vatican Media



Pope Francis appointed 108 of the 135 cardinal electors.

FROM MOURNING TO MISSION Pathway to the Pontificate

1 THE POPE IS CONFIRMED DEAD.



2 NOVENDIALES (THE NINE DAYS OF MOURNING) BEGINS ON THE DAY OF THE POPE’S FUNERAL.



3 A CONCLAVE OF 135 CARDINAL ELECTORS IS HELD AT THE SISTINE CHAPEL TO ELECT A NEW POPE.

4 BLACK SMOKE MEANS NO DECISION HAS BEEN REACHED.



WHITE SMOKE SIGNALS A NEW POPE HAS BEEN SELECTED.

5 THE BELLS OF THE VATICAN WILL TOLL IN CELEBRATION OF A NEWLY ELECTED POPE.



From Page 11

struggle to be conformed to Christ crucified,” the bishop commented. “Let us pray for his soul with grateful hearts for what he endeavored to teach us.”

Serving people where they are

The first Jesuit elected to the papacy, Pope Francis embraced Ignatian spirituality and the core belief that the salvation of souls is the ultimate goal with other endeavors and activities serving this purpose. He believed in ministering to people “where they are.”

“Sometimes you have to go into the messiness of people’s lives,” said Father John Robert Skeldon. “It was something all the modern popes advocated, but Pope Francis highlighted it.”

The rector of St. Patrick Cathedral likened Pope Francis’ support and service to migrants, the unchurched, or those living in poverty to the early history of the parish he serves in downtown Fort Worth.

“When it was founded, it was not located in the posh, ‘powers that be’ part of Fort Worth in the late 19th century,” Fr. Skeldon observed. “It was relegated to Hell’s Half Acre where the prostitutes, warehouses, saloons, and immigrants were, and that’s where Christ’s Church should be. Christ Himself was a friend to tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners and — to the dismay of many — even ate with them.”

Early in his papacy, Pope Francis stressed the need for priests to be close to the people they serve. Pastors, the pontiff said, should be “shepherds with the smell of the sheep,” so they could understand the flocks’ needs and life challenges.

“I think his own health issues gave him a heart for those who suffer,” the rector said.

As a teenager, Jorge Bergoglio battled a lung infection that led to the removal of part of his right lung at age 21. This surgery left him with ongoing lung conditions and made him more prone to influenza, bronchitis, and pneumonia later in life. Pope Francis also dealt with painful



Father John Robert Skeldon preaches the homily next to an image of the late Pope Francis at St. Patrick Cathedral on April 21 during a daily Mass offered for the repose of the pontiff's soul after he died Easter Monday at the Vatican. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

sciatica in his legs and lower back.

“From the Ignatian idea of discernment, Pope Francis allowed his pain to be transformative so he could enter into the suffering of others, those on the margins, those who don’t fit neatly into categories,” Fr. Skeldon added.

A POPE OF ‘FIRSTS’

Born to Italian immigrants Mario and Regina Bergoglio on December 17,

1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Jorge Bergoglio grew up the eldest of five children in a home steeped in faith and old-world traditions. He graduated from a technical school as a chemical technician before entering the Diocesan Seminary of Villa Devoto. In March 1958, the young chemist entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus and was ordained to the priesthood in 1969. Fr. Bergoglio began serving as Jesuit provincial of Argentina



in 1973 and later was named titular bishop of Auca and auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires on May 20, 1992.

He became archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998 and three years later was elevated to cardinal by Pope John Paul II.

When Pope Benedict XVI was chosen to succeed Pope John Paul II in 2005, Bergoglio reportedly received the second-most votes cast in the papal conclave.

After the resignation of Pope Benedict

in 2013, the Argentinian cardinal was elected pope at the age of 76. He was the first citizen from the Americas, the first Latin American, and the first Jesuit priest to sit in the chair of St. Peter.

ALWAYS A JESUIT

Jesuits around the world were stunned when a member of their own congregation, Jorge Bergoglio, cardinal of Buenos Aires, was elected pope on March 13,

2013. In the order's 473-year history, no Jesuit was ever chosen for the office.

"Not many people knew much about him, but we were elated to have a Jesuit elected pope," remembered Father Tony Rauschuber, director of the Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House in Lake Dallas. "We never in our wildest dreams thought it would happen. There had never been one, and we didn't think there would ever be one."

Jesuits traditionally vow not to seek higher offices within the Church. They also take a vow of poverty — not just personal poverty, exemplified by Pope Francis' choice to reside in the Casa Santa Marta guest house rather than the Apostolic Palace — but a commitment to those living in poverty.

"A simple lifestyle is a Jesuit ideal and that's why Pope Francis lived in the papal apartment instead of the main residence where other popes have lived," Fr. Rauschuber remarked. "Another Jesuit ideal is closeness to the poor and marginalized."

Laudato Si: "On Care of Our Common Home," the second encyclical of Pope Francis, is more evidence of his Jesuit heritage. The document is an appeal from the Holy Father to safeguard the future of the planet.

"One spiritual contribution or focus for him would be preaching mercy and having a ministry of reconciliation with each other, the environment, and all people," the director pointed out. 🇹🇽

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- A local funeral director's explanation of the papal funeral
- A history of electing the Bishop of Rome

And more articles from the Vatican on the death of the Holy Father.



A NEW HERALD OF THE GOSPEL

Blake Thompson stands before the altar in his new stole and dalmatic during his diaconal ordination Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Bishop Michael Olson ordains Blake Thompson to the transitional diaconate

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

“I do, with the help of God.” With those words, Blake Ryan Thompson stood in front of a church filled with family and friends and promised to serve Christ and His people during a life strengthened by celibate chastity, prayer, and acts of charity.

As his parents, Cash and Nanette Thompson, proudly watched from the first pew, the 26-year-old seminarian was ordained to the Sacred Order of the Diaconate by Bishop Michael Olson on March 19 in St. Maria Goretti Church in Arlington. Becoming a transitional deacon is the last major step in formation before a man is ordained a priest.

“It’s particularly fitting that Blake’s ordination is celebrated on the Solemnity of St. Joseph,” said the bishop, who celebrated the Mass with Vicar General Father Jonathan Wallis and other diocesan priests. “In a certain sense, the diaconate is a preparation for the chaste and celibate fatherhood of priesthood exemplified by the humble, generous, and chaste love of St. Joseph. He did not think of himself, but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus.”

During his homily, Bishop Olson reminded the ordinand of his obligation to serve the marginalized people in society. Authentic preaching of the Gospel and performing charitable deeds allows a deacon to represent the mission of the Church as Christ intended.

“An essential part of your life and ministry as a deacon, that remains after you are ordained a priest, is to protect the poor and vulnerable,” the celebrant stressed. “Ask St. Joseph to assist you because it is St. Joseph who protects the Church as he protected the Blessed Virgin Mary and Christ Child.”

After ordination, Deacon Thompson will proclaim the Gospel, assist with sacraments, and serve the needs of the faith community at St. Martin of Tours Parish in Gaithersburg, Maryland, as he completes his final year of study at the Theological College at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

A HEARTFELT VOCATION

Dan and Dorothy Marotta met the seminarian during his pastoral year spent at St. Martin de Porres Church in Prosper under the guidance of Father Stephen Hauck, pastor.

“He’s going to make an excellent priest. There’s no doubt about it,” assured parishioner Dorothy Marotta. “You can tell he wants to do this. It’s in his heart.”

Describing the would-be priest as knowledgeable, spiritual, and friendly, her husband, Dan said, “He really left an impression with people. I know our pastor is very proud of the work Blake did at St. Martin’s.”

CONFERRING THE HOLY SPIRIT

Eight years of discernment, study, and prayer culminated for Thompson during the Rite of Ordination. Following the homily, the candidate announced his willingness to live a celibate life, pray the Liturgy of the Hours, and obey the bishop and his successors. Then, in a visible act of submission before God, he lay prostrate before the altar while the congregation chanted the intercessory Litany of Saints prayer.

During the most sacred, pivotal moment of the rite, Bishop Olson imposed his hands on the head of the ordinand to confer the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The gesture was used by the Apostles in the election of the first deacons for the Church (*Acts 6:6*).

After the laying on of hands, the new



Bishop Michael Olson embraces Deacon Blake Thompson during the diaconal ordination Mass on March 19 at St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

deacon was vested with garments symbolizing his office — the dalmatic and stole — by Deacons Jack Gardner and Tony Viegas.

Finally, Dcn. Thompson received the Book of Gospels from the bishop with the instruction: “Receive the Gospel of Christ whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.”

With the ordination rite complete, he joined the other deacons and priests on the altar to assist in the celebration of the Eucharist.

THE RIGHT THING TO DO

A convert to Catholicism, Thompson entered St. Joseph Seminary College following graduation from Lake Ridge High School in 2017. Churchless much of his

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Blake Thompson prostrates himself during the Litany of Supplication at his diaconal ordination Mass. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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young life, he found a home at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield as a teenager.

“When I experienced the liturgy for the first time, with all of its beauty, it just made sense,” the seminarian said. “I left that Mass and remember telling my parents, I don’t know about y’all, but I have to be Catholic.”

After receiving confirmation during the Easter Vigil in 2015, Thompson became very active in youth ministry at the parish. A love of Christ in the

Eucharist eventually led him to consider the priesthood.

“He’s devoted his life to this from the very beginning,” said his father, Cash Thompson. “When we learned he wanted to become a priest, it was a shock but not a bad shock. It was more of a wow, what do we next?”

The seminarian’s parents, who are also converts to Catholicism, supported his decision.

“With some prayers, we knew it was the right thing for him and he knew it was the right thing for him,” his dad added. “Blake’s wise beyond his age and passionate about his interests. One of the most important things, besides his love of God, is a love of family and friends.”

SUPPORTING THE JOURNEY

Parishioners at St. Jude watched Thompson’s devotion to faith and service grow since high school, according to Florence Marcucci.

“We’ve seen him blossom into a man I think is going to be a wonderful priest,” said the longtime member of the faith community. “Our parish has tried to support his journey in the seminary.”

Every month, the family of a Knights of Columbus member sends a card or gift to seminarians and the women’s club helps monetarily and with prayer.

“We’re lucky to have so many young men discerning the priesthood,” the Chicago native observed. “That’s not happening in other parts of the country.”

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Thompson told the *North Texas Catholic* he took the day before ordination to reflect and meditate on God’s blessings in his life. He also visited with priests in the diocese and spoke to fellow seminarians.

“I wanted to offer words of encouragement especially to the guys preparing to go on their pastoral year. That was a very formative time for me,” Thompson said. “I feel a lot of gratitude and thanksgiving for them being here and helping me serve the Lord.”

Peter Nguyen, a first-year theology student who attends the Theological College at Catholic University of America with the transitional deacon, called the ordination of his friend “a great event in the life of the Church and diocese. It’s a sign of hope in this Holy Year of Hope for all of us.” 🇺🇸

SEE HIM
ORDAINED

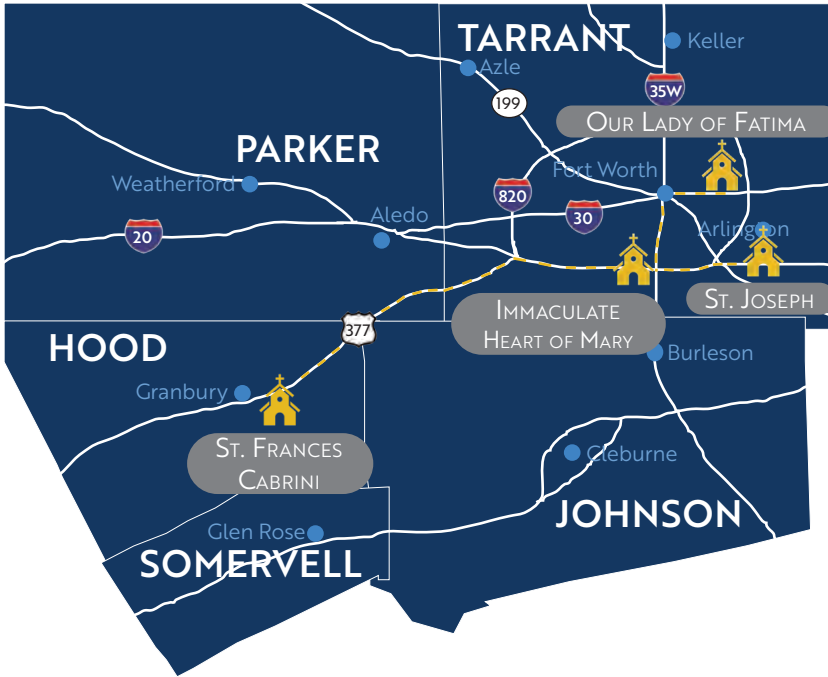


Watch a video of the diaconate ordination by scanning the QR code or visiting NorthTexasCatholic.org/videos.



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Pilgrimage**

Join the **NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC PILGRIMAGE** as it travels through the Diocese of Fort Worth on its route from Indianapolis to Los Angeles:



• **THURSDAY, JUNE 5**

OUR LADY OF FATIMA CHURCH
5109 East Lancaster, Fort Worth

- Mass: 6 p.m.
- Eucharistic Adoration: 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

• **FRIDAY, JUNE 6**

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY CHURCH
201 Thornhill Drive, Fort Worth

- Eucharistic Procession: 7 a.m.
- Mass: 8 a.m.
- Eucharistic Adoration: 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

• **FRIDAY, JUNE 6**

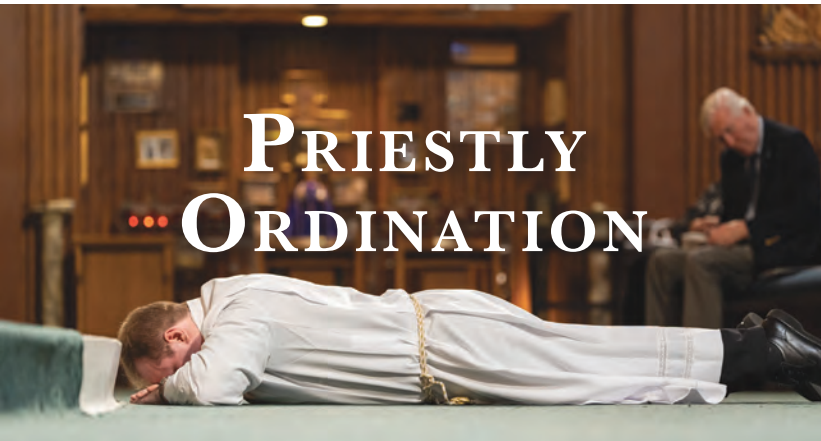
ST. JOSEPH CHURCH
1927 SW Green Oaks Blvd., Arlington

- Mass: 6 p.m.
- Eucharistic Talk by the Perpetual Pilgrims: 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

• **SATURDAY, JUNE 7**

ST. FRANCES CABRINI CHURCH
2301 Acton Highway, Granbury

- Eucharistic Procession: 7 a.m.
- Mass: 8 a.m.
- Adoration from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.



