

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



Creator's Content

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Distinctions among Immigrants Call for Immigration Reform

In the last seven months, the crisis of people illegally entering the United States at our southern border has been addressed through stricter enforcement resulting in few, if any, illegal entries. Accompanying this tactic has been an increase in the number of arrests of people who are illegally in the United States, including members of cartels and gangs and those who have committed violent crimes either here or in their country of origin. Most reasonable people recognize this as a positive contribution to the common good of society. Nobody wants to live with the threat of violence perpetrated against the vulnerable, especially those who live in close proximity to these criminals.

Current discussion regarding the treatment of undocumented aliens and the enforcement of immigration law includes disagreement over the relevance of a distinction between those who are present here illegally for the purpose of committing violent crimes with those who are without legal status but have traveled here to seek employment in order to provide for the lives of their families who otherwise would face destitution. A dominant opinion is that no further consideration needs to be given to the situation once it is established that someone is here without legal authorization. “They do not belong here; send them all back,” is the blunt refrain. This attitude does not prepare us

spiritually for the judgment that awaits us: “I was a stranger, and you gave me no welcome.”

Yet, amid all of the argument and turbulence regarding deportations of those here illegally, I have not heard any calls for stronger consequences for those who violate the law in hiring those without legitimate documents for legal authorization to work. It seems that too frequently such employers are not held accountable or are easily able to pay the fines should they actually be enforced. Here, I am not speaking of traffickers but rather those who illegally employ people who are frequently among the group of undocumented aliens who seek employment to provide for their families. There have been few cries to hold such employers accountable for their failure to follow immigration law. Employers are required to follow the I-9 employment eligibility verification process to ensure that they are only hiring employees who are legally authorized to work in the United States, which includes examining the documents that establish their eligibility. Verification of such information is frequently handled in only a cursory manner.

If advocates for deportation without further consideration of why someone is here without legal authorization are consistent, they would include stricter enforcement of harsher penalties upon those who employ people without legal

authorization to work in the United States. It should follow that if laws were more strictly enforced or if immigration reform included stricter penalties, the problem of illegal immigration might be resolved.

Yet, this has been precisely at the heart of our refusal as a nation for over 30 years to address this problem. The lack of enforcement or even of legitimate accountability on the part of employers to follow immigration laws remains unchecked because there exists a need for laborers in these areas of service and agriculture that is greater than the law currently allows. The result is that many workers who are working without legal authorization frequently are exploited by unjust wages, lack of health benefits, and threats of intimidation, while contributing financially to Social Security and seeking only to provide for their families.

The crisis concerning the just enforcement of immigration law will not be resolved by hostile discourse or a refusal to make relevant distinctions because we do not like the inconvenience of accountability. The distinction between criminals who have been involved with trafficking drugs or human beings and people who have come to our country without legal authorization and who have worked productively among us, sometimes for decades, is an important distinction for just, reasonable, and compassionate immigration reform. 🇺🇸

Mother's helper

I can't speak for fathers, but I can vouch for the truth of a saying I once heard and have since repeated many times about mothers: A mother is only as happy as her least happy child.

I first heard that axiom when my kids were little, when their emotions ran like a flooded river, high and fast.

From scrapes and bruises to the injustice of someone else holding the coveted toy, days were a blurred roller coaster ride of delights and despair.

At that stage, it seemed normal for me to be experiencing and moderating their feelings — good and bad — which were big and hard to process by someone yet to write their name.

However, I was surprised to learn through my friendships with older women in my parish that even after their kids had left the nest decades earlier, mothers' hearts and emotional states were still closely entwined with their long-since-grown children.

I met these mature women in my parish through a women's Bible study on Wednesday mornings. My children were toddlers; others had sons and daughters in their 30s and 40s.

At the end of each lesson, we spent some time sharing prayer requests. That's when they revealed how they suffered alongside their grown children over job loss, illness, or family strife. On happier occasions, they offered prayers of thanksgiving for graduations, engagements, and baptisms.

Twenty years have passed since then, and although my children are grown and flown, my disposition is affected by their experiences.

Their positive events and successes bring me joy, of course, but employment struggles or relationship woes can entrap me in worry or distress.

That's when I seek the consolation of my heavenly mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Who better to understand and intercede for mothers and their children?

From the prophecy of Simeon ("And you, yourself, a sword will pierce" — *Luke 2:35*) to assisting at the burial of Christ, Our Lady of Sorrows led a most blessed but a most sorrowful life on Earth.

Now Queen of Heaven, she provides strength and comfort to her children (and their children), as they walk the path that leads to her Son.

Susan Moses

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Views from the Pews

No slowing down during the summer in North Texas. The *NTC* found some young men at play, a new place to pray, and a chance to say congratulations to the correspondents and photographers who share the Good News in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Quo Vadis. The annual vocation discernment retreat attracted about 70 high school boys to Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House on the shore of Lake Lewisville for talks with seminarians and priests, Mass and Adoration, and games and sports.

Adore More. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller opened the St. Zachary Oratory on campus as a dedicated space for Eucharistic Adoration. The oratory accommodates around 30 people and features beautiful stained-glass windows and other art.

Honored. At the 2025 Catholic Media Conference, Director of Creative Services Juan Guajardo was awarded the Cardinal John P. Foley Award for “demonstrated excellence in Catholic storytelling.” He was also named videographer/video producer of the year, and the *North Texas Catholic* received a second-place finish for diocesan magazine of the year.

THERE'S
MORE



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NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Christina Benavides



Respect Life Day of Reflection

FORT WORTH — The Supreme Court’s 2022 ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade* engendered celebration among Catholics and pro-life advocates but also gave rise to unexpected consequences, Diocese of Fort Worth Respect Life Coordinator Terri Schauf said.

“It’s been challenging for people in pro-life ministry because, after *Roe*, many volunteers decided we won, we’re done, and stepped aside.”

Far from it, Schauf said, given that abortion remains legal in several states and acceptable in the minds of many.

Schauf praised volunteers from throughout the diocese for their continued efforts during an Aug. 19 Respect Life Day of Reflection at the Catholic Center.

Diocese Director of Evangelization and Catechesis Jason Whitehead elaborated on the challenges pro-life groups now face.

“The repeal of *Roe* led somewhat to a crisis of identity for Respect Life

ministries,” Whitehead said.

Through crises come opportunities, Whitehead added, in this case opportunities for ministry leaders and volunteers of the Church to broaden efforts to catechize and evangelize.

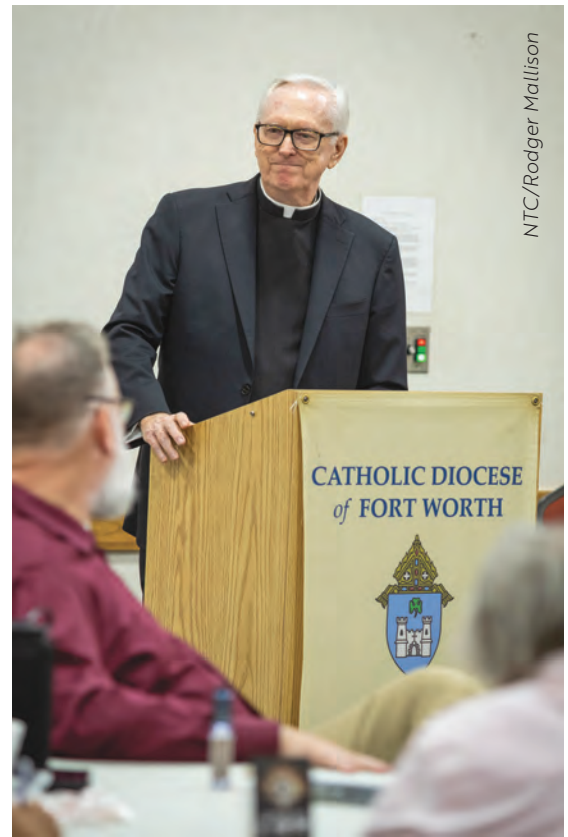
Monsignor E. James Hart meanwhile stressed the moral and theological need to continue to oppose abortion and contraceptives.

“The killing of innocent children under any circumstances is always evil,” Msgr. Hart said.

Schauf dubbed the event, which reached maximum capacity, encouraging.

“Today felt like a renewed call to action,” St. Catherine of Siena parishioner Michele Wiktorski said of the event. “A reminder that we still have to fight the good fight to eradicate abortion. A renewed realization that *Roe* was a victory, but it didn’t end abortion.”

— Matthew Smith



NTC/Rodger Mallison

Monsignor E. James Hart at the Respect Life event Aug. 19.

New building at St. Jude



Father Daniel Kelley blesses the parish hall, which honors church’s heritage



Father Daniel Kelley blesses St. James Center. (NTC/Matthew Redden)

MANSFIELD — Parishioners, clergy, and staff gathered at St. Jude Parish on Aug. 15 to celebrate two special occasions.

One was the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The second was the dedication of the new St. James Center, a ceremony that marked the culmination of years of hard work and something that was deeply personal for many at the Mansfield church.

More than 300 people were welcomed by Father Daniel Kelley, who presided over the dedication.

“If I’ve ever been out to bless your house, this is going to be similar,” Fr. Kelley said.

The St. Jude pastor then began the task of sprinkling

holy water around the perimeter of the new facility, as people, many of them strangers, introduced themselves to others at their tables and got to know one another.

St. Jude Business Manager Julie Cosby said this is exactly what the new structure’s intended purpose was designed to accomplish.

“People have waited for this to happen for a while,” Cosby said. “[Previously,] we had to go across the street to have food after Mass, and a lot of people didn’t want to do that. This allows us to walk straight from Mass into this new parish center, and it will be so helpful for parishioners to have fellowship and get to know each other.”

— John English

Jubilee of hope in Rome



Bishop Michael Olson meets Pope Leo XIV on the diocesan pilgrimage to Rome. (courtesy/Vatican Media - Produzione Fotografica)

JUBILEE RECAP



Eighty pilgrims from the Diocese of Fort Worth, including Bishop Michael Olson, went on a pilgrimage this summer to Rome and Assisi during the 2025 Jubilee Year.

Read correspondent Jenara Kocks Burgess' reflections on the pilgrimage to Italy by scanning the QR code or going to NorthTexasCatholic.org/local-news.

Jubilee of hope, close to home

Pilgrims visit Sacred Heart in Comanche in large and small numbers

COMANCHE — Some arrive in groups of 200, others come by themselves, and Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche welcomes them all.

Since Bishop Michael Olson designated the parish a pilgrimage site for Jubilee Year 2025, many groups have visited, explained Sacred Heart's Director of Religious Education Martina Sierra.

Large pilgrimages often begin with a Rosary walk around the grounds of the church, followed by time for confession and Eucharistic Adoration. A Mass and a meal, provided by Sacred Heart parishioners, conclude the pilgrimage.

To accommodate individual pilgrims, the parish has arranged for the church to be open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Father Matthew Sanka, pastor, has added a weekly Wednesday morning Mass during the Jubilee Year.

In addition to Sacred Heart, Bishop Olson



Bishop Olson designated Sacred Heart Parish in Comanche a Jubilee pilgrimage site.

NTC/Juan Cuajardo

decreed four other pilgrimage sites in the Diocese of Fort Worth:

- St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth
- Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in Wichita Falls

- St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound
 - Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth
- The Jubilee Year closes December 28, 2025.

Knights support Deaf Ministry, seminarians

ARLINGTON — Themes of gratitude, service, and taking initiative were constants during the 30th annual Priest and Religious Appreciation Dinner hosted by the Diocese of Fort Worth Knights of Columbus on July 28 at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Arlington.

More than 400 people were in attendance for the milestone program. It featured guest speakers Chris Lewis, president of the American Wheelchair Mission and son of the late comedian Jerry Lewis; Ron Alonzo, state deputy of the Knights; and a performance by the diocesan Deaf Ministry.

Priests, sisters, deacons, and seminarians were seated at tables sponsored by various Knights councils, while the room included the spiritual leader of the diocese, Bishop Michael Olson. The Knights presented him with a check for \$66,830, in funds tabbed for Deaf Ministry.

The presentation was the finale during a program in which \$4,500 was awarded to an emergency fund

for seminarians via the Pennies for Seminarians campaign by the Knights. There also was a recap of the wheelchair funding drives facilitated by priests in the diocese.

“At the heart of all of this is generosity,” Bishop Olson remarked. “And generosity can only be born of gratitude. And

we live at a time right now in the United States of America which very much needs us to be the Church, not just simply a partisan organization, but the Church that Christ founded, the Church who is meant to bring God’s love to all people.”

— Mary Rampellini



Bishop Michael Olson, Father Jonathan Wallis, Knights of Columbus State Deputy Ron Alonzo, Craig Modrzyński, and Joshua Gomez. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Teachers of souls

More than 1,200 school faculty and staff attend diocesan Catholic School Convocation



Sister Hoa Phung, LHC, a teacher at St. Maria Goretti Catholic School.

KELLER — On the Memorial of St. John Vianney, more than 1,200 administrators, educators, and others associated with the 17 Catholic schools in the diocese gathered on Aug. 4 for the annual teacher convocation Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller.

During his homily, Bishop Michael Olson reflected on the Gospel story about the loaves and fishes, noting the disciples’ emphasis on what they were lacking. “In Catholic education, we can hear the world tell us that we do not have enough — not enough money, not enough resources, not enough teachers, not enough patience — to nourish all the people in our schools,” he said.

Despite our limited resources, “the Lord shows us that it is more than

sufficient when we turn to Him and accept His invitation to be part of His solution,” Bishop Olson said. “Even if it is only a little, it is always more than sufficient ... so that we might impart and distribute it to His children whom He has directed us to educate and to form in accord with His Gospel, His cross, and resurrection.”

Lindsay Karant, diocesan school nurse consultant, appreciated the bishop’s reminder if we trust God with the little we have, He will multiply our efforts to the glory of His Kingdom. She said, “If I can interact with those around me with peace and joy, I can be the shining example of Christ’s love to our students, staff, and the communities we serve.”

— Jennifer Johnson

Ronald Clark, Teacher of the Year

FORT WORTH — For the fourth consecutive year, Cassata Catholic High School has an educator selected as one of *Fort Worth Magazine's* Teachers of the Year.

Ronald Clark has made quite the impact during his 18-year tenure at Cassata, and former principal Dr. Maggie Harrison said that perhaps the quality that sets the math teacher apart the most is his patience.

“Mr. Clark is passionate about math and passionate about teaching students,” Harrison said. “He is very patient and very engaged. When you visit his class, he is always working with a student. He is always trying to find new ways to explain things to help them.”

Clark, who believes that school should be more than just a place to acquire knowledge, said it was “overwhelming” to be nominated for such an honor, and said from his perspective, he is just doing his job.

“Firstly, the classroom must be a comfortable place in which to learn,” Clark said. “I couldn’t imagine the students herding through my classroom without us getting to know something about one another. It’s important to foster a sense of community within the classroom. It’s okay if our conversations are not always about math.

“A few jokes or an anecdote here or there fosters a feeling of community. To be sure, we are all on an academic mission, but that doesn’t negate enjoying the time

we spend together fulfilling the mission.”

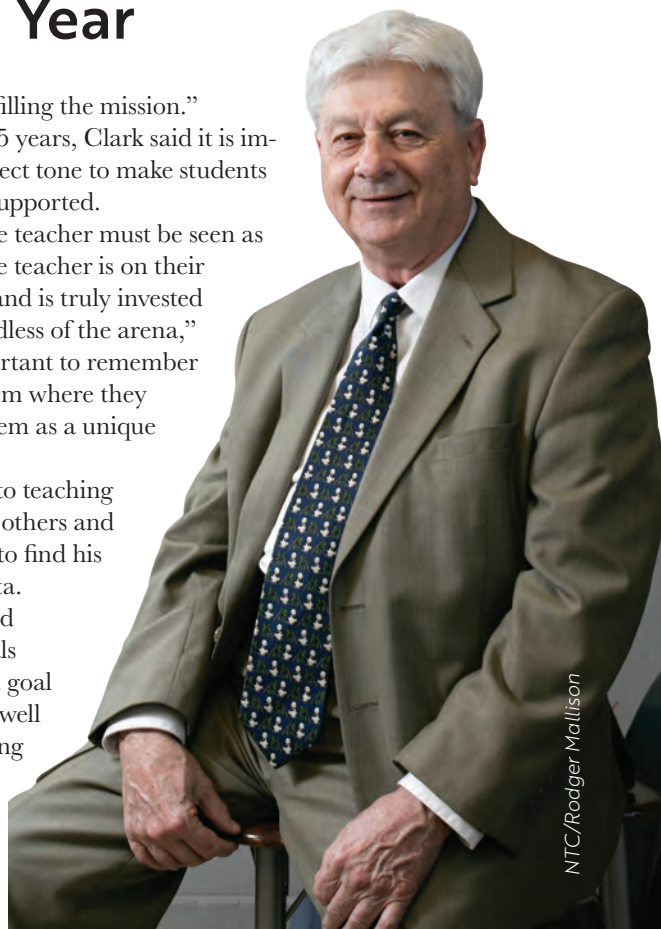
An educator for 25 years, Clark said it is important to set the correct tone to make students feel encouraged and supported.

“I truly believe the teacher must be seen as approachable; that the teacher is on their side, has their backs, and is truly invested in their success, regardless of the arena,” Clark said. “It is important to remember that we must meet them where they are and truly value them as a unique individual.”

Clark was drawn to teaching out of a desire to help others and said he was fortunate to find his “dream job” at Cassata.

“I find myself amid like-minded individuals embracing a common goal — all parties working well together and supporting one another in our mission,” he said.

— John English



NTC/Rodger Mattison



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Sister Ana of the Hijas del Espíritu Santo leads a session during a discernment retreat for about 30 young women, hosted by the Office of Hispanic Ministry on Aug. 9.

OBITUARY

JOHN J. HERNANDEZ

The list of lifelong All Saints parishioner John J. Hernandez’ accomplishments and contributions to the Church, family, Fort Worth, and beyond runs long, illustrating a life well lived in many facets.

A pioneering Fort Worth businessman and lifelong advocate for Catholic education, community service, and Hispanic advancement, Hernandez passed away July 30 at the age of 94.



John J. Hernandez

In addition to founding John Sons Press, Hernandez was an inaugural member of All Saints Parish Advisory Council and a long-time member of the Diocesan Finance Council.

He and his wife of 67 years, Jeanette, helped create the Father Jasso Tuition Assistance Program at All Saints Catholic School to make Catholic education possible for many.

He also served on many civic and nonprofit boards.



Read the full obituary at NorthTexasCatholic.org.

CLERGY ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

PRIEST ASSIGNMENTS

REV. JOSE FRANCIS, TOR

Previously Pastoral Administrator, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. John Paul II Parish in Denton, effective Aug. 1.

REV. AUSTIN HOODENPYLE

Previously Pastoral Administrator, has been appointed **Pastor** of Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster, effective Aug. 1.

REV. ED HOPKINS

Previously Pastoral Administrator, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville, effective Aug. 1.

REV. BRANDON LeCLAIR

Previously Pastoral Administrator, has been appointed **Pastor** of St. Frances Cabrini Parish in Granbury and St. Rose of Lima Parish in Glen Rose, effective Aug. 1.

REV. JUAN PÉREZ MONTROYA, OFM CAP

Newly ordained, has been appointed **Parochial Vicar** of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fort Worth, effective June 2.

REV. GERARD QUIRKE, FSSP

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. Benedict Parish in Fort Worth, has been **reassigned** by his order, effective June 30.

DEACON ASSIGNMENTS

DEACON ALFRED CAMARILLO

From Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Wichita Falls, has been appointed to Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Wichita Falls, effective June 9.

DEACON KEN COFFEY

Newly ordained, has been appointed to St. Michael Parish in Bedford, effective Aug. 9.

DEACON ALAN FRANKLIN

Newly ordained, has been appointed to St. Peter the Apostle Parish in White Settlement, effective Aug. 9.

DEACON WILFRIED LAMPKA

Newly ordained, has been appointed to Holy Redeemer Parish in Aledo, effective Aug. 9.

DEACON JOSÉ MATEO

Newly ordained, has been appointed to St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Grapevine, effective Aug. 9.

DEACON THANG NGUYEN

Newly ordained, has been appointed to St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, effective Aug. 9.

DEACON MARTIN ROBINSON

New to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed to Sacred Heart Parish in Muenster, effective June 9.

DEACON DAVY TOLENTINO

From Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Wichita Falls, has been appointed to St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett, Christ the King Parish in Iowa Park, and St. Paul Parish in Electra, effective June 9.