**PRIESTLY
ORDINATION**

**SATURDAY, MAY 24
10:00 A.M.
ST. PATRICK CATHEDRAL**

Through the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the imposition of hands
Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD, MA will ordain deacon **Isaac McCracken** to the sacred order of presbyter.



**ISAAC
McCRACKEN**

For more information visit fwdioc.org



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**TUNE IN
TODAY!**





NTC/Juan Guajardo

Caroline Powledge asks a question to her class using a pink microphone held by student Kamilah Gonzalez at Holy Family Catholic School on April 2.

EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION

Learning lessons of empathy and acceptance as Holy Family Catholic School adapts curriculum to include special needs students

By Christina Benavides

Jan Barker knows the perfect remedy for a bad day.

“Come sit in my classroom and listen to Kamilah and Andrew read — your day will feel so much better,” she said.

A teacher of 33 years at Holy Family Catholic School, Barker took on a new position this school year as a learning support specialist to assist the Fort Worth school’s students with learning differences, including two Down syndrome students, third-grader Kamilah Gonzalez and fifth-grader Andrew Matasso.

“Jan [Barker] is very talented and has many skills. She is accepting of all students,” Holy Family Principal Brenda Conway said. “Jan was the perfect fit [for the position]. She said, ‘I am bound and determined to have this become a real official program.’”

Barker researched curricula to help supplement her students’ instruction. With a targeted focus on helping Andrew and Kamilah improve their fine motor skills and reading abilities, Barker’s students have vastly improved in both aptitude and confidence.

“Their confidence is just — they’re beaming, and discipline is not an issue anymore because they have what they need; they’re so happy,” Conway observed.

GIFTS OF JOY

Daphne Gomez met Andrew just as the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions lifted.

Initially, the first-grade teacher had felt some apprehension about the shift in expectations and procedures as she began teaching Andrew. “We weren’t sure what the expectations were, but once we got him in the classroom, I mean, he could manage

just about everything on his own, just a little bit differently.”

She quickly learned how to communicate with Andrew, who at the time was nonverbal and would express himself using sign language.

“When he had to go to the bathroom, he would do this for me,” Gomez said, pointing her index finger up. “I still incorporate that in my classroom now.”

With the dedicated support of Andrew’s mother, Amy Matasso, who had moved from Kansas with her family and was determined to raise all of her children in the Catholic faith, the school came to understand, know, and love Andrew.

“We would play with other kids, and he liked to play sports,” Gomez recalled. “He liked basketball because he’s tall, which was a good advantage for him.”

She shared that Andrew’s presence in the classroom helped “make the kids

more empathetic towards their peers” and taught them “to be patient and understanding and to be kind.”

A few years later, when Gomez came to meet Kamilah, she felt even more equipped to see some progress due to Kamilah’s bubbly and talkative nature.

“I communicated more with Kamilah because she spoke a lot, and we had a good rapport,” Gomez said.

Kamilah’s parents came to learn about Holy Family after meeting Andrew and Amy at an early intervention program called KinderFrogs held at Texas Christian University.

“When she came, we accepted her because how could we not? We have one, and we could have another. It wasn’t even a question,” Conway said.

EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

When third-grade teacher Caroline Powledge’s mother was pregnant, she was notified her baby had tested positive for both spina bifida and Down syndrome.

After receiving the news, Powledge’s mother said, “This is perfect. This is the baby I want, and we’re just going to pray for her to be happy and healthy, and God will do the rest.”

Powledge was born with no complications and with a heart to “help students that are exceptional — that’s the term I think we need to use more. Not disabilities but exceptionalities.”

The Holy Family teacher now applies what she learned from Tarleton State University in Stephenville, where she studied special education, to teach Kamilah and Andrew, who join her class for science and mathematics.

“Every single student, no matter their ability, is exceptional in their own way,” Powledge said. “How do we honor that life that God chose to bring into this world? By recognizing the exceptional parts that make them and just helping them grow from there.

“The fact that I get to be here at Holy Family and have this experience [working with Kamilah and Andrew], it’s like checking all the boxes.”



Jan Barker works with student Andrew Matasso at Holy Family Catholic School. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Andrew’s exceptionalities lie in his generous and decisive nature.

Academically, he shines at math whereas Kamilah leads in reading. Her exceptional vivacity “brings out the best in everybody and whenever someone’s having a hard time, she can just sense it,” Powledge said.

During Mass, as Andrew joins the Communion line, he will pass Powledge sitting with her class, approach her, touch her hair, and give her the sign of peace.

“What else can make your day better other than that? When you receive just that little touch from them, which means the world to them,” she said.

Sometimes he serves as an altar server, and sometimes Kamilah cantors.

“Kamilah has a strong Catholic identity and watching her receive holy Communion, it will bring tears to your eyes,” Powledge said.

Gomez agreed to the power of seeing the young student at Mass.

“Kamilah will sing at church, and you always hear her when we’re doing Psalms and responses — you will hear her little voice because she’s always participating. It’s great to see that and hear that,” Gomez added.

A BLESSING TO SHARE

When Conway shared with the diocese’s Catholic Schools office the need for a dedicated teacher to help support Kamilah, Andrew, and several other students with learning differences at her school, Conway said Superintendent Dr. Melissa Kasmeier-Millard quickly extended her support.

Conway noted that Dr. Kasmeier-Millard, being a former principal of Holy Family, has seen firsthand “the blessing and the overall love our students have developed for someone who is different than them and how special it was and how it can really work.”

A highlight for Conway was seeing the outpouring of love and sincere compassion she saw in her students and faculty as they recently celebrated Down Syndrome Awareness Day. It reminded her of the lessons of acceptance and empathy they have all learned since Andrew and Kamilah have blessed their halls with their smiles.

“They come here, and they’re loved, and everyone takes care of them. Everyone does their part to help them,” Conway said. ✚



From left: Students Marianne Hall, Natalie Hamilton, and Owen Atkinson pose in Nolan Catholic High School's IDEA department.

from *requirement* to **OPPORTUNITY**

Catholic school students generously share time and talents with parish, school, and community through service requirements

By Jennifer Johnson
Photography by Juan Guajardo

To help diocesan school students understand and embrace Jesus' call to live generously and sacrificially, they complete service hours each year.

Middle school students complete 6-25 hours annually, and Nolan Catholic High School students must finish 75

service hours prior to graduation.

For diocesan school students, what may start as a "have to" service requirement becomes a "get to" opportunity as they live out their faith and evangelize through their actions.

The goal of required service hours is "to guide them to put their faith into action," said Jackie Cummings, a Holy Trinity Catholic School religion teacher. "We encourage them to use their gifts

and talents to create value for someone else. Students are reminded to live out the spiritual and corporal works of mercy every day and make it a habit."

She said the fruits of service requirements become evident over time: "Our eighth graders can see the benefit of serving others. Many share that they enjoy the service and engage in it because they like giving back and not because it meets a requirement."

◀ LEADERS AT NOLAN

Natalie Hamilton, a ninth-grade student at Nolan, volunteers at Stepping Stones Thrift Boutique in Keller, a local thrift store that provides free clothing for low-income children.

“One time there was a family whose house had burned down and they asked me to pick out clothes for a 12-year-old girl,” she said. “It was a very personal experience for me because I knew that someone was struggling and I [was

having] a direct impact.”

Nolan Catholic’s motto is *Esto Dux*, Latin for “Be a leader.” Nolan senior Marianne Hall has enjoyed numerous servant-leader opportunities there: summer sports camps, extraordinary minister of holy Communion, ambassador, and retreat team leader. She plans to continue serving while at Benedictine College. “I really want to help others in need, share my story, and share my faith life with them,” she said, hoping to someday join a mission trip.

Owen Atkinson, also a Nolan senior,

said volunteering has strengthened his faith. Atkinson’s interest in service went beyond Nolan’s 75-hour requirement. For completing 200+ service hours, he will be honored with a special cord to wear at graduation.

“That’s not just an academically challenging thing to do; it takes your time,” he said. “I’m really happy that Nolan does that kind of thing.”

Atkinson plans to attend Baylor University in the fall and hopes to start a Catholic men’s Bible study group there.



ST. ANDREW FAMILY

Andrew Soyer, an eighth-grade student at St. Andrew Catholic School, has happy memories of serving with his family last summer when they attended a Family Volunteer Camp at his parents’ alma mater, University of Notre Dame.

They volunteered at a community garden, food bank, assisted senior living facility, and

Montessori school. Soyer said what he likes best about serving is “the feeling that you did something good for others; that it was helpful and impactful. I also like serving with others who have the same goal to make a difference.”

Soyer believes the service requirement has deepened his faith. “We are called by God to serve, respect others, and treat others kindly,” he said. “Service has helped me see how privileged I am. It’s helped me to see how many blessings God has given me.”

HARD WORKERS AT HOLY TRINITY

Olivia Wolf, a sixth grader at Holy Trinity, earns hours through altar serving and proclaiming the Word during Mass at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville. She also participates in park cleanups and volunteers at Clothes Connection, a nonprofit in Haltom City that provides clothing to local students in need. “I enjoy serving others who don’t have as much as I do and giving back to the community because the community has done so much for me,” Wolf said.

Jack Bachman is an eighth-grade student at Holy Trinity with an array of volunteer experiences. He has delivered food with his grandfather for Meals on Wheels; buddy-climbed with special needs children with United Rocks; cleaned at a crisis maternity home called In My Shoes; and prepped nonperishable meal kits for

Feed My Starving Children.

His favorite activity is working at the Tarrant Area Food Bank each year with people from his dad’s workplace. “It’s just special when you have that time with your father and 200 people from his work. You see them come together to do this service they didn’t have to do,” Bachman said. “It makes me have faith that there are good things in the world. It’s also just fun too.”

“Once you’re done with a service and take a moment to think about what you’ve done, it gives you a good feeling in your heart,” Bachman said. “You know that you’ve done something important that’s worth your time instead of wasting it on other things.” 🇹🇽



Deacon Jesus Valadez explains a point in a training session for tribunal advocates at St. Patrick Parish Hall on March 1. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



divorce and reconciliation

Advocates and tribunal work together to bring parishioners back to the sacraments after divorce

By Matthew Smith

Being there first and foremost, but also helping others navigate the painful, often confusing challenges of divorce and reconciliation with the Church, is how Cheyenne Marrinan, office manager for the Diocese of Fort Worth's Ecclesiastical Tribunal, describes the marriage annulment journey.

"We hear a lot of sad sob stories, unfortunately," Marrinan said, "as people go through the process of talking about some of the worst parts of their lives. But we also hear some of the most beautiful stories in their desire to return to the sacraments and get married in the Church. We get to help them go full circle, which is really something beautiful to be a part of."

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioner

Toni Vasquez, who serves as a chief advocate for the tribunal, concurred when asked about the benefits of helping others through the process.

"It's scary for many people," Vasquez said. "A lot of times they don't know what options they have or if they have any. Through the process they have to think back on an unhappy situation and kind of live through all that again. But afterwards, many of them end up saying it was so healing to go back and revisit everything and through that, realize they're okay now. They can make peace with it, find closure and move forward. So, in that way, this is really a beautiful ministry."

Being there for others in their time of need is rewarding as well, Vasquez added.

"Because it is a confusing, many times sad, process," Vasquez said. "So to have an

advocate who has dealt with these situations before be there with them through that healing journey [provides] someone to talk to and walk through that with them."

It's a twofold mission, Marrinan and Vasquez said: helping people seeking a marriage annulment through the tribunal while also helping those people return to the sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist.

About 140 volunteer advocates serve the diocese, though several work with multiple parishes. Additional volunteers, especially Spanish and Vietnamese speakers, are always needed.

COMING HOME

The often-used term annulment is a misnomer, Marrinan and others point out. Although it is a legitimate legal construct



Volunteer advocates receive training at St. Patrick Parish Hall. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

within secular civil law, what many refer to as marriage annulment within the Church is actually a declaration of nullity.

It is, according to the annulment section of Holy Family Parish’s website, “a declaration by a Church tribunal [a Catholic Church court] that a marriage thought to be valid according to Church law actually fell short of at least one of the essential elements required for a binding union.”

The declaration of nullity, if granted by the tribunal, “allows divorced persons to remarry in full communion with the Catholic Church.”

Making matters more confusing perhaps is the fact that nothing is declared null by the process. Rather, the tribunal declares that a marriage thought to be valid within the Church actually fell short of at least one of the essential elements.

Those essential elements, among others, require that the spouses were free to marry; that both were capable of giving their consent to marriage and freely exchanged that consent; and that

both entered the marriage intending to be faithful to one another, married for life, and open to the possibility of having and raising children.

“There are lots of grounds for nullity,” Marrinan said. “Too immature, being forced into marriage because of pregnancy, being scared, or fleeing a bad home situation.”

The process can take time and is rarely cut and dried, Vasquez said.

“It’s not one-size-fits-all,” Vasquez said. “We look at each individual situation on its own merits. And we have to remind people that just because they’re seeking a [declaration of nullity] doesn’t always mean the tribunal will grant it.”

INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

Holy Family parishioner Dr. Mary Keller, who serves as an advocate and assists the tribunal, said the process compares to detective work or medical care, in that each situation must be approached individually to best determine the needs of

each person or couple.

Keller considers her advocate role as a vocation enhanced by her previous experience in education, in nonprofit work, and as a certified mediator through the Texas Bar Association.

“It’s a combination first of compassion and empathy for the people involved,” Keller said. “But behind that you’re helping them through the process. It’s about listening to their story to help find what’s right for them.”

Doing so brings great gratitude, Keller said, both through helping others return to the sacraments and in growing her faith life.

The process is demanding at times, but ultimately rewarding, Marrinan said.

“I’ve seen people who have wept at how much they miss receiving the Eucharist,” Marrinan said, “in physical and emotional pain at being separated from Christ, so helping them get back is a very moving, emotional part of this ministry.”

Father Tim Thompson of All Saints Parish in Fort Worth serves as judicial vicar for the diocese.

He said, “While the tribunal makes those decisions, certainly as a priest, I often talk to people seeking a [declaration of nullity], some who think nothing can be done, to help determine their options and more so bring them back to the sacraments.”

Vasquez stressed the tribunal, not the advocates, decides matters of declarations of nullity.

“That’s something I was afraid of when I was first asked about volunteering as an advocate,” Vasquez said. “But we don’t do that. What we do is talk with them, help with questions, and walk with them through the process.”

Vasquez spoke of common misunderstandings, such as the incorrect belief by many that children born of previous marriages are illegitimate, which is not the case.

She and others added one need not be a lawyer, counselor, or otherwise experienced to volunteer as an advocate as training and peer support are provided on an ongoing basis.

“It really is a very rewarding ministry,” Marrinan said. “Anyone interested is welcome to contact their parish or the website for the diocese to learn more. We have all kinds of people serving as advocates, but we always need more.” 🇺🇸

CATHOLIC VOICES, Catholic Advocates

On Catholic Advocacy Day, diocesan faithful encourage Texas legislators to consider the common good

By Susan Moses

An estimated 2,500 Catholics from across the 16 Catholic dioceses in Texas spoke, listened, prayed, and rallied at the Texas Capitol on April 1 to encourage legislators to pass bills that improve education; promote strong families; provide safe, affordable housing; and protect those on the margins of society.