DEACON HOANG TRINH

Newly ordained, has been appointed to St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, effective Aug. 9.

DEACON MICHAEL WALDON

Newly ordained, has been appointed to St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Roanoke, effective Aug. 9.



First Day of School

At left, kindergartener Rowan Threadgill enjoys the first day of school at St. Mary Catholic School in Gainesville. (NTC/Thomas Otto)

At right, Lenox Velazquez begins kindergarten as the line leader at All Saints Catholic School in Fort Worth. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

More first-day photos can be found at North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com/First-Day-of-School-2025.





Laura Carrion, financial wellness navigator, counsels a client at the new Denton office of Catholic Charities Fort Worth. (NTC/Thomas Otto)

To Denton and beyond

By Mary Lou Seewoester

In March, Catholic Charities Fort Worth opened the door to expanding services in rural communities when it launched a satellite office in Denton.

Laura Sotelo, head of CCFW's Regional Development and Business Operations, stressed that CCFW serves not only Fort Worth, but the entire diocese of Fort Worth.

"We're called to serve all our brothers and sisters throughout the [diocese's] 28 counties. This is another step in that direction," she said.

"We looked at the need within Denton," Sotelo continued. "They have a higher poverty rate than the state average. Then we looked at the LIFT project ... because it will guide us as we move forward in serving rural communities more effectively."

CCFW in Denton currently offers two programs, LIFT and Education Navigation. LIFT is a 6-to-12-month financial coaching model that incorporates employment and education opportunities as well as emotional resiliency coaching, explained Cindy Casey, head of CCFW

Client Services. LIFT is also the agency's third randomized control trial with the University of Notre Dame's Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities, she added.

With 1,352 participants recruited over the next four years, the trial will answer the question: Can we provide our unique model of holistic case management services virtually with the same engagement and efficacy as in-person services?

To that end, half of the participants will receive in-person services and half will experience virtual case management. CCFW's Fort Worth, Wichita Falls, and Arlington locations also serve LIFT clients.

Sotelo explained that if the research proves that virtual services achieve the same results as in-person services, it will open the door to reaching clients across the entire diocese, especially in rural areas.

"The research from the LIFT project will help inform how we're able to serve these remote communities more effectively," she said.

The Denton office currently serves 12 LIFT clients, six in person and six virtually. The in-person LIFT navigator

will see clients in Denton and Cooke Counties, part of Wise County, and parts of Lewisville. A Fort Worth navigator serves virtual LIFT clients.

The other CCFW program in Denton, Education Navigation, combines strategic financial assistance with long-term coaching and mentoring to support students academically, financially, and emotionally so they can overcome obstacles to completing college.

Education Navigation serves students at 11 campuses across the diocese. In Denton, the program will serve about 30 students at University of North Texas and Texas Woman's University and another 15 to 20 students at North Central Texas College in Corinth, Sotelo said.

"As we build these opportunities to serve Denton and outlying communities, it's the fulfillment of our Catholic call to serve," Sotelo said. "It's another step in the direction of [CCFW] being the service arm of the Church in the diocese." 🇹🇽

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



Seven permanent deacons were ordained by Bishop Michael Olson during Mass on Aug. 8 at St. Mark Parish in Argyle. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



CHOSEN FOR A PURPOSE

Seven men ordained as ministers of the Word, ministers of the altar, and ministers of charity

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

The first seven men ordained in the early Church as deacons were chosen for their faith, wisdom, and dedication to the Christian community.

Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch were ordained by the Apostles (*Acts 6:1-7*) for the special vocation of assisting widows and the poor.

Two millennia later, seven men in the Diocese of Fort Worth who embody the same qualities of prayerfulness, compassion, and willingness to serve have followed in their footsteps as permanent deacons.

Kendall Robert Coffey, Weldon Alan Franklin, Wilfried Axel Lampka, José Rafael Mateo, Peter Thang Cao Nguyen, Hilario Hoang Huy Trinh, and Michael Hugh Waldon received the sacrament of holy orders from Bishop Michael Olson

during an ordination Mass on Aug. 8 in St. Mark Church. Celebrated on the Memorial of St. Dominic, founder of the Dominican Order of Preachers, the evening liturgy in Argyle brought together more than 1,000 people from across the diocese.

Addressing the congregation, the bishop described St. Dominic as a mendicant priest who lived a life of poverty as he preached the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Meet the 2025 Class of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Fort Worth

“He is certainly an example and friend for our new deacons who today are ordained as ministers of the Word, ministers of the altar, and ministers of charity,” he said in his homily.

Like the first seven deacons named in the *Acts of the Apostles*, the diocesan candidates for ordination will use their new ministry to spread Christ’s Word and sacraments.

Advising the soon-to-be ordained men, the bishop added, “My brothers, welcome the Word, worship the Word, proclaim the Word, and witness to the Word with deeds of justice, mercy, and charity. This is how we follow Christ, lose our life with Him, and preserve it for eternity.”

INVOKING THE HOLY SPIRIT

The sacred ordination rite began with each candidate stepping forward as his name was called, signifying a willingness to undertake the responsibilities of the diaconate and obedience to the bishop and his successors.

Demonstrating a total surrender to God, the men then lay prostrate on the floor of the sanctuary as worshippers chanted the Litany of the Saints.

Rising from prayer, they approached the altar individually. With a gesture passed down from the Apostles, Bishop Olson imposed hands on the head of each ordinand to confer the power of the Holy Spirit. A prayer of ordination followed.

The newly ordained deacons were then vested with a stole and dalmatic, symbols of their office within the Church.

Approaching the bishop again, they received the book of the Gospels with the words: “Believe what you read. Teach what you believe. Practice what you teach.”

A LIFE OF PRAYER, SERVICE

Ordination was the culmination of five years of theological, pastoral, and spiritual formation for the men

who will now assist the priest at the altar, proclaim the Gospel, preach, conduct prayer services, baptize, witness marriages, bring viaticum to the dying, and officiate at funerals and burials. Unlike a transitional deacon who is preparing for eventual ordination to the priesthood, a permanent deacon remains in the same ministry for life.

One of the biggest challenges facing candidate Hoang Trinh during formation was the return to intense studying after being out of school for so long.

“The Blessed Mother helped me go through all this,” said the Lockheed engineer. “She helped me have a life of prayer. I pray constantly. When I open my eyes in the morning, I thank God for a new day and want to glorify Him in everything I do.”

GROWING DIVERSITY

The 2025 class of deacon candidates reflects the growing diversity of the diocese, according to Deacon Rodney Asebedo, director of diaconal formation. One man was born in Germany and another in Puerto Rico. Two came to the U.S. from Vietnam and three speak Spanish fluently.

“The Church is blessed by that. They also have a servant’s heart to serve the Lord and those on the margins of society,” he pointed out. “As candidates, these men have been ministering reverently in prisons, hospitals, and soup kitchens. Without question, they are willing to serve the invisible.”

Biographies of the men are “telling,” and demonstrate how personal life experiences will impact their new ministry, the formation director observed.

When Thang Nguyen’s 21-year-old son, Michael, was killed in a car

Continued on Page 14



ASSIGNED TO: St. Peter the Apostle, White Settlement



ASSIGNED TO: St. Joseph, Arlington



ASSIGNED TO: St. Francis of Assisi, Grapevine



ASSIGNED TO: St. Teresa of Calcutta, Roanoke



Deacon Wilfried Lampka, Deacon Thang Nguyen, and Deacon Ken Coffey after their ordination Mass on Aug. 8 at St. Mark Parish in Argyle. (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)

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accident two months before his December 2021 college graduation, the Vietnamese Martyrs parishioner remembers how people were there to “stand by me and hold me up” at the worst moment of his life. That’s why he finds hospital ministry, and reaching out to grieving families, so rewarding.

“It’s not about what you can do for them. It’s just being present with them,” Nguyen explained. “That’s the most important thing.”

The software engineer believes the death of his son will make him a better deacon.

“I became more holy, attended more daily Masses and have a family Rosary every night,” he added, describing the spiritual practices that led to acceptance and healing. “Michael would be very proud.”

WHEN GOD CALLS ...

Raised a Baptist in West Texas, Alan Franklin wasn’t practicing any religion when his wife Sara attended a Youth 2000 retreat. A cradle Catholic, she married outside her faith but returned to the Church after moving to Weatherford and joining St. Stephen Parish.

Wanting to validate her marriage, the retreat chaperone asked a priest at the retreat for advice.

“He told me to pray to the Divine Mercy Chaplet for my husband for 30 days

and I did,” recalled the mother of three, who asked the parish’s youth director and her sister to join the novena.

His wife’s heartfelt prayers “hit me like a ton of bricks,” Franklin admitted.

He started going to Mass and taking RCIA (now OCIA) classes. Learning about the faith kindled a desire to serve the Church as a deacon.

“They didn’t pray me into the Church. They prayed me through the doors and up to the altar,” the convert quipped. “When God calls, He continues to call. And yes, I’m glad He didn’t stop pursuing me.”

READY TO SERVE

While all Christians are called to serve others, deacons exemplify Christ the servant. They are the hands and feet of the Church and are often the first to notice when a family is hurting or in need. As ordained members of clergy who often have other professions, deacons are called to be attentive, compassionate, and ready to offer support.

José Mateo, Michael Waldon, and Wilfried Lampka said the final moments before ordination felt surreal after years of study and prayer.

“We’re anxious to get going and serve the Lord,” Lampka said. “It’s what we’ve been formed to do.”

With the addition of the newly ordained, the diocese now has 110 permanent deacons. 🇺🇸



ASSIGNED TO: Holy Redeemer, Aledo



ASSIGNED TO: St. Maria Goretti, Arlington



ASSIGNED TO: St. Michael, Bedford

SCAN FOR MORE PHOTOS:



Educated to lead with faith

Former Nolan Catholic students reflect on how Catholic education prepared them for public service to the nation, state, and city

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

E*sto Dux*, Latin for “Be a Leader,” is the motto that has guided students since Nolan Catholic High School opened in 1961. Through its curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and specialized programs, the faith-based institution not only prepares its graduates for professional success but also helps them develop the communication, problem-solving, and team-building skills needed to assume leadership roles in society.

Nolan Catholic boasts an impressive list of alumni whose outstanding achievements in public service exemplify “Be a Leader.”