The majority of the approximately 100 faithful from the Diocese of Fort Worth were students from Nolan Catholic High School, Cassata Catholic High School, and Holy Family Catholic School. Energy levels were high despite their 5:30 a.m. departure from their respective schools.

This year was the first time that seventh and eighth graders from Holy Family attended Catholic Advocacy Day, led by Jan Barker, who has taught for 33 years at the Fort Worth school.

The 16 middle-school students attended a mock hearing, toured the Capitol, and participated in a rally — all before lunch. Led by the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops, the rally on the Capitol's front steps promoted several bills prioritized by the TCCB.

Students held signs and chanted as Jennifer Carr Allmon, executive director of the TCCB, gave short summaries of several pieces of legislation.

"Representation is important," said Barker, "and it's important to advocate in the right way." Her students, she explained with a laugh, initially assumed the large assembly would be a protest.

In the afternoon, Barker, a former history teacher, took the Holy Family students to the Bullock Texas State History Museum, followed by a stop for kolaches in West, Texas, before their return to the school at 8:30 p.m.

The full day was an opportunity to strengthen the students' identities both as Catholics and as Texans. Barker said, "We have deep roots."

LEGISLATIVE VISITS

While most students attended mock hearings, others joined representatives from the diocese and Catholic Charities Fort Worth to visit 26 legislative offices from districts in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

For CCFW President and CEO Michael Iglío, meeting with legislators or their aides was more about "establishing a relationship of trust and community" than locking in a vote for a specific bill.

When legislation about affordable housing or decreasing reliance on government assistance is under consideration, "I would welcome them to talk to me about issues or clarify uncertainties," said Iglío, emphasizing CCFW's research-based solutions to eliminating poverty for local individuals and families through long-term case management.

"As an organization that works with tens of thousands of individuals within

their communities that they're representing, we can share with them how [a particular piece of legislation] might impact those they are trying to serve. There is a desire and a need to help those who are more vulnerable, but what they want to accomplish and ultimately how the bill gets written can sometimes be miles apart," Iglío continued.

An appointment with the office of State Rep. Charlie Geren gave legislative aide Ben Clements an opportunity to ask his Catholic visitors to explain the Church's positions on topics in the headlines.

Father Jonathan Wallis, vicar general, gave Clements thorough explanations for the Church's teaching on immigration and the prohibition of abortion, even for victims of rape or incest. The priest emphasized that the Church takes a "both/and" approach: a secure border and the just, humane treatment of immigrants. The health and healing of the woman and the unborn child.

HEALTHY COLLABORATION

For those participating in Catholic Advocacy Day, time spent in the Capitol reduces the polarized view of society, suggested Frank Perez, associate superintendent of schools.

That lesson is especially important for students, who may not have life experience beyond a divisive culture.

WATCH
VIDEO!



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Father Jonathan Wallis and a delegation from the Diocese of Fort Worth visit Ben Clements, legislative aide to State Rep. Charlie Geren. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Perez said meeting with the legislators, “who may or may not be on the same political side as their families,” benefits students “to see that there’s dialogue that’s happening that can be fruitful.

“If you presume positive intent and you see the good in all, all the folks, despite your point of view — all of us are trying to work towards a greater good. So it’s important for our kids to see the adults working that way,” the educator continued.

All the education bills are of particular interest to Perez, not just SB 2 and HB 3 which establish a universal education savings account to provide parents the opportunity to choose private school education. He emphasized, “I’m here to advocate for everybody. This [proposed legislation] is supposed to make education better for everyone ... all the kids deserve that.”

MORE THAN NUMBERS

About 9 million Texans are Catholic, roughly a third of the state’s growing population.

Those who participated in Catholic Advocacy Day have a special responsibility to speak for those whose voices are unheard.

Bishop Michael Olson said, “It’s important for members of the church to advocate for the common good in society, especially for the poor and those who live on the margins of society, in accord with human dignity.”

Nolan senior Sarah Hornick hopes that speaking with



Nolan students pray during a rally at Catholic Advocacy Day on April 1 at the Capitol. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

legislators will help them look beyond the numbers and statistics to see each human person when they craft legislation.

“We have to look beyond the numbers and realize we’re defending human dignity. That’s something worth pursuing,” she said. 🇺🇸



St. Martin de Porres student
Francisco Bayas takes aim.
(NTC/Kevin Bartram)

ON TARGET

Three stories of Catholic athletes who focus on Christ to achieve great things on water, land, and air

By Brenda Raney

St. Sebastian, patron saint of athletes and sports, help me to do the best I can, aim high and always give it my best effort, and if I should fail, give me the strength to try harder.

St. Sebastian, pray for us.

On March 26, the 59 boys and girls who make up the Archin' Nighthawks at St. Martin de Porres Catholic School

in Prosper recited this prayer before picking up their bows to compete in the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) State Tournament in Belton, Texas.

According to Coach Anastasia Moriarty, this prayer to St. Sebastian is what separates her team from the competition. It is a symbol of their Catholic faith and helps her team stay focused regardless of the outcome.

“We say it at the beginning of every practice and then we say it at the beginning of the tournament before we shoot. We say it out loud, as a team, together,” she said. “Even if we lose a tournament, we go back to the prayer. It serves as our guide.”

St. Martin de Porres participates in NASP, an instructional and competitive organization that encourages archery in schools. In Texas, over

1,700 schools actively participate in NASP. Archery has been part of the St. Martin de Porres physical education curriculum since 2016 for fourth through eighth graders.

Why add archery to the school's curriculum? Principal Susan Flanagan said she likes that archery is a sport that is open to everyone. "Because scoring is based on the individual, archery attracts youngsters who may not be inclined to participate in a team sport," she said. "It is not dependent on a person's size, and it challenges students physically and mentally."

St. Martin de Porres teams compete in two categories: fourth and fifth grades comprise the elementary teams, and sixth, seventh, and eighth graders compete in the middle school category.

"I love that archery builds students' confidence and can give them that sense of belonging to a team, even though they shoot individually," Moriarty said.

Moriarty trains her students to focus on their individual skills and many practice outside of school.

Qualifying for a state tournament is an important step for these young archers.

This individual commitment and the collective effort earned the team a spot in the state tournament. Eight of the Archin' Nighthawks posted "personal best" scores for the NASP State Qualifying Tournament. Two of her top performers, Julian Nelson and Moriarty's daughter, Zoe Moriarty, have consistently improved their scores over the last few years.

The state competition is a true test of skill since the flights consist of hundreds of youngsters all shooting at targets simultaneously. "State is really cool," Moriarty said. "They have 100 targets set up on one side of this huge convention center and then 100 targets against the opposite wall. There are flights like this all day."

Beyond the shooting range, the sport teaches youngsters life lessons. Eighth grader Zoe is the team's captain, and she said archery has taught her a lot.

"It pushes you into an environment of having good sportsmanship and even

MORE PHOTOS



See more photos of the Archin' Nighthawks shooting for success at North-Texas-Catholic/smugmug.com.

leadership from some of the older archers who've been doing this for a while," Zoe said. "You learn to be respectful and quiet while others are shooting."

Coach Moriarty added, "The fact that archery is co-ed is part of what makes archery so special. Both girls and boys have an equal opportunity to strive to hit a bullseye. It's what we aim for and when we give it our best effort, we can hit it and feel that achievement instantly. When we fail, we have to pray for strength, to not be discouraged, but to persevere and try again. These are virtues that grow in archery, and I hope the archers reflect on these virtues throughout their lives." 🇺🇸

Meet another athlete on Page 28



St. Martin de Porres Catholic School archery team includes 59 elementary and middle school students. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)



Horse Power

How breeding and training award-winning racehorses has helped the Durham family grow in their understanding of God

By Mary Rampellini

A small farm owned by a family deeply rooted in the Diocese of Fort Worth has pulled a David and Goliath feat by winning three major awards from the Texas Thoroughbred Association (TTA).

The journey to such an achievement has been two decades in the making, and the road Danele Durham and her children, Jackson, Katherine, and Caroline, have traveled along has been one of faith.

The Durhams breed and raise

racehorses in Richland Hills, a few miles from their home parish of St. John the Apostle. They have three broodmares led by Soft Music, whose daughter, Too Much Kiki, was named the Texas-bred Horse of the Year for 2024. The achievement in turn lifted Soft Music to Broodmare of the Year honors from the TTA and also led the state's breed registry to name Durham its Breeder of the Year.

The odds of a small farm sweeping such awards against some of the vast

breeding operations in Texas were long — and the Durhams did it with a mare purchased at an Oklahoma City auction for just \$1,700.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Soft Music was bought in 2015 under improbable circumstances, falling right in line with Durham's lifelong devotion to St. Jude.

"I had actually gone to look at another mare who had recently been retired, to

◀ Danele Durham, center, stands with Soft Music and (from left), Katherine, Caroline, Jackson, holding Weldon, and Jackson's wife, Amy. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

WANT
MORE?



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acquire her as a broodmare prospect,” said Durham, who also trains racehorses. “I stayed for the sale. The mare went out of my budget, and I was preparing to leave.”

A fellow trainer suggested Durham stick around and see what another mare from the same seller might bring at the auction.

“I said, ‘She’ll go completely out of the budget — you saw what the other one brought,’” Durham recalled. “I stayed. The bidding started and it was [slow], and I bought her for \$1,700. I literally was numb. I was just in shock. I shipped her to the house and that was the beginning of this great legacy.

“I think animals are almost just a reflection of how we have to be, and that’s to rely 100 percent on the Lord,” Durham said. “Just like the horses rely 100 percent on us to give them their morning feeding, give them their afternoon feeding, give them their evening feeding, we, too, have to rely on God to give us what we need, be it spiritually, monetarily, health-wise.

“You almost have to be like the birds of the sky and know that everything we have comes from God. And I think that there’s no better way to teach my children that than through working with animals.”

THE MIRACLE OF LIFE

Katherine has seen how raising racehorses has contributed to her faith journey.

She said, “I think those unique circumstances have allowed me to really see God’s will and His grace for my family. Through all of that, it teaches some virtues of discipline and patience and gratitude, I’d say, because if you’re not getting up and mucking stalls every morning, then you’re not going to have horses for very long. You’re not going to have much of a farm.”

Jackson said the activities on the farm strengthened his faith during the years of COVID-19.

“It was a dark time in the world and whenever these little babies were born in the backyard, and we’re seeing this new, beautiful life, it just restored my faith in the world,” he said. “God is watching over us. There really are good things in the world and we’ve got to embrace this. Knowing that God is in control and He is going to take care of you at the end of the day is kind of what I saw in these little beautiful horses come to life. There are things that happen that are just so incredible and that’s not a man-made thing. That’s God stepping in and taking control.

“The horse industry as a whole, there’s definitely highs and lows,” Jackson continued. “I think our faith is just as strong in the high times as the low. There were some times when things were tight. It’s incredible to me in those down times, where you are struggling, and you just pray to God for help, and as long as you’re doing whatever you can do, God always gets you over the hump.”

THE NEXT GENERATION

Soft Music was shipped to Kentucky in February to

be bred to the promising young stallion Annapolis. The gestation period is 11 months, and next year the Durhams will look forward to welcoming a new resident to the family farm.

“You trust in God and wait for the next one,” said Durham.

It’s a lesson taken to heart, said Katherine.

“I’m really proud of my mom,” she said. “She’s instilled so much of my faith in me because of how strong and resilient and confident she is, and I know that only comes from her own faith. And so there’s a pretty strong connection between the faith and how we’ve gotten here.” 🇺🇸

Meet another athlete on Page 30



Danele Durham with Soft Music (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

The Lord and the Board

Anna Kwong, nationally ranked TCU athlete, takes a deep dive with God

By Lisa Moore

Texas Christian University diver Anna Kwong has already surpassed most student athletes' dreams. She has bronze, silver, and gold medals from the Big XII Conference Championship, the National Invitational Championship, and USA Diving Open Nationals. She's earned an NCAA elite student-athlete status. She's an NCAA Championship Qualifier and Team USA Olympic Trials

Finalist. She's been the Big XII Conference's diver of the week 10 times in her collegiate career. She's broken TCU records, only to break them again.

She works hard, practicing 20 hours per week. But rather than keeping her tactic for winning to herself, the biology major shares with everyone the key to her success: surrendering all to God and doing all things for His glory.

"Diving has really given me a huge opportunity to surrender to God, and it has forced me to rely on God," she said. "He wants us to succeed and gives us opportunities to step out of our comfort zones and grow in the directions He's leading us. In sports, you're pushing to grow and improve, and that's taught me to have that same mindset in my faith.

"Making Olympic trials showed me that the mindset

of surrender to God is the most productive. It frees me to do my best instead of putting so much pressure on myself."

Born and raised Catholic in Omaha, Neb., Kwong discovered her love of diving in high school. Ever since, she's been honing both her faith and her passions with the same goals and devotions.

Her faith has also been crucial to discerning her next step in life: instead of beginning medical school in the fall as she'd planned, she came to realize through prayer that she wished to continue diving: "I was following the breadcrumbs and praying for discernment, doing novenas, offering Rosaries and Masses, and trying to discern the will of God in [Eucharistic] Adoration. I kept coming back to 'I cannot imagine being done with diving in March.' I feel like I have so much left to give and improve."

A valued member of TCU's Newman Center community, Kwong finds support and joy singing in the choir and serving on the faith formation committee and student leadership council. She has a way of welcoming people and drawing them in, inviting newcomers, and leading groups, Campus Minister Catherine Ochoa said. "If a new student comes by, I immediately introduce them to Anna if I have the opportunity because she's always so joyful," she noted.



courtesy photo/TCU Athletics Department



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Anna Kwong (right) sings at the Young Adult Mass Feb. 15.

Kwong credits TCU chaplain Father Jonathan Wallis and Ochoa for their guidance and friendship. In turn, they've witnessed her development as both an athlete and daughter of God. "When reading about an athlete, you hear about their scores and successes, which you absolutely do with Anna, but in all the articles or podcasts, she is very intentionally talking about her faith, giving glory to God, and mentioning the Newman Center and her involvement," Ochoa said. "That absolutely is opening the door for students to feel welcomed here. People are now becoming more aware because of her evangelizing."


Kwong's devout maturity indeed comes from very real experiences. She recalled last December, during the USA Diving Winter Nationals at Indiana University, in which she watched the effect of trust turn around her performance.

"I was really nervous, and I really wanted to do well. I was trying to be more self-reliant and do it myself instead of trusting that I put in the work and that God's will is greatest. In trying to force it, I self-sabotaged.

"Going into my last dive, I was behind 10-15 points, so I focused on setting my own pace and on surrendering to the Lord, saying, 'It's just me and the Lord and the board. I'm doing this for the glory of God, and not myself.' Then I did my dive, and I nailed it, and it bumped me up from third to first. I was so floored that ... surrendering to Him produced that outcome. Knowing that I didn't do it on my own, being able to share that with my competitors who are my friends as well, and glorifying God and turning it back to Him, was really fulfilling.