One of them is Commander Chris Meek, the incoming executive officer of the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron known as the Blue Angels.

The 2002 Nolan graduate credits his education in Catholic schools for his ability to successfully navigate the rigors of the U.S. Naval Academy and, later, military assignments.

“I’ve been in uniforms since I can remember,” quipped Meek, who graduated from St. John the Apostle Catholic School in North Richland Hills before attending Nolan. “I learned a lot about discipline at an early age. My days at St. John’s and Nolan were pretty regimented.”

While visiting the Naval Academy before the start of his senior year, the structured schedule of the midshipmen



Commander Chris Meek poses with his family at Nolan Catholic High School. (courtesy/Alex Mechalske)

seemed like familiar territory.

“I loved it,” enthused Meek, who made the Naval Academy his top college choice. “There was the continuation of challenging academics I was receiving at Nolan, and I loved the camaraderie I saw among the brigade of midshipmen. It was very much like my experience at Nolan.”

Commissioned in 2007 after receiving a Bachelor of Science in systems engineering from the Naval Academy, he earned his Wings of Gold as a naval flight officer in 2008. In that position, he



Commander Chris Meek (courtesy/U.S. Navy/CPO Conor Minto)

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works the radar, navigation, and weapon systems while the pilot focuses on flying the aircraft.

Over the years, the North Richland Hills native served both on the Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier and the amphibious assault ship Iwo Jima, and supported combat operations from the air in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia.

For the past decade, Meek, his wife Bridget, and their four children have lived in Virginia Beach where he is currently assigned to the Joint Staff J7 handling combatant command-level training exercises.

During a recent trip to Fort Worth to spend time with extended family, the Nolan graduate visited his alma mater and was impressed with recent improvements made to the campus. The new Integrated Design, Engineering, and Arts building and a natatorium featuring a 10-lane, 75-foot swimming pool and spectator area left the former Viking cross country runner awestruck.

“It’s wonderful to see how the school continues to invest in the education of its students and empowers them to be leaders through accountability and the honor code,” the naval officer added. “I know it helped shape me to be a leader.”

Meek, whose dedication to faith, academics, and willingness to serve the community, was recognized with the Chaminade Award at Nolan graduation, said he appreciates the values instilled during his time in Catholic schools. His eldest child, McKinley, will begin her freshman year at a Catholic high school in Virginia Beach this fall.

“I feel a debt of gratitude to all the educators who spent time with us as students,” he said. “It’s important to keep Catholic education strong.”

Meek will assume his role with the Blue Angels during an air show in Pensacola, Fla., on Nov. 8.

A PRO-LIFE CHAMPION

If you ask Stephanie Klick what shaped her views on protecting the unborn, caring for the disabled, and



helping vulnerable families, she immediately credits her years in Catholic school. As a member of the Texas House of Representatives for 12 years (2013–2025), the nurse turned politician was instrumental in achieving significant legislative pro-life victories during her tenure.

“*Roe v. Wade* was in the background when I was in Catholic school, and I learned at an early age that involved unborn children,” said Klick, who graduated from St. John the Apostle Catholic School and attended Nolan Catholic for ninth and 10th grade. “There was also a lot of discussion about euthanasia so that laid the moral foundation for my work in the pro-life movement.”

Named the Pro-Life Champion of the 88th Legislature by Texas Right to Life in 2023, the North Richland Hills native was applauded for banning partial birth abortions; co-authoring the landmark pro-life heartbeat bill; authoring a bill to ban mail-order chemical abortions; and leading the effort to ensure only girls can participate in girls’ sports.

Focused on issues that spark tremendous controversy, the former legislator

never shied away from expressing her opinion.

“I often had to defend my position, but my background in Catholic schools helped me to do that,” Klick asserted. “It wasn’t difficult because I held those beliefs from a very early age.”

After her sophomore year at Nolan, the former legislator transferred to another high school that required fewer credits to graduate.

“I already knew what I wanted to do in college, and I was looking out for myself and my future,” she explained.

But her time in the Catholic high school continued to benefit her in a tangible way. When Klick was placed in the foster care system, a Nolan teacher who learned of her plight offered the teenager a home.

“Peggy Norman and her husband were pretty much my family until she died in 2008,” Klick said, remembering the modern language teacher. “I was blessed with a foster home situation not every child had. They were my cheerleaders throughout life.”

Volunteering as a candy striper at

◀ Stephanie Klick, former Texas State Representative, at her Fort Worth home. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Glenview (now North Hills) Hospital and at a camp for kids with Down syndrome inspired Klick to earn a degree in nursing from Texas Christian University in 1981. She launched her political career in 2012 after working in a hospital and group homes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Health care is a very regulated industry and there were a lot of people making decisions who had no background in it,” she asserted. “Being a nurse helped me explain the medical part of it.”

As chairman of the Public Health Committee, she authored House Bill 3162 which significantly improved protections for vulnerable patients in Texas hospitals who are at risk of having their life-sustaining treatment withdrawn against their will. Under the 1999 Texas Advance Directives Act, hospitals could stop life-sustaining care for patients after 10 days if an ethics committee and physician decided to end treatment.

H.B. 3162 increased this period to 25 days along with other changes.

Now retired from active politics, the former representative of Texas House District 91 is an unpaid consultant helping other lawmakers pass pro-life legislation.

“I had some struggles early in life with a mother who had mental health conditions,” she admitted. “Who I am today is very much based on my Catholic upbringing.”

CIVIC SERVICE

Whether it was volunteering at the parish fish fry or becoming president of the neighborhood association, Carlos Flores always believed in giving back to the community. So when he was asked to run for the District 2 seat on the Fort Worth City Council, the aerospace engineer didn't hesitate to consider the move.

Elected in 2017, Councilman Flores represents an area that includes the historically Hispanic Northside neighborhood, the Fort Worth Stockyards, and Meacham International Airport.

“I serve in a nonpartisan fashion using critical thinking and objectivity to look at the issues and see how they affect people,”

said the University of Texas at Arlington and 1986 Nolan Catholic graduate. “I try to arrive at a decision that will bring the most benefit to the most people.”

Core principles are needed to make those types of judgments.

“My Catholic education grounded me on a good moral footing,” explained Flores, an All Saints parishioner. “A moral center governs us as persons first, but it also affects how we arrive at decisions.”

Critical thinking is another skill the councilman honed in the Catholic school classroom. Some people think a Catholic education is nothing more than religious indoctrination.

“That's absolutely false,” Flores insisted. “At Nolan we had spirited debates about theology, religious dogma, and even discussed other faiths — our differences and similarities. It was an open discussion, and I appreciated that.”

The back-and-forth dialogue encouraged critical thinking.

“Not just in religion but other facets of life,” he continued.

The third-generation Fort Worth native relies on tools learned during his formative years to help govern the city. Recently elected mayor pro tem, Flores cites improved infrastructure at Meacham Airport, the preservation and development of the Stockyards, and repairs and improvements to the underserved Northside area as notable accomplishments.

“We took a half-cent of our sales revenue and reinvested it in neighborhoods that may have gotten overlooked over



Councilman Carlos Flores in front of City Hall in Fort Worth. (courtesy/Rachel DeLira)

time,” he said, explaining how upgraded streets, lights, and sidewalks bring stability to an area. “Our neighborhoods should be vital, supported, and maintained.”

Supplemented by Community Development Block Grants, funds also renovated the Northside Community Center and the branch library, and made public safety additions like more police cameras and enhanced lighting.

With over a million residents, Fort Worth is unofficially the 10th largest city in the country, and the Stockyards welcome more visitors annually than the Eiffel Tower. Continued growth requires effective leadership.

The council member believes Nolan Catholic, a college preparatory school, set him up not only for the next step in his education but also life.

“I'm glad my parents made the sacrifice to put us all through Nolan. It's a gift,” said Flores, who has four siblings. “I want to give back some of what I received to my city and community. That's what really drives me.” 🇹🇽



STRIVING FORWARD

Three Diocese of Fort Worth Catholic Schools educators tackle new roles, opportunities, and challenges

By Matthew Smith

In an effort to strategically realign educational departments within Diocese of Fort Worth schools, Bishop Michael Olson recently announced several position changes.

The changes come, Bishop Olson explained, in response to robust North Texas population growth and the upcoming launch of the Texas Education Savings Account, or ESA, initiative. ESAs, a state-funded school choice

program, provide funding for Texas students wishing to attend private or home-based schools rather than public schools. Diocesan officials predict the program will increase Catholic education accessibility for families previously unable to afford it.

Among other changes announced by Bishop Olson, Frank Perez, former associate superintendent, now moves up to superintendent. Dr. Maggie Harrison,

former Cassata Catholic High School president, has been appointed assistant superintendent. Ignacio Aguilera, who formerly held teaching and administrative positions in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, will now serve as the diocese's associate superintendent.

Bishop Olson voiced support and congratulations to all three in their new roles.

“These changes reflect the diocese’s

◀ (L-R) Ignacio Aguilera, associate superintendent; Frank Perez, superintendent; and Dr. Maggie Harrison, assistant superintendent, pose for a photo in the hallways of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

deep commitment to strengthening its schools; expanding access to high-quality, Christ-centered education; and preparing students for lives of purpose, virtue, and leadership,” Bishop Olson said.

STRONG ACADEMICS, STRONG FAITH

Superintendent Frank Perez credits his educational career path to his wife.

“When we became engaged, she asked if I ever thought about becoming a teacher,” Perez said. “I told her not really. I wasn’t that crazy about school when I was in school.”

Perez joked that his interest grew when his wife, also an educator, pointed out that they would have summers off together.

“More importantly though, she pointed out that I could be like the teacher I never had,” Perez said. “Or be like the teacher I did like, whose class I really enjoyed and made a difference. I’d never thought of it that way.”

Perez first taught pre-K in public school then taught elementary through high school grades before moving into administration.

Perez, when asked about the big-picture vision of his new role as superintendent, stressed strong academics, navigating education in the age of AI and emerging technology, and the importance of staying competitive with other area schools.

“What we lean on, though, is one thing nobody else can offer, which is being unapologetically and faithfully Catholic,” Perez added. “Strong academics is a nonnegotiable, but strong faith, too.”

Perez emphasized, too, the importance of preparing for the ESA program — both for existing and possible new students to come — as well as the urgency of getting out word about the opportunities

ESAs make possible.

“We have that balance of having to provide services for existing families as well as potentially new families coming in,” Perez said. “That’s what we’re called to do as a Church, and we’re an extension of that.”

Perez encouraged families thinking of applying for an ESA to begin researching and visiting diocesan schools now.

Outside of work, Perez spoke of his enjoyment of the outdoors and love of country, rock, soul, and other music genres.

PRESERVE THE CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Although she helped tutor fellow students during her school days in Toronto, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Maggie Harrison said she, too, never envisioned a career in education early on.

“But the Lord gently led me toward a life of service through teaching and mentoring,” Harrison said. “What started as a love for learning became a vocation rooted in giving and faith.”

Harrison discussed her goals for her new position.

“I feel a deep responsibility to help shape a future where our Catholic schools are not only strong in academics but also places where faith is lived and nurtured,” Harrison said. “Where every student has the opportunity to encounter Christ, grow in their God-given gifts, and be formed as a light for others.”

Harrison characterizes challenges as gifts from God.

“While there are real obstacles ahead, I choose to focus on the many blessings already present in our diocesan schools,” Harrison said. “Passionate educators, faithful families, and students eager to grow in both knowledge and virtue.”

Harrison expressed excitement over the ESA program but also the importance

of maintaining sustainability, staffing needs, and preservation of a strong Catholic identity.

“If implemented thoughtfully, [ESAs] could make Catholic education more accessible to families who have long hoped for it,” Harrison said. “Allowing us to welcome even more students into our Christ-centered communities.”

Harrison said she enjoys reading and studying languages in her free time.

PASSION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Associate Superintendent Ignacio Aguilera said a “deep desire” to help form young people inspired his passion for Catholic education.

“Not just academically, but spiritually and morally,” the El Paso native said. “Over the years, I’ve served as a catechist, teacher, assistant principal, principal, and now in diocesan leadership. “Each role has strengthened my belief in the transformative power of our Catholic schools.”

Aguilera said he strives to make diocesan schools the best in every way.

“My primary goal is to support our principals, teachers, and families so that each of our schools can thrive as vibrant communities of faith, academic excellence, and virtue,” Aguilera said. “I want to help strengthen our shared mission of forming disciples who are equipped to live joyfully and faithfully in the world.”

Overcoming challenges requires both faith in God, and teamwork, Aguilera said.

“It’s essential that we continue to build strong relationships with our pastors, parents, and parish communities,” Aguilera said. “Because our schools are not just places of learning; they are vital parts of the Church’s life.”

Aguilera enjoys studying theology and philosophy as well as bicycle riding in his free time. 📍

FAITH

shared and boosted

Annual Diocesan Appeal expands opportunities for local parishes, schools, and ministries

By Jennifer Johnson

Each year, the Diocese of Fort Worth invites the faithful to unite their resources and collectively support ministries, programs, and services beyond their own parish community by participating in the Annual Diocesan Appeal.

The mission is clear: to witness to God's grace in our lives by together sharing the Gospel message of faith, hope, and charity with parishes, schools, and ministries in need.

For last year's campaign, which ended June 30, 2025, Catholics from 92 parishes in 28 counties across North Texas generously responded to Bishop Michael Olson's call to participate.

When the 2025 campaign was complete, the Advancement Foundation, which conducts the Annual Diocesan Appeal, raised \$6,024,945 and achieved two significant milestones: donations totaled \$6 million for the first time and surpassed the 2025 goal by \$1 million.

The generosity of local Catholics allowed the Advancement Foundation to grant funds to each parish and school that applied. Additionally, more than \$1

million from the Appeal helped support security measures including personnel and technology at the schools.

"We were also able to give tuition assistance grants to all 17 [diocesan] schools," said Renée Underwood, CFRE, chief development officer of the Advancement Foundation, the fundraising non profit supporting the Diocese of Fort Worth.

She credited larger donations and a surge in continuous giving as reasons for this year's fruitful results. "We saw lots of increases in our recurring monthly donors that we call our St. Francis Circle, the people that give to the appeal every single month the same way they give to their parish every single week," Underwood said. "Those generous, faithful stewards stepped up."

Rachel Martinez, CFRE, director of annual giving and grants for the Advancement Foundation, noted pastors emphasized the importance of each parishioner's involvement more than the goal of a specific amount of money. "It was more about everybody in the parish participating and supporting the ministries and the other parishes that are in need," she said.

This year, 9,467 households across the

diocese made a gift to support the Appeal and nearly 20 percent of parishes reached their goal. "Everybody's goal was higher, so that's amazing," said Martinez.

HEART FOR SCHOOLS

Kindra Johnston, principal of St. Rita Catholic School in Fort Worth, is delighted to receive a \$35,000 grant for teacher salaries and benefits for the 2025-26 school year.

Having worked there for 13 years, including seven years teaching middle school and three years as a school counselor, she is excited to provide some of her educators a salary boost.

Johnston wanted to improve the salaries of several seasoned teachers who have taught for many years but have not received an increase in compensation. "My goal with this grant was to get them at least at a more competitive salary so that they feel valued," she said. "They are the cornerstone of the school. I want them to feel that appreciation."

According to Johnston, these grants are especially important for inner-city schools who do not receive enough funding from tuition to support their annual budget.



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Sister Catherine Mary Nguyen, OP, school nurse, chats with a student on the first day of school at St. Rita Catholic School in Fort Worth Aug. 13. The Appeal provides school funds for teacher salaries, security, and tuition assistance.

“It opens up that door of opportunity to be able to do things that we may not possibly be able to do without it,” she said. In addition, it allows for other important needs to be met. “While this grant is specifically for teacher salary and benefits, it also [opens resources] in other areas so that I can help [families] with tuition assistance.”

Johnston believes the Annual Diocesan Appeal is a unique chance for parishioners who have a heart for Catholic education but do not have an affiliated school at their parish, to support something that is important to them. “There are parishes not connected to schools that can still actively participate in our students’ faith formation,” she said.

FIRE FOR THE FAITH

In rural parts of North Texas, smaller parishes seeking a share in the Annual



Eighth-graders prepare to exit their classroom at St. Rita Catholic School. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Diocesan Appeal hope to offer the kind of ministries and services that are typically a mainstay at larger suburban parishes.

Olivia Olvera can attest to the spiritually transformative effect these funds can have on forming the next generation of Catholics. She is the family and youth minister for St. Theresa Parish in Olney and St. Mary Parish in Graham, and her salary is funded through one of the annual grants.

“In bigger parishes or those in the city, it is difficult to imagine managing a parish that has no paid staff other than an administrative assistant, working only [through] volunteers who have limited time to take the lead and guide the ministries,” she said. “Rural churches sometimes do not have enough parishioners to support expenses and needs, not being able to

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provide what people need to grow in their faith,” she said.

While Olvera wears many hats for both parishes, including safe environment coordinator, annulment advocate, and translator, her primary mission is to evangelize the youth. Her efforts have led to more participation at youth group meetings, church retreats, and other faith-enriching activities.

Compared to last year, more than double the number of parish teens registered to attend the Steubenville Lone Star High School Conference in Irving. She said these opportunities for youth and teens can be life-changing.

“One girl, who had been away from the Church for a couple of years, came back on fire for the faith. [She gave] her testimony at a Sunday Mass with such passion and enthusiasm that many of the parishioners left with tears that day, having felt what she expressed,” Olvera said.

“This young lady joined the young adult women’s group after graduating high school, became a lay reader, assists in Sunday school, and posts in her social media about the love of God,” she continued.

She recalled another high school student who started regularly attending parish youth events and sharing his love for God. “He speaks about his faith and is trying to get all of his peers to come to youth group,” she said.

Olvera also supports family formation at both churches by providing opportunities for parents to learn about their faith in their own language and become equipped to teach their children.

“Many of our parish families are Spanish-speaking migrants who come from a background of very minimal faith formation,” she said. “If we are not able to provide services in Spanish and help the



Father Bose Jjuvarapu, HGN, delivers the homily at St. Mary of the Assumption in Megargel.

NTC/Iuan Guajardo



Parishioners pray during Mass at St. Mary Church in Graham. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

families in their needs, they are at a loss and disconnect from the faith.”

Three years ago, Olvera made the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults program available for any adult in the parish to attend, whether they sought full initiation into the Church or wanted more instruction. She shared that one mother begrudgingly started attending formation classes several years ago while her child was preparing for confirmation.

“It awakened in [the mother] a need to learn more about her Catholic faith,” Olvera said. “She is enthusiastic to attend and hardly ever misses the class. This is

her third year in the process of formation and she keeps coming.”

Father Eugene Nyong has served as pastor since 2016 and affirmed how vital Olvera’s work is for both parishes.

“It is important to make contact with the youth and also family catechesis programs for parents to bond with their children through faith formation,” he said. “Somebody here to speak with and help them come together shows that they are not alone, but part of a larger body.”

Olvera has witnessed the impact Annual Diocesan Appeal support has on rural parishes for individuals and families

alike. “It is proclaiming the fullness of the Gospel in a place where it was not yet shining,” she said. “Building community completely transforms the livelihood of the Church.”

HOPE FOR VOCATIONS

Father Bose Jujvarapu, HGN, pastor of Sacred Heart in Seymour and St. Mary of the Assumption in Megargel since 2019, recently received a grant for \$15,000 for the latter church.

“St. Mary is a small parish in a very vibrant traditional farming community,” he said. “The reason behind asking for the grant is specifically for the youth and their catechism. Who knows, maybe for some, it will support their faith and [lead to an] increase in vocations, according to their discernment of their call.”

He was delighted when he learned that St. Mary’s grant request was approved.

“I’m so grateful to our bishop and the Advancement Foundation for considering our application and supporting St. Mary Parish,” he said. “It helps our young children in the formation of their faith, and I hope they will understand what God is calling them to be.

“The bishop’s appeal is well received from both parishes in these farming communities,” Fr. Jujvarapu said of his parishes’ response. Sacred Heart surpassed its goal for the 2025 Appeal, and St. Mary of the Assumption came within a few hundred dollars.

The pastor explained his parishioners’ outlook on the Annual Diocesan Appeal, saying, “We are a parish of families. Each one is called to participate in the mission of the Church and share in the ministry.” 🇺🇸

Learn more about the Annual Diocesan Appeal by visiting [AdvancementFoundation.org/annual-diocesan-appeal](https://www.advancementfoundation.org/annual-diocesan-appeal).