"God wants to hear your desires," she continued. "He only wants what's best for us. Voicing that desire to Him and being really scared to do so, then having that fulfilled continues to shock me. It keeps me in an attitude of gratitude. Everything I have is from God. If I tried to do this on my own, it wouldn't have happened."


Kwong asks for prayers as she pursues her "God-given passion," competing in Mexico, Canada, and Singapore, as well as stateside. "Pray for safety, success, and that I'm able to surrender and give God His due glory throughout." 🇺🇸



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Wholly Holy

The sights and sounds of the Holy Land, even if virtual, bring new understanding to Jesus' humanity

Article and photography by Susan Moses

Charles Gappa has traveled to each of the seven continents, absorbing the history, the culture, and the natural beauty of the world.

But, Gappa explained, “The only one that I repeat is the Holy Land. I keep going back to the Holy Land because it feels like I am going home.”

The retired DRE from St. Bartholomew Parish in Fort Worth is planning his eighth trip to Israel this fall, traveling as both the host of a pilgrimage and a pilgrim himself. Each trip, he said,

involves discovery and rediscovery.

He said, “I love the Scriptures; I love walking to places where Jesus walked.”

FULLY HUMAN

The impact of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land stems from it being the land where Jesus was born, lived, and died.

Father Philip Petta, pastor of Holy Family of Nazareth Parish in Vernon, St. Joseph Parish in Crowell, and St. Mary Parish in Quanah, said, “If you go to the Holy Land, or you even just contemplate the Holy Land with its rich and extremely

long history, it reinforces that our Lord was an actual human being that walked the earth among us.

“Sometimes we emphasize Christ’s divinity so much that we lose sight of His humanity — where He was a baby, where He was raised. He was an actual person who could get angry and get hurt. He was a boy; He was a man; He actually existed in human flesh,” the priest continued.

Gappa’s personal experience bolsters Fr. Petta’s view.

The Holy Land, said Gappa, “is a place where you go and you stand in awe

◀ At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, an altar stands over the site where Jesus hung on the cross.

and reverence when you go to the Temple. This is where Jesus preached and taught and was presented. Where He got lost also.

“The [Church of the] Holy Sepulchre is where Jesus died on the cross. It’s preserved for 2,000 years, and it’s a place where my Lord, my God, walked, died, and rose from that one place. It’s a reverence you experience when you go there. So it’s not just a dream or a reading in a book,” he said.

HOLY SITES

Tessy Ross wasn’t sure what to expect when she and her husband Bill went to Israel in 2006 on a pilgrimage hosted by Bishop Kevin Vann, who was then bishop of Fort Worth.

It quickly became an “awe-filled” experience, she said.

First stop was the Basilica of the Annunciation, where the archangel Gabriel visited Mary and told her she would be the mother of Jesus.

Ross recalled, “I remember Bill saying, ‘If this is all that we see, it’s been so — not just worth it — but so much of a blessing to be where the Blessed Mother received the message from the angel Gabriel.’

“Every subsequent visit to a church just kept adding more and more to the whole experience,” she recalled.

Until last fall, the Rosses served 18 years as section leaders of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, which supports the Holy Land through “prayer, purse, and pilgrimage,” Ross said.

A mission of the international apostolate is to protect Christian locations in Israel. Ross explained, “We need to make sure those are available and present to



The fifth Station of the Cross: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross.



The Church of the Beatitudes sits on a hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee.

future generations, number one, because they are holy sites and part of our faith tradition, where Jesus actually was here on Earth.”

Because the number of Christians who live in Israel is rapidly declining, the Order also helps support parishes, seminaries, and Catholic hospitals, schools, and orphanages.

Pat and Joan Bridges, parishioners of St. Mark Church in Argyle, serve as

current section leaders of the Order and have visited the Holy Land twice.

Their first visit, Pat said, left them feeling overwhelmed. “There’s so much over there. You’ve read the Bible, you know these words and places and see how they fit together.”

He remembered, “Actually traveling from point A to point B — this is where

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TALES
FROM
THE HOLY
LAND



Reflections from the author on her recent trip to Israel: NorthTexasCatholic.org/feature-articles.

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it happened, this is where Mary went to visit Elizabeth — it makes it more real to me. It was a deepening of your spirituality because you're in these places and it's just so moving to be there."

THE FIFTH GOSPEL

Beginning at a young age, most Christians can cite the four Gospels where we learn of Jesus' life: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

But throughout history, saints and popes have referred to the Holy Land as the fifth Gospel.

St. Jerome in the fourth century is credited as saying, "Five Gospels record the life of Jesus. Four you will find in books and the one you will find in

the land they call Holy. Read the fifth Gospel and the world of the four will open to you."

In modern times, Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini (The Word of God)*, "The stones on which our Redeemer walked are still charged with his memory and continue to 'cry out' the Good News. For this reason, the Synod Fathers recalled the felicitous phrase that speaks of the Holy Land as 'the Fifth Gospel.'"

"The more we turn our eyes and our hearts to the Earthly Jerusalem, the more will our yearning be kindled for the heavenly Jerusalem, the true goal of every pilgrimage, along with our eager desire that the name of Jesus, the one name which brings salvation, may be acknowledged by all." ✝

Take an armchair pilgrimage

For most of us, the 7,000 miles that separate our diocese and Jerusalem puts the Holy Land out of reach.

The next best thing, however, can be achieved in your favorite recliner or within the boundaries of the diocese.

Here are some ideas to enhance your knowledge and devotion to the land where Jesus lived:

- Enjoy a slow trek through a book about the Holy Land. Many of your favorite Catholic authors have published books filled with photos, commentaries, and meditations.
- The Stations of the Cross are not just for Lent. Several parishes have outdoor statues, or arrive early at your parish to pray and reflect on each station to walk with our Lord on His Way of the Cross.
- Spend time poring over a map of the Holy Land, taking note of where the familiar towns are located. Next, check out a map of the Old City of Jerusalem and find the Temple, Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, and other sites frequently mentioned in the Gospels.
- Experience the Holy Land virtually. You'll find many tour videos of Jerusalem on YouTube. Just recently, actor Jonathan Roumie of "The Chosen" and biblical scholar Jeff Cavins partnered to create a video series titled "Holy Week in the Holy Land" that can be found on the Hallow app.



Sections of the ancient Roman road can be found in Jerusalem.

- Pray for the Holy Land and the people who live there. "For the peace of Jerusalem pray: 'May those who love you prosper! May peace be within your ramparts, prosperity within your towers.'" (*Psalms 122:6-7*)

Fr. Petta encourages the faithful to contemplate the land where Jesus was born, lived, and died, whether or not they are able to make a pilgrimage in person.

He said, "It doesn't matter if you go there or don't go there. You're thinking about an actual place that exists in time and in space. "It's not up in the clouds. It's not a myth. It's not something that might have been or could have been. There's just too much evidence," the priest continued. ✝



A Red River Hospital representative speaks with a U.S. Navy veteran at Catholic Charities Veterans Fair in Wichita Falls. (NTC/Lisa Moore)

Help, hope, and community for veterans

By Lisa Moore

At the Wichita Falls Public Library on April 10, Catholic Charities Fort Worth hosted its fourth annual Veterans Fair featuring over 60 vendors. Private care companies, U.S. and state departments of Veterans’ Affairs, the Texas Workforce Commission, as well as the local Crisis Aid Response Team and specialty clinics all attended, ready with answers to show just what they can offer veterans at every stage.

With every vendor, the message was the same: “We’re here to help.”

CCFW’s Director of Northwest Community Impact Rita Gauthier pointed out the importance of the face-to-face conversations the fair provided.

“Getting through to talk to a live person was something that the fair gives — to come talk to real people about their issues,” she said. “A good number of the folks who come to these fairs a lot of times are looking for services regarding their VA rating or VA disability. They were onsite doing claims for folks.”

Having all the service agencies under one roof was not only great for the community, Gauthier noted, but also the vendors themselves, allowing them to better network with other service providers and refer clients to adjacent agencies. “They felt that was a huge benefit,” she stated.

Recreational therapy organizations offered helpful fun to veterans and their families: Veterans Freedom Retreat advertised therapy getaway sessions for singles and couples, while Warrior Art Brigade creatively reconciles injury trauma by exploding acrylic paint onto canvases with gun powder.

Organizations for fellowship and community service were also at the forefront, particularly encouraging veterans of younger generations to find community with them.

“The younger folks – Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom – they’re welcome,” U.S. Air Force Ret. Fred Prejean of the Texas Association of Vietnam Veterans emphasized.

Home for Freedom, a nonprofit

undertaking cemetery renovations, tiny home building, and service dog training — all for veterans — received excellent support from Catholic Charities, founder Lisa Lothenore noted. Home for Freedom hopes to not only continue partnering with Catholic Charities, but also reciprocate Catholic Charities’ assistance, she said.

“It was heartfelt for me to see that they were really taking to heart what we’re doing,” she stated. “They told me endless times, ‘if you need anything, call us. We’ll be glad to help you any way we can.’ That just made me smile. If there’s a project they need help on, we want to help as well.”

By providing an occasion for care providers to come together and meet their patrons and fellow organizations, the Catholic Charities Veterans’ Fair made one thing abundantly clear: through all walks of life and in every need, our veterans are not alone. 🇺🇸

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



A CONVERSION

Faithful Catholics reflect on their initiation into the Catholic Church

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Cori Gonzalez wasn't raised Catholic, but every time she attended a wedding, funeral, or first Communion Mass, a sense of peace washed over her.

"Growing up in Southern California, my parents were not regular churchgoers, but I had a lot of friends who were Catholic. If I went to their home for a sleepover, I'd go to Mass with them," said the Colleyville resident, recalling her early experience with the faith.

Over the years, Gonzalez's interest and curiosity about the Catholic Church never waned. After marrying and having children, going to Protestant services left her feeling disheartened.

"There was always something off-putting about what the pastor said or the service itself," the mother of four explained. "I often heard negative remarks about Catholicism. We were told Mary wasn't a perpetual virgin and Communion was just a symbol."

Gonzalez began attending Mass with her daughters but the urge to explore Catholicism came with questions. Her eldest son, Ozzie, who was enrolled in a Catholic university in Oregon and was on his own faith journey,

helped her find the answers. His theology professors at Gonzaga University and the University of Portland influenced the 24-year-old's religious pursuits and encouraged research.

"My son would explain things and recommend books to read," she continued. More information was gleaned from Bishop Robert Barron's "Word on Fire" podcast, the Catholic prayer and meditation app Hallow, and "The Catechism in a Year" podcast with Father Mike Schmitz.

"Everything I read and listened to was Biblical and the opposite of what most of the Protestant churches I went to said about Catholicism," Gonzalez stated emphatically. "Books helped me understand why Catholics do things. Why do we pray to Mary? Why are there statues of saints? If you understand, it makes sense."

Parishioners at St. Francis of Assisi in Grapevine welcomed Gonzalez and her daughters, Ezra, 18, and 10-year-old Zoe, into the Church during the April 19 Easter Vigil Mass. Her son, Ozzie, received the Easter sacraments at his Washington state parish.

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Cori Gonzalez and her daughters, Ezra, 18, and 10-year-old Zoe, bring the offertory gifts to the altar at St. Francis of Assisi in Grapevine, during the April 19 Easter Vigil Mass. (NTC/Scott Wagner)



FOR THE AGES



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TEACHING THE FAITH

The Gonzalez family joins the more than 1,250 candidates and catechumens in the diocese entering the Church this Easter.

“Last year we set a record with 629 baptisms and this year we’ll exceed that with 752 baptisms. We’re still compiling the number of professions of faith [baptized Christians receiving the Eucharist and Confirmation],” said Jason Whitehead, diocesan director of evangelization and catechesis. “I’m very happy with the work that’s been done these last few years and the fruit we’re seeing from our labor.”

Formerly known as the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA), instruction for prospective converts

wanting to become Catholic was renamed the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). In 2021, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a new translation of the process and its corresponding curriculum. The USCCB decided “Order” was a more accurate and precise translation of the Latin text and reflected the ongoing spiritual journey of faith formation instead of a one-time “rite” or ceremony.

Whitehead, a convert who entered the Church in 2012, credits part of the diocese’s success in attracting new Catholics to the way it prepares catechists to teach the faith.

“In our diocese, one of the chief goals is to get catechesis back to two things — it should be Gospel-centered and content-based. Proclaiming the Gospel and teaching the faith is what we stress in the

department of catechesis,” he explained. “It’s only through those means people can come to divining the Catholic faith.”

Changes came after what some call a “crisis” in catechesis, according to the diocesan director. Starting in the 1960s, faith formation focused on experience rather than content. Generations of Catholics stopped learning the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

“This is the backdrop to why so many Catholics have fallen away from the faith,” Whitehead said before citing an example. “People are told to attend Mass but weren’t taught the full significance of what is done during the liturgy and why.”

Eventually, people feel they’re just going through the motions.

“You can only maintain that behavior for so long before people start to wonder why go to church at all,” he pointed out.



Ezra and Zoe Gonzalez light their candles at St. Francis of Assisi in Grapevine, during the April 19 Easter Vigil Mass. (NTC/Angela Wengrenovich)

SEEKING ANSWERS

Raised a Southern Baptist, Joshua Wattley withdrew entirely from religion as a young adult. But, with age and maturity, he began to realize the value of a strong faith foundation.

“I started learning about the history of the Church and the Protestant Reformation. It answered a lot of questions and ultimately led me to the Catholic Church,” said the human resources manager. “I was exposed to things I never knew.”

According to Wattley, there are approximately 30,000 different Christian denominations.

“And I wanted to know why,” he explained. “Learning about the different formations of Protestantism made me realize I wasn’t aligned or in agreement with the majority of them.”

Prodigious research helped him unravel some of the misconceptions about Catholicism. Electing a pope to lead the Church was one of them.

“Now I see the necessity for having that authority figure and how essential it is to our faith and the Body,” the Indiana native continued.

Wattley began formal instruction in the faith in September 2024 at St. Francis of Assisi Church. He attended Mass at other locations but felt drawn to the close-knit parish in Grapevine.

“I was greatly influenced by Jennifer Proctor. We had some great, hopeful conversations,” he said, referring to the parish’s coordinator of adult faith formation. “She has a genuine spirit for bringing more people into the Church and faith.”

FINDING PEACE

A dedicated catechist helped Christine Vincent find a spiritual home at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth following a series of tragedies that devastated her personal life. The health care worker’s husband died a year after she retired, and her father passed away six months later. Being mugged and injured in a supermarket parking lot left her with post-traumatic stress disorder.

“My whole world was crashing,” Vincent remembered. “It was a lot to



Joshua Wattley receives the sacrament of confirmation during the April 19 Easter Vigil Mass. (NTC/Angela Wengrenovich)

handle, and, after a while, you lose hope.”

The Pennsylvania native met Virginia Rodriguez, the parish’s director of religious education, during a nursing assignment.

“Her son was my patient, and we became friends,” Vincent explained. “I became integrated into that huge family.”