Sacramental preparation (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)



Seminarian education (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)



IN ADDITION TO OPERATING GRANTS FOR PARISHES AND SCHOOLS, THE ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL SUPPORTS:

- Tuition assistance
- Youth ministry
- Marriage and family life ministry
- Catholic school learning specialists
- Seminarian education
- Parish fundraising support
- Campus ministries
- Teacher salaries
- Sacramental preparation
- Poverty intervention
- School security
- Stewardship education
- Respect Life ministry
- Retired priest care fund
- #iGiveCatholic campaign
- Correctional ministries
- Diaconate formation
- Evangelization
- Gabriel Project

Retired priests (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)



Campus ministry (NTC/ Ben Torres)



SOLID ROOTS

Campus Catholic Ministry expands in the diocese as student populations grow in faith and in numbers

By Lisa Moore and Susan Moses

When it comes to college campus ministry, the diocese has its eyes on the horizon: serving students now while also focusing on the needs of future generations.

Campus ministry has long been a priority for the diocese under the direction of Bishop Michael Olson, explained Father Jonathan Wallis, vicar general and chaplain of the Texas Christian University Newman Center.

He said, “One of the major priorities of the Annual Diocesan Appeal has been for campus ministry — it’s allowed this growth, and it’s helped provide the personnel and the place for it to happen effectively.”

For TCU and Tarleton State University, this far-sighted perspective means new facilities to accommodate the expanding number of students participating in campus ministry programs.

HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK

While Father Ed Hopkins ministers to his current parishioners and students, he’s also looking forward. The pastoral administrator of St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville and chaplain of Catholic campus ministry at Tarleton said, “It would really be a sin against hope to envision that we are the last group that will

pray here, that we’re the last generation that’s going to worship here.

“We want to have a place for people to do this in 50 years because we have faith that this ministry will grow and continue. We feel and see the Holy Spirit working here,” he continued.

Tarleton’s Catholic campus ministry has grown “four or five times” in size during the past five years, said Nathan Mena, campus minister of Tarleton. An average of 60 students attend daily Mass on Wednesday evening, and around 150 participate in weekend Mass.

This year Fr. Hopkins added a third weekend Mass at St. Brendan, which serves the Stephenville community as well as Tarleton students from its location across the street from the university. He said, “Even adding that third Mass, you may still have 20 or 30 people standing for the Sunday evening Mass” — the most popular time for college students.

Mena added that Bishop Olson has noticed the rate at which Tarleton State University is growing. Mena said, “When I was a student in 2014 compared to now, Tarleton has almost doubled in size. I think Bishop and the diocese together just realized we need to think big.”

Mena and Fr. Hopkins said Bishop Olson has been instrumental in helping the parish kick-start a capital campaign,

estimated at \$18 million. The two-phase plan will more than double the worship space and provide a new parish hall, classrooms, kitchen, offices, and a dedicated space for campus ministry.

Fr. Hopkins said the current facility allows only one meeting or program at a time in the parish. “There’s just not a lot of space. If you’re doing your Bible study, nobody else in the parish” can meet, he described.

A GIFT TO GATHER

The TCU Newman Center begins the 2025-26 academic year in a new location at 2000 W. Berry St.

The property is a permanent site owned by the diocese, instead of the previous leased space. The diocese provided initial funding for the purchase of the building, which is currently being renovated, and a capital campaign has begun.

“As TCU is expanding, we’re also able to expand, and we’re able to help out in the mission of the diocese and be part of TCU’s growth,” Fr. Wallis said.

Like the plans for St. Brendan, the new TCU Newman Center is much larger, with more space for Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and reconciliation; additional rooms for study, work, and recreation; and an outdoor gathering space.

Professor of education Dr. Michelle

Bauml, a regular at TCU Newman Nights, has been faculty adviser to TCU's Catholic student organization since 2015, when they had no facility at all.

"The students know what a gift it is to have a gathering space so close to campus," Bauml said. "Before there was a Newman Center, students would meet on campus in rooms we would reserve every semester, but they didn't have that regular space to pray and socialize as a Catholic community. I've seen the transition from no designated Newman Center to now having this space."

In her first year as TCU campus minister, Catherine Ochoa has observed growth in TCU's campus ministry.

In April, TCU's Newman Center had its largest confirmation class on record, confirming 16 students during the Easter Vigil. Mass attendance has increased significantly also, Ochoa shared.



A view of the TCU Newman Center's new location at 2000 W. Berry St. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

SOULS WHO SEARCH

In addition to TCU and Tarleton, the diocese offers campus ministry at Midwestern State University, University of North Texas, Texas Woman's University, and University of Texas at Arlington.

Victoria Ramon, diocesan director of youth, young adult, and campus ministries, said, "Every single one of our campus ministries is growing and thriving. Participation has steadily increased over the last three years, and the diocese supports the evangelization and catechetical efforts of the campus ministers."

Before Fr. Hopkins was ordained, he served as campus minister at TCU for more than a year. He has observed today's college students are living in "quicksand or a swamp sort of thing," in a world of moral relativism.

He finds students "are looking for something more and something greater than themselves. Ultimately, they're seeking truth, which they will find through Christ. If we're authentic and if we preach the Gospel and the whole Gospel, that appeals to them.

"The Church gives them something to hold onto. They own their own faith; they go to Mass now," Fr. Hopkins said.



Gabriel Gutierrez, a student from Tarleton State University, participates in fellowship at the Campus Ministry Field Day on April 5. (NTC/Annette Mendoza-Smith)

"Instead of walking away when they're bombarded with everything, hopefully we hold them and they continue to put down the roots that they'll have now through life."

The college years are a critical time in the faith development of students as they leave the structure of home life, prepare to

live independently, and take responsibility for their own spiritual growth.

Fr. Wallis said, "The faith is important to them as something that gives them meaning and purpose and forms their identity, so that then they might be a witness to hope — in love and service of Jesus Christ and in this Church in the world." 🇺🇸



NTC/Juan Guajardo

Father Brett Metzler and three diocesan seminarians lead a panel discussion at the 2025 Vocation Awareness Program, sponsored by the Serra Club.

a Catalyst for Vocations

Serra Club promotes vocations to the priesthood and religious life and supports existing vocations

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Rosanne Taylor-Hunt remembers her introduction to the Serra Club with a chuckle.

Inspired to become more involved in the Church after attending a parish retreat, a friend suggested she join the Northeast Fort Worth Serra Club.

The St. Francis of Assisi parishioner scoffed at the idea.

“I told her I don’t hike or bird watch,” she said, recalling how she confused the Serra Club, a ministry devoted to promoting religious vocations, with the national

Sierra Club known for its environmental advocacy. “We still laugh about it now and then. A lot of people make that mistake.”

An active Serra member since 2018, Taylor-Hunt was one of three club presidents installed during the apostolate’s joint meeting this summer. Visiting the diocese for the first time, Dr. Anne Roat, president of the United States Council of Serra International, conducted the ceremony for officers and new members who belong to the Fort Worth, Arlington, and Northeast clubs.

Currently the director of Evangelization, Family Life, and Pastoral

Ministries at her Lafayette, Ind., parish, the Serran administrator praised the work being done in the diocese to foster and affirm vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Dr. Roat told the *North Texas Catholic* she recently asked U.S. clubs to fill out a survey detailing their activities. Not only did Renée Underwood, the Fort Worth Club president, fill out the survey, she added three pages of comments and included newsletters from all three clubs.

VOCATIONS REQUIRE PRAYER

“Looking at what these three clubs do is amazing,” Dr. Roat said, noting the

wide-ranging discernment and awareness programs. “Not all dioceses are doing this. It’s wonderful when you see a diocese doing all these wonderful things and have a bishop who is supporting vocations.”

Because the Serra Clubs in the diocese are so innovative regarding the apostolate’s first two missions — promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life and supporting existing vocations — Dr. Roat spoke to the gathering about a third goal: encouraging personal holiness.

During her talk, she touted the Serra Club’s primary resource, a handbook dedicated to improving each member’s spirituality through prayer, exercises like the Liturgy of the Hours, and other avenues to a Christ-centered life. She also recommended daily Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, retreats, and participating in parish ministries.

Dr. Roat reminded her listeners that a successful vocation ministry requires contemplation.

“Each of us is called to be a saint deeply in love with God and showing that love in service to our neighbor,” she commented. “Inspired by our patron, St. Junipero

Serra, let us continue to move forward on that path to holiness and be the saints God has called us to be.”

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

The only lay organization aggregated to the Vatican for vocation work, Serra International is found in 48 countries and boasts 13,000 members. Started in Seattle by four men in 1935, the organization is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. There are 189 U.S. clubs with 8,000 members, including the 158 Serrans in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Despite a plethora of activities like the Vocation Awareness Weekend, priest/religious appreciation dinners, monthly meetings, and outreach to seminarians, “the Serra Club is one of the best-kept secrets in the Catholic Church,” Underwood explained.

“Almost weekly, I encounter people who tell me they’ve always been Catholic but never heard of us,” explained the Fort Worth Club president who is also chief development officer of the diocesan Advancement Foundation. “It’s important to get more members and lay leaders to commit to this mission so we can accomplish our goals.”

Bishop Michael Olson and Father Brett Metzler, director of vocations, would like a thriving vocation ministry in every parish with a plan for year-round awareness programs.

“The Serra Club can’t do it all,” Underwood pointed out. “We’re just catalysts who provide resources. We need parish workers.”

Increasing membership, parish involvement, and awareness are Underwood’s key priorities. The rapidly growing diocese also needs Serra Clubs in the Wichita Falls and Denton areas, she said.

“Anyone interested in organizing a Serra Club in their part of the diocese can contact me,” she said. “I have priests

willing to charter a new club. They need to know the lay leaders who will work to make it happen.”

THE NEED IS GREAT

Friends invited Jim Finkenkeller to join the Arlington Metro Serra Club in 2022. The Most Blessed Sacrament parishioner admits he didn’t know much about the group before then.

“Once I joined, I learned about the mission and need for vocations,” said Finkenkeller, who is beginning his second year as the club’s president.

“The need for priests and religious is so great, we should do as much as we can to encourage more vocations and support priests and religious as they continue their vocations,” he said.

He’s excited about the diocesan initiative to establish vocation committees in every parish.

“As our Arlington club continues its strategic effort to bring the culture of Serra to the parishes we serve, we will be able to work with the vocation committees to significantly increase the mission of Serra, membership in our club, and ultimately, vocations.”

First-time president of the Northeast Fort Worth Club, Taylor-Hunt hopes to do the same. A cradle Catholic, she loved the sisters who taught her religious education classes.

“The Church needs good priests and nuns,” she explained. “It’s important to put that thought into the minds of young people.”

God calls us to encourage vocations. “If it wasn’t for the priests, we wouldn’t have the sanctity of the Eucharist,” reasoned the Northeast Fort Worth Club’s president.

Taylor-Hunt added, “If you know someone thinking about the priesthood or religious life, just invite them to ‘Come and See’ one of our vocation programs. It can make a difference.” 🇺🇸



Dr. Anne Roat, president of the United States Council of Serra International, spoke to the three Serra Clubs in the Diocese of Fort Worth this summer. (NTC/Carolina Boelter)



Leaders of the Immaculata Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order. (NTC/Scott Wagner)

‘THESE ARE MY PEOPLE’

Lay Franciscans explain their service, path to membership in the Immaculata Fraternity of the Secular Franciscans

By Mary Rampellini

Brad and Sharon Toups traveled to Patriot House in Fort Worth on a recent Saturday to join some of their fellow Secular Franciscans in serving a meal at the shelter for homeless veterans.

“We may be there serving food, but that’s an incidental,” Brad Toups said. “Our real reason for being there is to encounter those people and give them evidence of the love of God by virtue of being present with them.”

It’s a means for the Toups to put their faith in action, guided by the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order set forth by St. Francis of Assisi in the 1200s. They’ve followed it ever since 1983, when the couple

made their Rite of Profession into what is the third, or lay, order of the Franciscans.

Today, the Toups head the Immaculata Fraternity of the Secular Franciscans, which celebrated its 35th anniversary in the diocese recently with a working meeting and recognition at a Mass at Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville. Brad Toups is minister, or president, of the local community, which currently meets monthly at Good Shepherd and has about 35 members. Sharon is vice minister.

“Probably the most important work that the Immaculata Fraternity does is to continue to make present in the world the charism of St. Francis as lived out by lay people, in their secular way of lives,” he said.

Most members of the Immaculata

Fraternity serve in various ministries within their parishes. They also support seminarians and retired Franciscans.

Father John Mark Klaus, a Franciscan priest at Good Shepherd and the spiritual assistant for the Immaculata Fraternity, said there are over 10,000 members of the Secular Franciscans in the United States.

“They’re trying to live like St. Francis,” he said.

A FLOURISHING FRATERNITY

Mark Lukowiak is in his fifth year as director of formation for the Immaculata Fraternity and said membership is experiencing significant growth. Six candidates are on pace to make their final profession in the spring of 2026.

“I’ve been a Secular Franciscan since 2003 and I’ve never seen anything like this,” he said. “Six is a big group. We probably have more new people than we do people who have been professed for a long time.”

“The church itself is real receptive. They’re Franciscan Friars. They support us. And, as people joined, they went out and got more people and that’s why this kept growing.”

There are two types of formation within the fraternity. “The first type is when someone wants to become a Secular Franciscan,” Lukowiak said. Steps include a discernment period and total about three years. “And then we have what’s called the ongoing formation, which we do once a month.”

The Immaculata Fraternity members also commit to daily prayer through the Liturgy of the Hours.

A PLACE FOR COUPLES

Klaus said there are four couples within the Immaculata Fraternity. They include Chuck and Carol Lieser, who both served on the regional council for the state of Texas.

Carol, a past minister within the fraternity, said involvement has had a meaningful impact on the couple’s 50-year marriage.

“It has strengthened our ability to love one another and to be patient with one another. When you’re in the mindset of being of service to another you begin to realize that’s what love is about,” she said.

“It’s wanting the best for the other individual and with the help of being a Franciscan and the prayer life and the Rule that we follow, it’s enabled us to have a system of gratitude and respect for the individuality



Father John Mark Klaus, TOR, chats with members of the Immaculata Fraternity at Good Shepherd Church in Colleyville. (NTC/Scott Wagner)

each of us have and also for what we can do together.”

NEW FACES

Amy Crissey is one of the newest members of the Immaculata Fraternity, having made her Rite of Profession on March 5, 2022. The 45-year-old’s interest was unknowingly cultivated years earlier.

“At the time I was a parishioner at St. Maria Goretti in Arlington, and we had the TOR friars. One of them I got to know pretty well,” Crissey said. “I just found there was something special about him that was so peaceful and so joyful that it almost seemed unworldly. When he moved away, I found myself wondering, ‘What was it? Was it his Franciscan charism that made him different?’”

During that time, she was reading about the life of St. Margaret of Cortona and learned she was a Secular Franciscan, which led Crissey to look into the order and attend a meeting at Good Shepherd.

“I just knew from day one that these were my people,” she said. 🇺🇸

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IN SOLIDARITY WITH IMMIGRANTS

WE CATHOLIC SISTERS FROM 14 CONGREGATIONS IN TEXAS stand in solidarity with our immigrant and refugee brothers and sisters. Sacred Scripture calls us to show compassion and hospitality to “strangers” in our land.

We decry unjust deportations and the labeling of millions of our poorest neighbors as criminals. We oppose the denial of due process of law to anyone.

We lament that the laws of our nation have not evolved to recognize the dignity of those fleeing violence, extreme poverty, or environmental degradation. As a result, millions are suffering.

We advocate for **comprehensive immigration reform** rooted in justice and compassion that provides a reasonable path to citizenship for undocumented persons.

We pray that all will recognize the face of Jesus in the immigrant and refugee, and work toward humane and dignified solutions to the nation’s immigration system.

To immigrant communities: We hear your cries, We acknowledge your fears, We affirm your hopes, And we deeply value your presence.



Artwork by Sr. Marilyn Spring, OVISS

Divorced and widowed parents seek Church resources
for comfort and support as they raise their children

alone, but with God

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

When Amber Bowen's husband died nine years ago, the mother of three felt lost and hopeless. Eventually, the self-described religious nomad found comfort in the Rosary.

"I was drawn to the Blessed Virgin and that brought me into the Church," said the recent convert, admitting she was wary and timid about joining the Catholic faith. "I was afraid I wouldn't be welcomed as a single mother. Even in OCIA [Order of Christian Initiation of Adults], I was cautious about revealing my status."

Her fears were unfounded. Becoming part of the St. Jude community was a positive experience with one parishioner making a significant impression. During a women's welcome retreat, Bowen listened to Kelly Lugo give her testimony.

"It was very inspiring," she remembered. "I saw a parallel of her journey as a single mother and mine."

When Lugo's book, "The Single Parent's Devotional: 101 Reminders of God's Purpose and Promises for Your Life," was published earlier this year, the special education teacher read it cover to cover. Practical information included in the chapters offered a wealth of guidance.

"Reading her book gave me ideas on how to raise children in the faith, find joy in stressful moments, and connect with my kids," Bowen explained. "It encouraged me to embrace being Catholic and a single mother."

Once hesitant to bring her 11-year-old twins and 10-year-old son to church without a father, she now attends Mass with

the children regularly and enrolled them in formation.

"I think the diocese does a good job focusing on families and family events, but I really think there needs to be a ministry for single mothers," Bowen suggested. "A campaign welcoming single mothers and fathers into the parish would let them know they have a place here. I didn't know that."

SURRENDERING TO GOD

Bowen is the type of young mother Lugo was thinking of when she decided to write a devotional for single parents. Inspiration came during a very low point in the author's life.

Although helped by family members at different times, the divorced mom of a 17-year-old boy and 16-year-old girl parented alone for 15 years.

"It was the constant worry of carrying it all by myself along with other things unraveling personally," Lugo said, describing the daily grind of meals, laundry, dishes, and financial worries that led to overwhelming sadness. "I went to Adoration constantly, said all the novenas, and nothing changed. It got worse, not better."

Watching an interview with Jonathan Roumie, who portrays Jesus on the television drama "The Chosen," gave her hope.

"A devout Catholic, he talked about a particular low point in his life and how he just needed to surrender," the Arlington native recalled. "I realized I'd been telling God what I wanted but I never surrendered. When you give God that surrender, and truly hand it over, even when it's not what you want for yourself, things start to happen."

Her motto became: Say yes to whatever God asks.

Lugo contacted Dynamic Catholic — a Catholic website — and volunteered to write content for them focused on single parenthood. Having the editor agree to the proposal took some persuading.

"I told him 21 percent of Catholic parents in the U.S. are divorced, widowed, separated, or never married. That's a big chunk of people there's no ministry, community, or support for in the Church, beyond Gabriel Project for mothers in crisis and, maybe, a brief divorce support class. That's it," she said, recounting the conversation.

The well-received articles she produced evolved into a series of devotionals and was turned into a book written to be comforting, challenging, and encouraging while acknowledging feelings of heartbreak, grief, loneliness, and fear. Lugo also asks readers to "celebrate wins" and find support from reliable people.

"I want single parents to realize God has a plan [for them] because of their journey, not in spite of it," she said. "That's what changed everything for me. Now I have the opportunity to use what I've been through to help other people. There was purpose in the pain."

NEED FOR COMMUNITY

While writing the book, the author reached out to Momentum, a faith-based community for Catholic single moms that offers retreats, online fellowship, and local chapter meetings. Founded in Canada, the organization is expanding into the U.S. with the newest group started locally by Lugo.

Single parenting author Kelly Lugo and her children Josh and Isabel are parishioners of St. Jude Church in Mansfield. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)



On the third Friday of each month, single mothers meet at Holy Family of Nazareth Parish in Irving from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. In addition to childcare, a meal is provided because “One of the greatest gifts you can give a single mom is a night when she doesn’t have to cook,” the organizer said.

The first meeting in May brought together Catholic single moms from across the Metroplex.

“There’s just a desperate need for community,” said Lugo, noting participants ranged from a mom with a

three-month-old baby to women with adult children. “You don’t stop carrying the burden of being the matriarch and patriarch of a family as it grows.”

Sophia Starostin, a divorced mother of a two-year-old, was seeking Catholic fellowship when she heard Lugo interviewed on a podcast talking about the new Momentum chapter in Texas.

“I definitely wanted to get involved in that. There are a lot of Catholic moms out there, and we definitely feel like outliers,” admitted the St. Patrick parishioner, who recently moved to Fort Worth from

Austin. “There’s this silent shame around being a single parent and being Catholic because it’s not the ideal image of a nuclear family.”