Not raised in any particular religion but always a believer, she was influenced by the matriarch’s strong faith and decided to explore Catholicism. Vincent remembered being the oldest prospective convert in her RCIA group.

“On the first day of class, the pastor came in and asked everyone why they chose to be there,” the retiree recalled. “I told him I had a hole in my heart and didn’t know how to fix it. I hoped becoming closer to God would make me whole again.”

Vincent came into the Church in 2022 and continues to take adult formation classes. Now a Eucharistic minister, she’s found peace and a personal relationship with Christ.

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“It’s helped me tremendously,” the OLG parishioner said. “Emotionally you go through so many things, but God puts people in your life to encourage you.”

Her advice to others coping with loss and hopelessness: “If you’re troubled, follow your heart and find the Lord.”

EXPERIENCING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

There aren’t many Catholic converts who can say they were baptized by a pope. Michelle Klash is one of them.

When the Coppell High School graduate enrolled in the University of Dallas to study economics in 1991, she never imagined meeting St. John Paul II was in her future.

“I was interested in UD’s Rome program,” she said, recalling her decision to attend a Catholic college. “Other than it was close to home, I had no real good reason to go there. The Holy Spirit was guiding me.”

Raised without a strong religious background, Klash became immersed in the Catholic culture that permeates the Irving campus. Eventually, she decided to begin RCIA instruction under the guidance of UD’s chaplain Father Gregory Kelly (now bishop of Tyler). When it came time to receive the Easter sacraments, the college sophomore was spending the semester in Rome.

“Father Kelly petitioned the Vatican for suggestions on where I could be baptized, and they added me to the Easter Vigil,” she explained.

On Holy Saturday 1993, Klash walked into a darkened St. Peter’s Basilica with 30 other catechumens for a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

“I was completely unfamiliar with the Easter Vigil,” the convert admitted. “Just walking into that beautiful church, lit by candlelight and then all the lights turning on inside, was amazing. It felt warm, like



home, and that’s an unusual thing to say about a marble building.”

When Pope John Paul II poured baptismal water over her head, all doubts about what she was doing were gone.

“I don’t think there are words to describe how I felt that day,” said the married mother of three. “All of my questions were answered. I knew exactly what I was doing and that it was right.”

After the ceremony, the “quiet but

genial” elderly pontiff greeted each new Catholic with a smile. Klash received a beautiful baptismal certificate penned in Latin and Italian, a white lace baptismal veil, and rosary. The Vatican photographer provided a visual keepsake of the Mass.

Today, the former corporate finance professional guides others through the conversion process as the OCIA coordinator at St. Ann Parish in Burleson. Ten



Michelle Klash photographed at St. Ann Parish in Burseson. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

people were baptized at Easter with another six preparing for confirmation on Pentecost.

The peace she felt during the baptism rite is something Klash wants others to experience. Over the years, the UD graduate has attended the Easter Vigil Mass numerous times as a sponsor and catechist.

“There’s so much symbolism, especially the light of Christ entering the church and then filling the church,” she said. “The Paschal story is a wonderful visual for all Christians — not just those coming into the Church.”

STUDYING THE EARLY CHURCH

For most of his adult life, Catholics gave Gary Morgan “the creeps.”

“Although I didn’t become a Christian until I was in my 20s, I lived in a fundamentalist, Protestant culture,” he explained. “Catholics kneeling and burning candles in front of an

Continued on Page 42

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Gary Morgan photographed at St. Jude Parish in Mansfield. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

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image of the Virgin Mary looked like bowing down to someone who is not God. It's a knee-jerk reaction many have, and so did I."

The Catholic convert now understands Mary and saints, who lived out their Christian faith at a high level, inspire and set an example for others to follow.

"They are able to intercede for us with prayer," Morgan pointed out. "One of the huge differences between Catholicism and Protestantism is the communion of saints. Non-denominational, contemporary churches have a gravely different view of these things."

After attending Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Texas native went on to pastor mission, Baptist, and cowboy churches. In May 2001, he became leader of the Cowboy Church of Ellis County — one of the first western-heritage congregations affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. For several years, it was the largest cowboy church in North America.

Morgan's son, Jonathan, a former atheist who became an Orthodox Christian, inspired his father's conversion to Catholicism.

"I wanted to understand where he was coming from and dialogue with him," said the longtime resident of Waxahachie. "I wanted to find some commonality in faith."

The Protestant minister began reading the works of the early Church fathers — books fundamental to Orthodoxy as well as other faiths. Studying Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp had a profound impact.

"It was so obvious they were Catholic, thought Catholic, and worshipped Catholic and the documents supported that," Morgan stressed.

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Becoming Catholic

This Easter Vigil, I celebrated my 13 year as a Catholic. At times, it feels like eons ago. At others, it feels like yesterday. The former is due, in part, to my journey having various phases, spanning my entire life. The initial phase is marked by a little white church in rural upstate New York where my paternal grandfather served as pastor. The church is still there, but for me, it lives in my memory as the place where I can still hear the bell ringing for miles around, where the folks from the countryside would gather to lift their voices in prayer, led by my aunt at the organ and my grandmother in the choir.

It was as storybook as it sounds. My greatest memory, however, the one which sticks with me most, is the giddy look on Grandpa's face as he pulled on the rope of the church bell on Sunday mornings, calling us to worship. My brothers and I, with my cousins, would come running from playing in the field behind the church to witness our favorite shared experience, the glow of Christian joy on Grandpa's face. The source of his enthusiasm, of course, was much more than the old bell. It was the love he had for God and the fact we were at church to be in the business of worshipping Him to the best of our ability. As I would run into church, I thought to myself many times, "That's the type of Christian I want to be." I am sure he knows, but I wish I would have told him before he died.

This was the foundation God laid for my formation. Even as we knelt by the altar to receive our Methodist communion, God was preparing me to become Catholic, so I may, in fact, be enabled to worship Him to the fullest. As Grandma led us in "Rock of Ages," God was slowly teaching me to trust in Him, to hide myself in Him so I may survive the dark and stormy seas of life in hope of reaping a reward where our troubles are all ended and happiness in Christ reigns forever.

After my family moved to Texas in the late 1980s, we found a new home among the Southern Baptists. With their emphasis on Scripture, God honed our zeal by the written word of God, giving us subsequent increase in devotion. In time, both my father and I would discern the call to ministry. Dad still pastored his congregation faithfully. My call took an unexpected turn.

It was at Baptist Bible College and Seminary in Dallas, in pursuit of degrees leading to ordination, where I would be introduced to the Church Fathers. In their writings, beginning in 2003, God led me to realize the fact of Christ establishing His Church as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.

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.



Jason Whitehead



United Methodist Church of Risingville, NY, where Whitehead was baptized by his paternal grandfather. (courtesy photo)

God, through the Fathers, led me to wrestle with the papacy, Mary, the Eucharist, confession, etc. It took some time, but in Advent of 2010, God broke through my heart of stone, opening me, finally, to embrace Him in His fullness, in the Catholic Church.

I was received in 2012, at the Easter Vigil, after being embraced by my local parish through its RCIA, showing me how to live as a Catholic. My memory of the Vigil is hazy, so taken was I with emotion. What I do recall, with crystal clarity, is, through tear-dropped eyes, seeing the face of my pastor, and knowing I chose the right path.

Through these same eyes, I see others becoming Catholic. While our stories may differ, I know many who share similar journeys. Please pray for them so they may continue to enjoy the joy which exceeds all telling. After all, being Catholic is not easy. They need your help.

These last 13 years have exceeded my wildest expectations, especially having the joyous opportunity of laboring in the vineyard of Fort Worth. I hope to give the Church a fraction of what She has given me. I also hope Grandpa's proud. I miss him, and pray to see him again, someday. 🇺🇸

Father Sojan George Puthiyaparampil baptizes Ezra Gonzalez at St. Francis of Assisi in Grapevine, during the April 19 Easter Vigil Mass. (NTC/Angela Wengrenovich)



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The pastor also recognized the strong link between the Catholic and Jewish faiths.

“Christianity evolved from Judaism,” he added. “The Apostles were brought up in a Jewish environment and much of Catholicism reflects that. Protestants don’t see that connection.”

Morgan read 50 or 60 books and all the ante-Nicene fathers before he approached anyone about converting. The Coming Home network, an online archive for those learning about the Catholic Church, became an important resource.

Sensitive to the feelings of the nondenominational congregation he shepherded for 22 years, the St. Jude parishioner and his wife, Donna, kept their 2023 entry into the Catholic Church a low-key event, sharing the news only with close family and friends.

“It was a delicate situation,” conceded Morgan, who planned a seamless transition of leadership at his former church before leaving. “I was deeply concerned that I could do something to damage the faith of the people in that community.”

Now the coordinator of adult formation and education at St. Jude, he advises others considering Catholicism to read books by Catholic authors. “The Faith of Our Fathers” by Cardinal James Gibbons is a favorite recommendation. The convert also says to expect personal challenges that come with adopting a new faith.

“You may feel lonely or scared but absolutely do it,” Morgan insisted. “I knew in my heart this was God’s will.”

PRAYING FOR CONVERTS

Helping converts grow in faith after completing OCIA is an important priority for parishes, according to Whitehead.

“Learning about the faith cannot stop at the Easter Vigil,” he emphasized. “After receiving the sacraments, there’s a mindset that says, ‘They’re good to go.’ We should never think of any Catholic in that context.”

Along with developing opportunities for adult formation with trained catechists, parishioners should also pray for new converts. By coming into the Church, many have made their lives more complicated.

“They’re not coming from Catholic families and may not have many Catholic friends,” Whitehead explained. “They’re entering an entirely different world often viewed by non-Catholics and anti-Catholics as utterly foreign and negative. They need a lot of prayer and help in learning how to be Catholic.” 🇺🇸

Virtue and victory

From left: Eric Hernandez, Evan Lang, Father Maurice Moon, and Alexander Jansen. (courtesy photo/Fr. Moon)

I had the opportunity to coach our seminary basketball team to victory in the St. Francis de Sales Seminary Invitational this past February in Milwaukee. Sixteen teams competed, and it was a high level of basketball as many of the seminarians played in high school and some in college. Our team showed grit, great team play, and perseverance to win it.

One of the things I thought about during that tournament was how sports can help lead us to God, grow in virtue, and discern one's vocation.

During the tournament, we played six games in 36 hours. In the semifinals, the game went into triple overtime in a gym filled with screaming fans cheering for the opposing team and rooting against us. We got down at times, but our team continued trusting in their teammates, fighting to win, and overcoming these challenges.

Fortitude, or courage, is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. I saw our team practice the virtue of fortitude, amid fatigue and adversity, by choosing not to give up or lose their cool, for the pursuit of God, for their teammates, for victory. The championship game the next day was much easier after having fought so hard the night before.

In 2000, St. John Paul II said in his homily on the Jubilee of Sports People:



Fr. Maurice Moon

“Every Christian is called to become a strong athlete of Christ, that is, a faithful and courageous witness to His Gospel. But to succeed in this, he must persevere in prayer, be trained in virtue and follow the divine Master in everything.”

He reminded us of the need to persevere both in prayer and virtue if we are going to follow Christ. Sports can help with this.

In sports, a battle takes place within a person when he or she can be tried by physical and emotional exhaustion, tried by a superior opponent, tried by pain, by loss, or by circumstances where one feels treated unfairly during the competition. These factors play a part in teaching the Christian athlete valuable lessons of fortitude and perseverance through adversity.

We know life is a battle, particularly a spiritual battle. St. Paul says, “For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and power, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places” (Ephesians 6:12). Without God's grace and our practice of virtue, these spiritual forces will overpower us, causing us to lose hope.

God in His Providence allows battles to happen in our lives that seem too difficult, opposition that seems insurmountable to overcome. For He wants to remind us that we need Him, we need His grace — and our

cooperation with this grace — to achieve victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Virtue is needed in one's daily relationship with God and especially in discerning one's vocation. The thought of priesthood or religious life can seem too difficult, too scary. But if one has learned to practice the virtue of fortitude repeatedly, the priesthood and religious life become viable vocations because one has learned to trust in God and persevere.

Although sports can turn into an idol, lead into vainglory or other sins, sports played in a Christian way can help men and women learn important lessons of virtue, like fortitude and perseverance. Sports can help train Christians to accept the vocation God wants for them because they have learned to practice virtue and self-control amid adversity.

Not only are sports a healthy form of leisure, but they can help train a Christian to become a better soldier for Christ. Ultimately, success in sports does not depend on winning the game, but on exercising virtue to win the crown of eternal glory. “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one” (1 Corinthians 9:25). 🙏

Father Maurice Moon is the Director of Collegian Seminary Formation and on the formation faculty at St. Joseph Seminary College.



CRAFTED WITH CARE

Volunteers help families cope with infant loss with gift of handmade casket and burial garments

By Susan Moses

The sounds of love and dignity ring loud and clear over the whine of the saw and the whir of the sewing machine.

More than a dozen men and women, mostly parishioners of St. Frances Cabrini Church in Granbury, build caskets and sew burial outfits for infants lost to miscarriage, stillbirth, or other death early in life.

For parents suffering from the unthinkable, the nonprofit All God's Little Children provides recognition of the devastating loss and the infinite dignity of the short life of their precious child by providing exquisitely crafted wooden caskets and intricate white burial garments, infused with prayer and love.

AN UNLIKELY START

Jay Worrel rarely watches television and has no experience in carpentry, which makes the origin of All God's Little Children all the more remarkable.

Nearly three years ago, he happened to watch a segment on EWTN about four woodworkers in Metairie, Louisiana, who build caskets for families who have lost a baby.

He felt compelled to learn more, so he and his wife, Colleen, paid a visit to the men and returned to Granbury with wood, sample caskets, and a mission.

Worrel recruited John Bowen, an accomplished woodworker, and Raymond Rodriguez, an attorney, to help assemble the caskets and the nonprofit's organization, respectively, while the Worrels visited hospitals, pregnancy centers, churches, and doctors' offices to spread awareness of the new ministry.

◀ (L-R) Karen Trammell, Nanette Nadeau, Colleen Worrel, Cathy Mason, Dawn Wolf, and Silvia Cooper display the handmade gifts of the caskets and burial garments. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Almost immediately, Moore's Custom Cabinets in Granbury donated scrap maple and oak to the nonprofit. Bowen marveled, "We have so much wood; we don't even need to go back."

Meanwhile, Colleen and other women gathered fabric from donated wedding dresses to line the caskets and sew blankets, pillows, and garments.

The ministry has hand-delivered the caskets and garments to 24 families from Denton to Stephenville — wherever and whenever they learn of a need. "We don't limit our work to just the Catholic Church or the diocese; wherever we can help we are glad," said Colleen.

MADE WITH PRAYER

Not all the volunteers are master carpenters or seamstresses. Some sand and stain the caskets; some clean and cut wedding dresses; and others dedicate their prayers to the ministry and its clients.

Before any wood is trimmed or any stitch is made, the volunteers of All God's Little Children begin in prayer.

Bowen explained, "You feel like you're in Joseph's workshop, with Joseph and Jesus, when we have our group meetings in the shop. Before every meeting, whether it's a board meeting or whether it's a work meeting, Jay leads us in a prayer to St. Joseph, our sponsor, to set the tone."

Likewise, the women pray when they gather to line the caskets and sew the garments and accessories. As they add the finishing touches to the casket, they carefully tuck a written prayer commending the young soul to the mercy of Jesus between the wood and the satin lining.

Prayer is the first step at the front end, too.

Colleen said, "When I take a call [from a family needing our service], I immediately offer our sympathies to the family. And I say, 'I'm starting your message to our prayer warriors right now.' A lot of the moms can't speak, and then they start crying. They understand the value of



John Bowen works on the caskets in his workshop. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

prayer and the power of prayer. And after we deliver [the casket], we tell them, you're on our prayer list forever now.

"We get immediately on the prayers. And it's forever," she continued. "The families are really so appreciative."

Bowen added, "We have a list in the shop. We have a list of all the babies' names."

IT'S PERSONAL

Despite the physical nature of the casket and the garment, the biggest gift to the family might be immaterial.

The caskets are delivered in person, most often by the Worrels, but sometimes Bowen or Rodriguez.

Colleen said, "It's personal; it's emotional — to help with the grieving family as they try to work through their grief and closure."

Bowen interjected, "Instead of just receiving something in the mail, you get a personal delivery; it's from our heart."

"Really, to the family for the baby," Rodriguez added.

The caskets, which come in four sizes, feature a cross on the top and the child's name laser-engraved into the wood.

The garments are even more personal, offered in various sizes with differing levels of trim and customized for a boy or a girl.

Parents choose the garment, as well as the blanket and pillow, for the burial.

"If it's a boy or a girl, I try to usually take a couple of gowns or a couple of pouches and let them have the option. When they lose the baby, it's not their choice. So therefore, if we can give them a choice on what they could pick out for the baby, for the burial, that would be a big help to them," said Colleen.

Choosing the outfit and engraving the name on the casket emphasizes the personhood of the baby, Bowen added.

Jay said, "Everybody who's received one has always expressed real deep gratitude and mentioned how beautiful they are. So that gives you a sense of accomplishment that you're doing something for Jesus and for the community." 🇺🇸



A journey of generations

By Christina Benavides

In *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), Pope Francis reminds us, “All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families. ... Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together” (325).

For the Filipino American Lavedan family of St. Michael Parish in Bedford, the Catholic faith is not just a belief but a way of life. Guided by grandmother Lourdes Camungol, Pierre and Anna Liza Lavedan have joyfully instilled a deep, genuine love for the faith in their three children — Pierre Bienvenido (27), Gabrielle (26), and Phillipe (20) — as they walk this journey together.

HOW THEY MET: Anna and Pierre met while studying medicine at the University of Texas at Houston Medical School. Reeling from failing a particularly difficult exam, Anna jokingly proposed to Pierre during a moment of levity. Amused, he later asked her to join him for dinner, marking the beginning of their relationship. A year and a half later, on December 18, 1993, they were married at St. Michael.

COMMUNITY OF FAITH: After graduating from medical school, the two doctors moved to Omaha, Nebraska, to start their residency. They called Omaha home for the next 20 years.

Raised Catholic, the Lavedans prioritized building a community of faith as

they raised their children. They remained active in their local parish and invested in their children’s Catholic education.

“Kids watching their parents connect with their fellow parishioners is very important,” Pierre said. While their children sometimes grew frustrated by the time spent at church, it reinforced the value of investing in one’s community.

“I think that inspires you to become part of that [community] when you’re older, versus a family who just clocks in and clocks out, right?” Pierre continued. “It’s important to invest time with that [parish] and make those friends.”

A GRANDPARENT’S ROLE: Though Lourdes Camungol and her husband Bienvenido remained in Bedford while

◀ **Front:** Lourdes Camungol, Anna Liza, and Pierre Lavedan, **Back:** Gabrielle, Philippe, and Pierre Bienvenido Lavedan, photographed at their Colleyville home. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

the Lavedans lived in Omaha, the devoted grandmother ensured distance was never a barrier. A former auditor of American Airlines, Camungol's frequent work trips to the Omaha branch allowed for regular visits, and her position came with the flexibility to offer available seats to her immediate family, an opportunity her grandchildren used to come visit.

"I would say these kids think they are just taking a taxi to go to Texas," Pierre chuckled.

Her grandchildren cherished the homecooked meals, devoted attention, and especially "prayer with Momma and Papa," Camungol recalled. "They had to learn how to pray the rosary per decade — because there are five of them, so they had one decade each."

RETURN TO ST. MICHAEL: The Lavedans moved back to Texas in 2014 as their children prepared for university. Before long, they began to reconnect with the parish community at St. Michael.

Following grandmother Lourdes' example of participating in the Filipino Catholic community, Gabrielle sings in the Filipino choir, serving as a cantor for the Wednesday night Filipino Mass. Her older brother, Pierre, began assisting with sacrament courses, youth formation, and young adult Bible studies last year after completing his master's degree in sustainability.

"Some of the best experiences that I've had with the Church come from when I'm trying to do a service or I'm trying to step in and use my talent for the evangelization of others," he said.

SPIRIT OF SUCCESS: A graduate of Nolan Catholic High School in Fort Worth, Phillippe Lavedan is now studying engineering at Texas A&M University.

CATHOLIC DOCTORS: Within their professional circles, the Lavedans found strong support among fellow Catholic peers.

"So many good friends were Catholic," Pierre said. "My wife's partner in her practice in Omaha was Catholic, and one of the partners in my practice was Catholic and we went to the same church. You know, it was just really nice that way with the community support."

Now a specialist in palliative and hospice care, Pierre emphasized the importance of balance: "You have your work life, you have your family life, and you have your spiritual life, and you need to try to make sure they all balance out."

MEETING ADVERSITY: "Faith gives you a spiritual home to help you through any kind of the hardship that you go through in life, you know?" Anna shared. "I think it's kind of something we pass down to the kids."

HIDDEN BLESSINGS: As an internal medicine and pediatric doctor, Anna recalled a patient's wisdom: "The worst thing that happens to you is the best thing that happens to you at that time," she said.

Reflecting on her own challenges — like her son's recent layoff, which ultimately led him to a better career path — she realized its truth. The layoff her son experienced was difficult but gave him the experience he needed to begin a desired career.

Even what she had once considered a devastating academic setback, failing a pharmacology test, had proved to become a turning point for the better. "If I did not fail that test, I would not have met Pierre, and we would not be here," she said. 🇺🇸

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To Report Misconduct:

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

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

To Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

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

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

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





NTC/Juan Guajardo

An instrument of service

HE IS: Father Rubén Tena Guzmán, parochial vicar of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Fort Worth.

A BRIGHT LIGHT: The eldest of five, Fr. Tena Guzmán grew up in Copándaro de Galeana in Michoacán, Mexico.

When he was 12 and an altar server, a new priest arrived in his hometown parish and began to “revolutionize” a previously “lifeless parish.”

“I wish I was like that,” he recalled, thinking of the 70-year-old priest.

TRIAL AND ERROR: Fr. Tena Guzmán moved to his father’s native California at about 20. Although his primary obligation was work, he also felt a pull to prioritize attending Mass and pursuing a rich life of faith.

He shared his desire to become a priest with a parish pastor, who encouraged him to undergo a period of discernment and participate in parish youth group.

After relocating, he met with the pastor of his new parish, who providentially was the vocations director for the *Confraternidad Sacerdotal de los Operarios del Reino de Cristo* (Fellowship of the Laborers of the Kingdom of Christ).

After some time, Fr. Tena Guzmán visited the CORC seminary in Querétaro,

Mexico. At 27, he felt far older than many seminarians. However, to his happy surprise, the seminary accepted him.

A CHARISM TO WORK: The example of priests in his order taught him the value of humility and a willingness to undertake any necessary task, “whether it was to pick up a broom, learn to cook, or find a way to change a fixture in the parish hall.”

ORDAINED: September 12, 2020, at the CORC seminary in Querétaro, Mexico.

FAMILY MAN: After he was ordained, Fr. Tena Guzmán served in Oklahoma. Almost a year later, he was assigned to serve alongside Father Oscar Olvera in Fort Worth.

Upon receiving the news, the young priest felt overjoyed because his parents and siblings had since relocated to the DFW Metroplex.

Fr. Tena Guzmán now drives his mother to her work each day before morning Mass and had the opportunity to be with his father before his recent passing.

“When you trust in God, when you have certainty, the assurance, that you did what you should have done — of course it’s sad, it’s painful, but at the same time, it’s very beautiful,” Fr. Tena Guzmán reflected.

TO SERVE OTHERS: Fr. Tena Guzmán defines his vocation as a commitment to serving others.

“It is truly putting yourself at the service of others, knowing how to listen, knowing how to advise. ... Being a priest is being an instrument that sometimes gets tiring, but in the end, it’s part of your vocation, because it’s a vocation of service, right? “Not a vocation of comfort, but of service.”

EVERY DAY COUNTS: “Not everything is rose-colored in the life of a priest. Our goals reset every day.”

OPEN DOORS: No matter how busy parish life can be, helping people receive the sacraments is of utmost importance.

“Those of us who can help, we have to be open. Because that’s what Pope Francis says, right? The Church has to be a house with open doors.”

GOD’S INSTRUMENT: “What does it mean to be a priest but to truly put yourself at the service of others, to know how to listen, to know how to advise, and ultimately, to understand?

“Being a priest is being an instrument, which is sometimes tiring, but in the end, it’s part of your vocation, because it’s a vocation of service.” 🇺🇸

Consistently inconsistent

I've been pretty serious about my faith for 45 years. I had a number of profound experiences of God as a teenager and this propelled me into a life of intentional connection to my faith and the Church. And yet, sometimes I feel as if I could be holier than I am, and I could have grown more than I have.

Historically I'm terrible at daily prayer, Bible reading, sitting in silence, regular confession, serving the poor, and pretty much all the things associated with being a good follower of Jesus. Yet, as much as I feel like I have failed at these things, after 45 years of striving, I can actually say I feel like I've grown some in all these areas.

How has this happened? I've been consistently inconsistent.

For the most part, I have not let my inconsistency stop me from consistently trying. Even though I continually fall off the horse, I've come to understand that horses (at least spiritual ones) were made to fall off of, and as such, I've made friends with the ground.

Along the way, I've also learned that God is great at picking us up, brushing us off, and helping us get back on the horse.

I suppose part of the reason I feel I should be farther along than I am is

what I see in other people whose faith I admire, not to mention the lives of the saints. There is so much growth to be had, so much faith to be experienced, so much intimacy with God that seems to elude me, and so much more depth of encounter with the living God to be had than what I have experienced thus far.



Jeff Hedglen

I also see all the missed opportunities for growth, so many hours that could have been spent in prayer, study, and action. Sure, I have participated in many spiritual activities on some level, but I've for sure spent way more time watching the Rangers than reading the Bible and more time mindlessly scrolling the internet than mindfully meditating on the love of God.

And yet, what amounts of time I have, though inconsistently, given to God have borne fruit. Just like the world around us that is in growth mode fueled by inconsistent rain and blistering sun, so too our faith can grow even with meager effort on our part.

How can this be? Well, even though we can be consistently inconsistent, God is consistently consistent. God joyfully takes whatever we give Him, takes it into His effusive heart, and turns it into beauty and holiness.

Working on growing in holiness from the age of 16 has taught me that progress is seldom a steady upward trajectory. Rather, it is full of peaks and valleys, stops and starts, and, in a word, seasons.

Just like the world outside our windows has a cycle of growth and dormancy, so too does our relationship with God. The one thing we want to try to avoid is jumping ship — though even when we do this, God goes into Jonah mode and keeps after us, giving us opportunity after opportunity to get back on track.

Success is an erroneous word when it comes to holiness; after all the only true measure of this is the beatific vision, which happens (God willing) after we die.

Instead, I strive for movement in depth and breadth. Meaning, deeper connection and broader knowledge across my experience of God, prayer, sacraments, Scripture, service, and all the other spiritual practices our faith offers to draw us into relationship with the Triune God.

Steady growth might be the goal, but sometimes being consistently inconsistent is a viable way forward. 🇺🇸

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

PAPA FRANCISCO

EL SIERVO DE DIOS

Un legado de sencillez,
humildad y fe profunda

Por Christina Benavides

A pesar de haber estado hospitalizado recientemente por 38 días debido a una doble pulmonía, la muerte del Papa Francisco, ocurrida el 21 de abril, conmovió profundamente a los fieles católicos. Muchas personas lo vieron en público apenas el día antes durante las celebraciones del Domingo de Pascua en el Vaticano.

El Obispo Michael Olson emitió una declaración sobre el fallecimiento del Santo Padre y pidió a los fieles: “Por favor, únense a mí en oración por el descanso del alma del Papa Francisco mientras lamentamos su fallecimiento al inicio del tiempo pascual. Nos apenamos con gratitud por su servicio a la Iglesia y con esperanza en la misericordia de Cristo”.

El obispo escribió en su declaración: “Sus últimas palabras en público fueron ‘Felices Pascuas’. Las pronunció con mucho esfuerzo en medio del sufrimiento que estaba pasando rodeado de los fieles reunidos el Domingo de Pascua en la Plaza de San Pedro de Roma. El Papa Francisco murió de la misma manera que vivió y ejerció su ministerio; un hombre



El Papa Francisco, cardenales y obispos rezan durante una misa en la Basílica de San Pedro en el Vaticano en esta foto de archivo del 2 de noviembre de 2022. (Foto de CNS/Vatican Media)



NTC/Juan Guajardo

La Diócesis celebró una misa especial por el eterno descanso del Papa Francisco el 24 de abril en la Parroquia de Holy Name of Jesus de Fort Worth.

sencillo de fe en la Resurrección de Cristo y Su amorosa misericordia por cada uno de nosotros”.

El Papa Francisco nombró al Obispo Olson para servir en la Diócesis de Fort Worth en noviembre de 2013.

La diócesis celebró dos misas especiales por el eterno descanso del Papa Francisco. La primera misa fue el 23 de abril en la Catedral de St. Patrick de Fort Worth y la segunda misa fue celebrada en español el 24 de abril en la Parroquia de Holy Name of Jesus de Fort Worth.

“Oremos por su alma con corazones agradecidos por lo que se esforzó en enseñarnos y con confianza en el Espíritu Santo”, escribió el obispo.

UN PAPA SERVIDOR

El director diocesano del Ministerio Hispano, Diácono Rigoberto Leyva, dijo que su hija lo despertó a las 4:30 de la mañana después de enterarse de la muerte del Papa.

“Lo primero que sentí fue estar sorprendido y triste”, compartió el diácono. “Y luego me llegó la sensación de una gran pérdida para nosotros, para el mundo, porque el Papa Francisco ha sido verdaderamente un Papa para el mundo, para todos los católicos”.

El Papa no solamente enseñó con palabras el Evangelio, pero lo vivió, señaló el Diácono Leyva.

“Para él era importante no solamente hablar de servicio o decir que vayan

y sirvan, pero para él era el poner el ejemplo, y lo pudimos ver. ¿Cuántas veces no visitó las cárceles, cuántas veces fue a los hospitales a bendecir gente, a estar con ellos? Entonces, para mí como diácono, me pone el ejemplo del servicio al que estoy llamado, configurado en Cristo a servir. Que el Santo Padre haga esto, ¿cómo voy a quedarme yo en casa sentado sin hacer nada?” dijo.

El mayor legado del Papa fue su espíritu de servicio y su firme determinación de hacer que la Iglesia fuera accesible para todos — desde su novedosa visión de la Iglesia como un hospital que acoge a los pecadores, hasta la sencillez de sus enseñanzas como autor de cuatro encíclicas, siete exhortaciones apostólicas y setenta y cinco documentos motu proprio, afirmó el diácono.

“Creo que ése es el gran ejemplo que deja al pueblo de Dios: que realmente vale la pena seguir a Cristo”, enfatizó. “Vale la pena servir a Dios en todas las capacidades y usando los dones que Dios nos ha dado, así como el Papa Francisco lo hizo”.

El pueblo hispano recordará al primer Papa latinoamericano por su don de servicio, afirmó el diácono. “Fue el Papa servidor del pueblo; el Papa Francisco, el servidor de Dios.”

UN HIJO DE INMIGRANTES

Jorge Mario Bergoglio nació el 17 de diciembre de 1936 en Buenos Aires, Argentina, descendiente de inmigrantes

italianos. Su padre Mario era contador ferroviario; y su madre Regina Sívori, ama de casa.

El joven Jorge fue criado en el barrio obrero de Flores y pasó mucho tiempo con su querida abuela Rosa, a quien atribuye su despertar en la fe.

El momento decisivo de su vocación llegó el 21 de septiembre de 1953, cuando, tras una confesión inesperada, tuvo un encuentro con la misericordia de Dios que le cambió la vida. “No sé qué pasó, no lo recuerdo, no sé por qué estaba aquel sacerdote allí, a quien no conocía, por qué había sentido ese deseo de confesarme, pero la verdad es que Alguien me esperaba. Me estaba esperando desde hacía tiempo. Después de la Confesión sentí que algo había cambiado”.

“Yo no era él mismo. Había oído justamente como una voz, una llamada: estaba convencido de que tenía que ser sacerdote”, contó el Santo Padre en 2013.

Tras formarse como técnico químico, ingresó al seminario y, en 1958, al noviciado de la Compañía de Jesús. Fue ordenado sacerdote en 1969 e hizo su profesión perpetua con los jesuitas en 1973. Ese mismo año, con tenía 36 años, fue nombrado Provincial de los Jesuitas en Argentina.

SERVICIO EPISCOPAL

El Papa San Juan Pablo II lo nombró en 1992 Obispo Auxiliar de Buenos Aires.

Fue designado en 1997 Arzobispo Coadjutor de Buenos Aires; y al fallecer el Cardenal Antonio Quarracino en 1998 fue nombrado Arzobispo metropolitano. San Juan Pablo II lo elevaría en el 2001 al Colegio de Cardenales.

Como arzobispo rechazó algunos beneficios del cargo. Viajaba en metro, vivía en un departamento sencillo y dedicó gran parte de su tiempo a los pobres y a los que vivían en los barrios marginales de la ciudad.

ELEGIDO AL PONTIFICADO

Tras la histórica renuncia del Papa Benedicto XVI en febrero de 2013, el Cardenal Bergoglio fue elegido Papa el 13 de marzo.

Antes del cónclave, el jesuita argentino de 76 años no estaba considerado como candidato. Sin embargo, luego de presentar su visión sobre la reforma de la Iglesia Católica en un discurso a los cardenales, la mayoría de ellos fueron persuadidos de que podría ofrecer una respuesta contundente a los escándalos y desafíos de la Iglesia, así como proporcionar soluciones a la disminución de las vocaciones y de la participación eclesial.

Elegió el nombre de Francisco, inspirado en el santo de Asís, como símbolo de una Iglesia cercana a los pobres y comprometida con la sencillez del Evangelio.



El Obispo Michael Olson saluda al Papa Francisco durante una visita Ad Limina el 21 de enero de 2020.

UN LEGADO PROFÉTICO

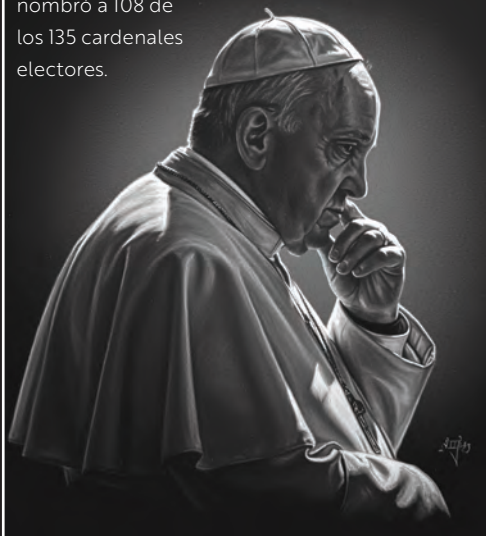
“Prefiero una Iglesia accidentada, herida y manchada por salir a la calle, antes que una Iglesia enferma por el encierro y la comodidad de aferrarse a las propias seguridades”, escribió en *Evangelii Gaudium* (La alegría del Evangelio), su exhortación apostólica de 2013, que exhortaba a una ‘Iglesia en salida’.

Su pontificado se caracterizó

por promover una Iglesia que llegue a las periferias y que sacuda — a veces, incómodamente — estructuras autorreferenciales y rígidas. Como él mismo escribiera: “La Iglesia en salida es una Iglesia con las puertas abiertas”. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20-24) ✝

Nota de editora: Este artículo incluye reportaje de Redacción Central de ACI Prensa.

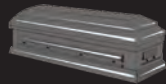
El Papa Francisco nombró a 108 de los 135 cardenales electores.



DEL SILENCIO AL ANUNCIO

Camino hacia un Nuevo Pontífice

1 SE CONFIRMA LA MUERTE DEL PAPA.



2 COMIENZAN LOS NOVENIALES (NUEVE DÍAS DE LUTO) EL DÍA DEL FUNERAL DEL PAPA.



3 UN CÓNCLAVE DE 135 CARDENALES ELECTORES SE REÚNEN EN LA CAPILLA SIXTINA PARA ELIGIR AL NUEVO PAPA.

4

HUMO NEGRO INDICA QUE NO SE HA ALCANZADO UNA DECISIÓN.

HUMO BLANCO ANUNCIA QUE HAY NUEVO PAPA.

5

LAS CAMPANAS DEL VATICANO REPLICAN PARA PROCLAMAR LA ELECCIÓN DEL NUEVO PONTÍFICE.





LA DOCTRINA SOCIAL CATÓLICA Y LA LEY DE INMIGRACIÓN

La Sociedad de St. Thomas More explora la inmigración
a través de la enseñanza social católica

Por Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

¿Qué es exactamente la doctrina social católica? ¿Cómo deberían reaccionar los fieles católicos ante la inmigración? ¿Cuáles son los cambios en la aplicación de las leyes migratorias?

Las respuestas a estas inquisitivas preguntas se abordaron durante un panel de discusión celebrado el 3 de abril sobre “La ley de inmigración y la doctrina

social católica”, que fue organizado por la Sociedad de St. Thomas More de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad Texas A&M de Fort Worth. El Padre Samuel Maul, capellán de la sección local de la Sociedad, y Paul Hunker, exasesor general del Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas (ICE), hablaron frente a una audiencia de abogados y estudiantes de derecho.

La inmigración es un tema de gran actualidad, según Courtney Taylor,

presidenta y directora ejecutiva de la Sociedad de St. Thomas More de Fort Worth.

La Iglesia Católica tiene una perspectiva única sobre esta cuestión.

LA POSICIÓN DE LA IGLESIA

“La doctrina social católica es un área que pocos comprenden”, continuó. “Ésta es una buena oportunidad para repasar o aprender por primera vez los principios al respecto”.

La política migratoria sigue siendo uno de los temas más polémicos y trascendentales en los Estados Unidos. La Oficina del Censo de EE. UU. estima que la población nacida en el extranjero (legal e indocumentada) alcanzó en enero de 2025 un récord de 53.3 millones, que representa un 15.8% de la población total del país.

“Dado los esfuerzos que la actual administración realiza para 'arreglar' el problema de la inmigración, existe una gran preocupación por garantizar que se respete la dignidad de los migrantes de nuestro país”, explicó el Padre Maul.

Al pedirle que definiera la doctrina social católica, el Padre Maul, párroco de la Parroquia de Santa María Goretti de Arlington, explicó que los principios fundamentales se basan en las palabras de Cristo, las cartas de los apóstoles y las enseñanzas de la Iglesia. En el 2004 se presentó el Compendio de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia, a solicitud del Papa Juan Pablo II, para ofrecer un panorama general de las ricas enseñanzas de la Iglesia católica sobre cuestiones relacionadas con la persona humana, la sociedad, la autoridad política, la economía, el medio ambiente y la paz mundial.

“Siempre que hablamos de la doctrina social de la Iglesia, nos referimos a la aplicación de los principios divinos que recibimos de Cristo a la realidad general que experimentamos en nuestra vida diaria”, afirmó. “Le digo constantemente a las personas que, si intentan determinar qué postura adoptar en la sociedad, recurran a las palabras del propio Cristo y se pregunten: si éstas son las verdades absolutas, ¿cómo nos vemos a nosotros mismos en relación con ellas?”

Ningún esquema completo resuelve todos los problemas de la inmigración en todos los casos, pero la Iglesia ofrece preceptos mediante los cuales las personas pueden determinar si se adhieren al mandato de Cristo de cuidar al prójimo.

Los documentos importantes que abordan el tema de la justicia social o la

inmigración enfatizan varios principios fundamentales, señaló el Padre Maul.

1. Se debe garantizar a las personas la dignidad del trabajo y el derecho a acceder a los bienes de la tierra para su sustento.

2. El mundo no fue creado para una nación en particular, sino para todos los pueblos. Si bien existen derechos de propiedad privada, tenemos la responsabilidad, por caridad, de cuidar de los pobres entre nosotros.

3. Las naciones, si siguen a Cristo, deben adoptar la postura de acoger al forastero.

4. Las políticas no pueden basarse en la discriminación de clase social o raza.

5. Las naciones tienen derecho a una frontera segura.

6. Todas las naciones tienen la responsabilidad de promover el bien común, no sólo para su propia nación, sino para el mundo. No deben implementar políticas que exploten a los países vecinos o más pobres.

7. Se han de abordar las causas profundas de la migración: la guerra, la pobreza y el hambre.

8. Lo más importante es que se debe considerar a las personas como personas y no como plagas.

“Éste sería un buen punto de partida para basar cualquier decisión moral que tomemos”, dijo el Padre Maul. “Les digo a los feligreses que Cristo es claro sobre cómo se nos juzgará. Debemos alimentar al hambriento, dar de beber al sediento, cuidar al enfermo, visitar al preso, vestir al desnudo y acoger al forastero”.

‘LA PRUDENCIA ES CLAVE’

Hunker, abogado de inmigración que tiene su práctica privada, afirmó que no ha habido ningún cambio significativo en las leyes de inmigración estadounidense desde el 1996, pero sí han hecho cambios en la forma en que se gestiona la aplicación de

las leyes migratorias.

Debido a la escasez de recursos, el Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas (ICE) se centra actualmente en deportar a delincuentes e inmigrantes que representan un riesgo para la seguridad nacional o pública. Si ICE encuentra a alguien que se encuentra en el país sin documentos, los agentes lo detendrán.

Hunker tiene dos clientes que fueron puestos bajo custodia del ICE tras infracciones de tránsito.

“En general, centrarse en deportar agresivamente a todos los que están aquí no es bueno para las familias ni para las comunidades”, afirmó. “Tengo clientes que llevan aquí 20 ó 30 años y eso les va a afectar la vida completa”.

La cantidad de inmigrantes indocumentados que cruzaron la frontera durante los últimos cuatro años es un problema, admitió el abogado.

“Y existe la idea generalizada de que las personas son el problema”, añadió. “Eso es incompatible con el catolicismo. Las personas no son el problema, son la solución para un país, y la economía lo demuestra”.

Hunker aboga por una mayor inmigración legal, visas para trabajadores temporales y una frontera más segura.

“Creo que las políticas y leyes de inmigración podrían estructurarse de manera que promuevan el bien común y también permitan que más personas en los Estados Unidos disfruten de la libertad de expresión, el desarrollo económico y la educación”, aseveró. “Nuestro sistema actual no hace eso. Tiende a llevar a las familias a desintegrarse”.

Royce Hansen, feligrés de St. Jude, disfrutó escuchar las opiniones de alguien que formó parte de la organización ICE.

“Aprendimos específicamente cuáles son los verdaderos problemas; y fue fantástico que el Padre Maul nos recordara lo que debe preocupar a los católicos”, explicó. “Si algo aprendí de esto, es que todas estas decisiones son complicadas, pero la prudencia es clave”. 🇺🇸



Abren con **‘JÚBILO’** la Puerta Santa

Peregrinos de la diócesis llegan a la Parroquia de Our Lady of Guadalupe para recibir la indulgencia plenaria

Por Violeta Rocha

La Parroquia de Our Lady of Guadalupe de Fort Worth reafirma con gozo y entusiasmo “su tarea de llevar esperanza” al ser designada como uno de los lugares santos de peregrinación de la Diócesis durante el año de Jubileo, sintiéndose “muy amados por Dios y por nuestro Obispo”, asegura su párroco Fray Feliciano Torres-Castro, O.F.M. Cap.

La Iglesia Católica celebra cada 25 años el Jubileo, durante el cual se otorga la indulgencia plenaria - el perdón de todos los pecados cometidos y sus efectos - a los fieles que se confiesen, crucen la Puerta Santa en las basílicas de Roma, reciban la Santa Eucaristía y recen por las intenciones del Papa.

El Papa Francisco, pidió que en este año jubilar, llamado “Peregrinos de Esperanza”, todas las diócesis ‘abran’ la Puerta Santa a todo peregrino y reciban las indulgencias, sin que tengan que viajar a Roma.

El Obispo Michael Olson decretó como lugares de peregrinación en la Diócesis de Fort Worth a la Catedral de St. Patrick de Fort Worth y las siguientes parroquias: Immaculate Conception of Mary de Wichita Falls, Sacred Heart de Comanche, St. Philip the Apostle de Flower Mound y Our Lady of Guadalupe de Fort Worth.

La tradición de entrar por la Puerta Santa comenzó en el año 1300 con el Papa Bonifacio VIII. Dichas puertas se abrían sólo durante los años jublares para ofrecer la oportunidad de conceder a los fieles la indulgencia plenaria y sentir la misericordia de Dios.

Sergio Martínez, feligrés de la Parroquia de Our Lady of Guadalupe desde hace 15 años, no dudó en poner al “servicio de la Iglesia” sus talentos en carpintería para construir ‘la Puerta Santa’, pues sabe que “es por la fe y la gracia que Dios nos da la indulgencia, pero si con el talento que Dios me dio

puedo ayudar para que muchos puedan cruzar la puerta y ganar indulgencias, me siento privilegiado y feliz”, asegura Martínez, originario de Zacatecas.

El Padre Chano, como llaman sus feligreses a Fray Castro-Torres, explica que cruzar la puerta santa es un acto profundamente simbólico, que representa la entrada a un nuevo período de gracia. Es “entrar al redil de Jesús” para cambiar nuestras vidas y tomar un compromiso.

El año jubilar, añade el sacerdote originario de Chihuahua, “es un encuentro vivo con Jesús”, poniendo “el acento en la renovación y la conversión”.

“Esta iglesia es la casa de Santa María de Guadalupe, quien pidió que se le construyera un lugar donde entren todos. Eso ya es un signo de esperanza”, afirma el vicario Fray Roberto Viveros Rosales, originario de Michoacán.

Los frailes Capuchinos “se llenan de júbilo” al recibir los sacerdotes que llegan a celebrar Misa junto a sus feligreses y los acompañan, cuando así se les pide, con charlas, la peregrinación con la cruz jubilar en medio de los cantos y la Letanía de los Santos, la renovación de las promesas bautismales y la Santa Eucaristía.

El Padre Thu Nguyen, párroco de la Parroquia de St. Paul the Apostle de River Oaks, fue a la Parroquia Our Lady of Guadalupe el 13 de marzo para celebrar la Misa, acompañado de más de 60 de sus feligreses.

“Necesitamos darle a la gente toda ocasión para recibir la gracia de la indulgencia”, dijo el Padre Nguyen. “Mi esperanza es reconciliar muchos casos de familias que no viven sus sacramentos” y “sembrar el deseo de regresar a Dios con todos sus pecados perdonados”, agregó. Señaló, además, que van a regresar el 26 de junio con más peregrinos.

Rumelia Luján, feligrés de St. Paul por más de 30 años, no sólo peregrinó para recibir la indulgencia, sino también

para participar de la Liturgia como Ministro de la Eucaristía.

“Cuando el Padre Thu le agradeció a la Parroquia de Our Lady of Guadalupe por habernos recibido, diciendo “venimos de San Pablo”, fue muy emotivo sentir cómo somos su rebaño y que él nos está llevando al Señor”, comparte Luján.

Daisy Pérez sintió que, tanto ella como su familia “no estamos solos”, al confesarse y profundizar en el valor de la indulgencia; y “llegando juntos en comunidad” desde su Parroquia de St. Paul.

Para Mónica Mendoza y su esposo Jorge, ser “peregrinos de esperanza” ha representado, no sólo buscar la indulgencia para ellos, sino para el alma de su hija Mónica Patricia, que falleció a la edad de 25 años.

El matrimonio Mendoza, que son oriundos de Aguas Calientes y llevan casi tres décadas de pertenecer a la Parroquia de St. Stephen de Weatherford, entrelazó sus manos al cruzar la Puerta Santa acompañados de 5 de sus 6 hijos, llevando en el corazón y en sus oraciones a su hija Mónica Patricia. “Confiamos en las promesas de Dios pidiendo la indulgencia plenaria para nosotros, pero, sobre todo, por el alma de nuestra hija que falleció hace dos años”, dijo Mónica Mendoza.

“Llegamos con nuestra alma adolorida, pero el Padre Chano y el Padre Beto (Fray Rosales), llenos de su amor al servicio, nos dijeron, ‘Aquí está Dios esperándonos’”, describe Mónica sobre su primera peregrinación en febrero junto a 10 feligreses de St. Stephen y su regreso en marzo junto a 60 peregrinos de su propia parroquia. “El abrazo de la parroquia como lugar de peregrinaje fue fraterno y hermoso”, señala.

Mendoza planea ofrecer la indulgencia en comunidad una vez al mes, pues “tenemos que vaciar el purgatorio”, asevera. 🇺🇸

‘STEWARDSHIP’ Y LA SOLIDARIDAD CATÓLICA

Asistentes al Día Diocesano de Stewardship aprenden cómo compartir el llamado al servicio y a la unidad de la Iglesia

Por Karla Silva

“**N**uestro trabajo aquí no es sólo reflexionar sobre cómo nos desarrollamos como Iglesia, sino también cómo servimos a Cristo entre nosotros en el mundo de hoy”, destacó el Reverendísimo Obispo Michael Olson durante el Día Diocesano de Stewardship que se llevó a cabo el 8 de marzo en la Parroquia de St. Mark de Argyle. Durante este evento se compartieron temas fundamentales para el desarrollo de la Iglesia y su misión en el mundo actual; se profundizó sobre el verdadero significado del concepto de stewardship y los obstáculos que enfrenta; cómo practicarlo en las comunidades multiculturales y cómo podría florecer en las comunidades parroquiales.

Este encuentro contó con la participación del Obispo Olson, que celebró la Misa para iniciar el evento y dio la charla de introducción. Participaron, además, Patti Maldonado de Nuestro Visitante Dominical (OSV, por sus siglas en inglés), que presentó la charla titulada ‘Stewardship en la comunidad hispana’; y Miguel Mireles del Santuario del Beato Stanley Rother, que impartió la charla ‘Sirviendo a Dios, Sirviendo a los demás’.

A menudo, se plantea la pregunta de cómo se traduce la palabra ‘stewardship’ al español. Aunque existen traducciones

literales, como por ejemplo, mayordomía, corresponsabilidad o administración, Maldonado señaló que, en realidad, ninguna de ellas captura completamente su significado. De hecho, hasta en inglés muchas personas desconocen su definición precisa. “Por eso, en ocasiones optamos por dejar el término en inglés y permitir que las personas pregunten su significado, lo que da lugar a su explicación. Sin embargo, si se busca una palabra en español, podríamos utilizar ‘solidaridad católica’, como una opción”, afirmó Maldonado.

Cabe entonces preguntar, ¿qué significa realmente ‘stewardship’? “Stewardship es dar desde el corazón”, afirmó Maldonado. “Muchos piensan que se trata únicamente de aportar algo económico, pero esto es sólo una parte del concepto; ya que stewardship abarca mucho más que eso. Se trata de reconocer los dones y talentos que Dios nos ha otorgado y ponerlos al servicio de los demás”, añadió.

Maldonado destacó que la comunidad hispana ha aumentado de forma exponencial en los últimos años y reconoció el valioso servicio que dicha comunidad aporta a la Iglesia. “El concepto de stewardship en la comunidad hispana se practica de manera diferente a otras comunidades, ya que pone un gran énfasis en el trabajo en conjunto.

Si hay una necesidad en la parroquia, los hispanos se unen para recaudar fondos y se organizan ventas de comida u otros eventos, sin pensarlo dos veces. La aportación de tiempo y talentos al servicio comunitario y a las actividades de la Iglesia se considera, a menudo, tan importante como la donación de dinero”, explicó.

En el contexto de una comunidad parroquial multicultural, Maldonado reconoció que uno de los principales desafíos es la diversidad de enfoques que existen entre las comunidades al momento de trabajar y servir juntos. Una feligresa de la Parroquia de St. Thomas the Apostle de Fort Worth compartió su experiencia al enfrentarse a los procedimientos y la documentación que se requieren para organizar actividades. “A veces es frustrante, porque no estamos acostumbrados a ellos; simplemente queremos poner nuestro trabajo al servicio de los demás”, expresó.

Ante esta realidad, Maldonado enfatizó la importancia de cultivar relaciones de colaboración con los párrocos y líderes religiosos, estar abiertos a recibir retroalimentación y trabajar de manera conjunta con otras comunidades. “Es fundamental tener una buena disposición para escuchar y colaborar”, agregó.

Por su parte, Claudia Chávez,



Fieles diocesanos participan en el Día Diocesano de Stewardship en la Parroquia de St. Mark en Argyle el sábado 8 de marzo. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

feligresa y lectora de la Parroquia de All Saints de Fort Worth, subrayó la importancia de la paciencia y la comprensión al trabajar con comunidades diversas. “Es esencial comprender por qué cada comunidad sigue ciertos procesos. No se trata de hacer las cosas a nuestra manera, sino de llegar a un mutuo acuerdo donde cada comunidad se sienta incluida y pueda aportar sus dones y talentos por el bien de toda la Iglesia”, destacó.

El Obispo Olson, a su vez, recalcó la invitación de Jesús a enfocarnos en el prójimo y no en nosotros mismos al compartir los dones que Él nos ha dado. “El mundo necesita que seamos la Iglesia que decimos que somos. La tentación para nosotros es caer en la falsa narrativa que exige que escojamos entre dos extremos, cuando Cristo nos enseña a servir a todos. Esto conlleva tomar consciencia, desarrollar carácter y exige también liderazgo. Tenemos que liderar el camino, tanto con la palabra como con la acción, y por supuesto, con el ejemplo”, enfatizó el Obispo.

Surgieron numerosas ideas de parte de los asistentes para desarrollar

el carácter y liderazgo necesarios para servir al prójimo. Entre ellas, la oración; el poner las necesidades personales y las de los demás ante el Señor; nunca dejar de formarse y de crecer en la fe; permitir que Dios nos use como Sus instrumentos; y cuestionar las cosas del mundo.

Al abordar la pregunta sobre cómo fomentar el servicio dentro de la comunidad, Miguel Mireles enfatizó que ‘stewardship’ se trata de una acción concreta. “El decirle a una persona sinceramente ‘te necesito’ hace que ellos sientan que ‘ven algo en mí que puedo aportar’. Escuchan el llamado y son invitados a responder con un sí”, explicó. Maldonado recalcó la importancia de la unidad en este proceso, “estamos aquí como uno y damos lo que tenemos; somos uno y damos como uno”.

“Se espera de nosotros liderar como Cristo lideró, con espíritu de servicio y amor hacia nuestro prójimo; siendo también conscientes de los pobres y de la justicia; y celebrando los dones que Dios nos ha dado y poniéndolos al servicio de la Iglesia, que somos todos nosotros”, concluyó el Obispo Olson. ✨

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 se le ha revelado un abuso,

- ▶ 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



Un instrumento de servicio

ÉL ES: Padre Rubén Tena Guzmán, vicario parroquial de la Parroquia de Immaculate Heart of Mary de Fort Worth.

LUZ BRILLANTE: El mayor de cinco hermanos se crió en el municipio de Copándaro de Galeana, Michoacán, México. Cuando tenía 12 años y era monaguillo, un nuevo sacerdote llegó a la parroquia de su ciudad natal y comenzó a “revolucionar” lo que antes había sido una parroquia sin vida. La alegría del sacerdote al servir la comunidad animó al joven Tena Guzmán a interesarse en el sacerdocio. “Ay, yo quisiera ser así”, recordó haber pensado.

PRUEBA Y ERROR: Se mudó a California, donde su padre nació, cuando tenía unos 20 años. Aunque su principal obligación era el trabajo, también sentía la necesidad de priorizar asistir a misa y llevar una vida de fe plena.

Al poco tiempo compartió su deseo de ser sacerdote con el párroco, quien lo animó a un período de discernimiento y a participar en el grupo juvenil de la parroquia. Finalmente, tras mudarse a otro lugar y comenzar a ir una nueva parroquia, solicitó reunirse con el párroco, que providencialmente era el Director de Vocaciones de la Confraternidad Sacerdotal de los Operarios del Reino de Cristo. Al cabo de un tiempo fue invitado a visitar el Seminario de CORC en Querétaro, México. Como ya tenía 27 años, el joven se sentía mucho mayor que la mayoría de los seminaristas, que

tenían entre 17 y 21 años. No obstante, el Seminario lo aceptó.

CARISMA PARA TRABAJAR: A través del ejemplo de los sacerdotes de su orden, los primeros años de seminario le enseñaron el valor de la humildad y la disposición para completar cualquier tarea necesaria: “Ya no era tanto trabajo intelectual, sino más bien pastoral, más trabajo manual. Por eso, es que nosotros decimos que, como Operarios, como sacerdotes, podemos hacerlo”.

ORDENACIÓN: 12 de septiembre de 2020 en el Templo Expiatorio del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús del Seminario de CORC en Querétaro, México.

CERCANO A SU FAMILIA: Tras su ordenación, el Padre Tena Guzmán fue asignado a trabajar en Oklahoma. Supo, al cabo de casi un año, supo que serviría junto al Padre Oscar Olvera en Fort Worth.

Al recibir la noticia, el joven sacerdote se llenó de alegría, ya que sus padres y hermanos se habían mudado al área metropolitana de Dallas-Fort Worth. Ahora puede llevar a su madre al trabajo todos los días antes de la Misa de la mañana y tuvo la oportunidad de estar con su padre, acompañándolo a sus citas de diálisis, antes de su reciente fallecimiento.

“Cuando tú confías en Dios y cuando tú tienes la certeza, la seguridad de que hiciste lo que debías haber hecho, y claro

que es triste, es doloroso, pero a la vez, es algo muy bonito”, reflexionó el Padre Tena Guzmán.

SERVICIO A LOS DEMÁS: Él define su vocación como un compromiso de servicio a los demás. “Es verdaderamente ponerse al servicio de otros, saber escuchar, saber aconsejar... el ser sacerdote, pues es ser instrumento que a veces cansa, pero al final es parte de tu vocación, porque es una vocación de servicio, ¿verdad? No una vocación de comodidad, sino de servicio”.

CADA DÍA CUENTA: “No todo es color de rosa en la vida del sacerdote. ... la meta es de todos los días y de lo que haces todos los días”.

PUERTAS ABIERTAS: Por muy ocupada que sea la vida parroquial, ayudar a las personas a recibir los sacramentos es de suma importancia. “Quiénes podemos ayudar, tenemos que estar dispuestos a hacerlo. Porque eso dice el Papa Francisco, ¿no? La Iglesia tiene que ser una casa con las puertas abiertas”.

SU INSTRUMENTO: “¿Qué significa ser sacerdote, sino ponerse verdaderamente al servicio de otros, saber escuchar, saber aconsejar y, al final de cuentas, entender? Esto es lo que yo quería, esto es parte de mi respuesta: ser sacerdote es ser un instrumento, lo cual a veces cansa, pero al final, es parte de tu vocación, porque es una vocación de servicio”. 🇺🇸

REVIVIENDO EL Vía Crucis

Por Christina Benavides
Fotografía de Juan Guajardo

El Viernes Santo 18 de abril alrededor de 500 fieles vivieron con devoción una representación de la Pasión y un Vía Crucis en vivo hecho por los feligreses de la Parroquia de All Saints en Fort Worth.

Un grupo de voluntarios de la parroquia llevan presentando en vivo la obra de la Pasión de Jesús y el Vía Crucis por los pasados 20 años.

El Diácono Ricardo De León y su esposa Estela han ayudado con el Vía Crucis desde hace tres años.

“Viendo la via crucis es muy emotivo para mí”, el diácono dijo. “No sé qué es. Ya sabes, es sólo una obra, pero aun así te metes en ella”. 🇺🇸



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