The 36-year-old hospital case manager would like to attend a Bible study class, but childcare is always an issue.

“I even put off things like reconciliation because I don’t have childcare,” Starostin added.

She hopes the local Momentum group grows and parishioners recognize the need

Continued on Page 32

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for this ministry.

“We’re doing the right thing raising children in the faith, but we feel so alone and not worthy to be part of the Catholic Church,” the young mother shared.

FINDING SUPPORT

Single motherhood is a role Stephanie Hernandez never imagined she’d experience. Her husband, Eric, was just 50 years old when he died suddenly in February 2024 from complications caused by double pneumonia. Four years earlier, the couple lost their fourth child, Emma Grace, at birth.

“He was a very faithful man,” the widow said, remembering how her husband helped her cope with the death of their baby. “We prayed and had our church family around us, but when Eric died, I lost a little bit of my faith.”

The mother of three still finds walking into church without her partner difficult, but she accompanies Eli, 17, Chris, 12, and Michelle, 9, to Mass because “it’s just something I need to do. St. Bart’s is my other family,” the St. Bartholomew parishioner said candidly.

When someone on the parish staff recommended a grief support group, she embraced the idea and began attending monthly meetings at a bereavement ministry available at Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth.

“I’m so glad I started that because the people there know what I’ve been going through,” Hernandez said. “We share our stories and bond through similar experiences.”

Her children find support and grieve the loss of their father at The Warm Place — a nonprofit dedicated to helping youngsters deal with the death of a loved one.

Parishioners at St. Andrew Church also rallied around the widow, who is employed as a teacher’s aide at the parish school. Co-workers provided meals for the family for more than a month, and funds raised helped defray medical and other expenses.

“It was amazing to see how everyone wanted to help,” Hernandez added.

Her husband, a Nolan Catholic and Texas Christian University graduate, worked for years as a youth minister at St.



Stephanie Hernandez stands outside St. Bartholomew Church with her children Chris and Michelle. Her oldest son, Eli, serves as an usher at the Fort Worth parish. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Bartholomew.

“He would love what all three parishes did for me and my kids,” she said.

NOT FORGOTTEN

Lugo wants divorced, separated, or widowed Catholics like Hernandez to know that God and the Church has not abandoned them.

“But there’s a lot more we could be doing to make our parishes more welcoming to single parents,” she asserted.

Providing childcare, inviting single-parent families to bring up the offertory gifts, giving homilies that mention the

challenges of raising children alone, and offering fellowship are some suggestions.

Her message to struggling single parents who may not fully feel part of a parish family is this: “You are not forgotten. You are seen, known, and loved by God and the Church, and He is going to bring good from this heartbreaking chapter in your life for you and your children.”

God is now Lugo’s parenting partner.

“That’s who I talk to when I’m feeling overwhelmed,” she said. “There is victory in all of this. God will do things we can only imagine if we give Him the opportunity.” 🇺🇸



YOUR GENEROSITY AT WORK

“One woman returned to the sacraments after 15 years away,” says Olivia Olvera, the bilingual religious education director at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Graham, TX. A parish operating grant from the Annual Diocesan Appeal helps fund salaries, benefits, and faith formation programs at the parish.

This support has borne great fruit: every teen who received Confirmation has returned as a youth volunteer. Twenty-six high schoolers attended the Steubenville youth conference, and 17 middle school students participated in the diocesan youth rally. St. Mary’s also hosted a NET Ministries retreat, and 27 parishioners attended the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis.

“Through these travels,” the director says, “our small parish has brought back encounters with Christ that inspire a greater witness of faith within our rural community.”

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus tells us, “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.” 9,467 stewards from throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth chose to serve others through a sacrificial gift to the Annual Diocesan Appeal. “As a wife and mother to four young children, my vocation to service begins at home and in my parish. But as a Roman Catholic and a citizen of Tarrant County, I know the world is bigger than my circle of influence. The Annual Diocesan Appeal is an easy and impactful way to influence a larger area outside myself,” says Rachel Martinez, Director of Annual Giving and Grants at the Advancement Foundation of the Diocese of Fort Worth. “Knowing a gift to the Annual Diocesan Appeal is helping small rural communities like my husband’s hometown and is educating and forming future priests and deacons, is affirming that when everyone does something, we make a difference.”

This high-five is for you!

For the first time in its recent history,

EVERY PARISH that applied for a grant from the Annual Diocesan Appeal grant program, **RECEIVED A GRANT.**

EVERY SCHOOL in the Diocese of Fort Worth **RECEIVED FUNDING.**

and **ELIGIBLE MINISTRIES** **RECEIVED INCREASED FUNDING.**

You helped support parishes, outreach ministries and the vital ministries of the Diocese of Fort Worth through your Catholic Stewardship in Action. This report offers a comprehensive account of how gifts to the Annual Diocesan Appeal were used throughout the year, ended June 30, 2025.

**ANNUAL
DIOCESAN APPEAL**
CATHOLIC *stewardship* IN ACTION

Together, we are making a difference



You are building up parish communities in your area.

20% Stewardship and Development Work of the Foundation

The Foundation helps to improve the financial viability of all parishes in our rapidly-growing diocese through staff expertise, data analysis, resources and events such as Light of Christ Awards, Stewardship Days, Aging with Grace workshops, planned giving resources, and #iGiveCatholic.



You support young and old spreading the Gospel. You are a disciple!

10% Evangelization

Your support helps cultivate vibrant ministries that reflect the diversity of our diocese. Programs for small parishes, young people, and college students provide spaces for encounter, discipleship, and belonging. These efforts ensure that all are welcomed and formed in faith.

2% Fundraising Expenses

Brochures and envelopes in parishes, postage and printed mailed materials calculate to less than \$1 per person. Online recurring gifts through the St. Francis Circle donations help lower this expense each year.

19% Catholic Education

Through investments in religious education programs, tuition assistance, and professional development for educators, you are shaping the minds and spirits of the next generation. Catholic education remains a beacon of hope and formation for thousands of students and families across the diocese.



You help keep schools safe.

18% School Security

You bless diocesan schools by having full-time school resource officers present on campus.



You are supporting works of mercy.

4% Helping Those in Need

Respect Life ministries provide outreach to mothers in crisis pregnancies. Correctional ministries bring the Word of God to the imprisoned.

7% Parish Operating Grants

Assisting parishes with the means for essential operational support such as utilities, insurance, staff salaries and more.



You support the Clergy who provide the Sacraments.

11% Vocations

Your gifts ensure that our priests— both active and retired— receive the spiritual, emotional, and practical care they need. From seminary education for those discerning a vocation to ongoing formation for those in ministry and dignified support for those in retirement, your generosity strengthens the heart of our Church.



You are feeding the hungry and helping families support themselves.

9% Poverty Intervention

Rooted in the Gospel call to love our neighbor, gifts to the Appeal empower ministries that serve the poor, advocate for the dignity of life at every stage, and address the social challenges faced by our communities. Catholic Charities of Fort Worth and parish-based outreach efforts continue to bring Christ's compassion to those most in need.



ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL
CATHOLIC *stewardship* IN ACTION

2025 Goal: \$5 million

80% 90% 100% 110% 120%

Actual Raised: \$6,024,945

Generous Catholics from throughout the diocese contributed \$6,024,945 to parishes, schools and ministries within the Diocese of Fort Worth during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025 through the Annual Diocesan Appeal.

Parishes are listed in order of the percentage of actual donations compared to goal. The highlighted names indicate those parishes with more than 30 percent of families supporting the appeal.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please reach out to the Advancement Foundation at 817-382-4939.

Parish	2025 Parish Goal	2025 Total Paid	% Goal Paid	% Part.	Avg. Gift	Parish	2025 Parish Goal	2025 Total Paid	% Goal Paid	% Part.	Avg. Gift
St. Andrew - Fort Worth	\$210,383	\$2,244,198	1067%	5%	\$12,468	St. Bartholomew - Fort Worth	\$86,800	\$60,429	70%	6%	\$540
St. Francis Xavier - Eastland	\$2,500	\$3,310	132%	14%	\$255	Nativity/Blessed Virgin Mary - Penelope	\$4,350	\$3,000	69%	18%	\$231
Sacred Heart - Comanche	\$7,600	\$10,057	132%	6%	\$592	St. Peter - Lindsay	\$50,000	\$33,302	67%	25%	\$300
Holy Family - Fort Worth	\$160,700	\$187,866	117%	10%	\$874	St. John Paul II - Denton	\$22,600	\$14,993	66%	32%	\$441
Sacred Heart - Seymour	\$19,400	\$22,159	114%	34%	\$426	Sacred Heart of Jesus - Breckenridge	\$11,500	\$7,621	66%	7%	\$476
Holy Cross - The Colony	\$53,500	\$60,301	113%	8%	\$384	St. Martin de Porres - Prosper	\$88,700	\$58,396	66%	3%	\$822
St. Mary - Graham	\$20,250	\$22,264	110%	20%	\$445	Good Shepherd - Colleyville	\$367,000	\$237,218	65%	10%	\$719
St. Paul - Electra	\$3,700	\$4,032	109%	37%	\$403	St. Rose of Lima - Glen Rose	\$9,500	\$6,025	63%	13%	\$335
St. Benedict - Fort Worth	\$62,500	\$67,873	109%	40%	\$3,572	St. Catherine of Siena - Carrollton	\$80,400	\$50,180	62%	10%	\$386
St. John the Apostle - Fort Worth	\$115,600	\$125,505	109%	13%	\$339	St. Peter the Apostle - Fort Worth	\$54,000	\$33,373	62%	6%	\$375
St. Brendan - Stephenville	\$17,500	\$18,288	105%	8%	\$469	St. Mary - Gainesville	\$40,950	\$24,725	60%	5%	\$458
Sacred Heart - Wichita Falls	\$95,300	\$97,922	103%	14%	\$365	St. Vincent de Paul - Arlington	\$142,100	\$85,349	60%	7%	\$414
Holy Family of Nazareth - Vernon	\$13,400	\$13,695	102%	12%	\$442	St. Joseph - Arlington	\$97,900	\$58,177	59%	9%	\$361
St. Mary - Dublin	\$20,000	\$20,345	102%	11%	\$473	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton - Keller	\$330,375	\$196,256	59%	10%	\$503
Christ the King - Iowa Park	\$4,100	\$4,154	101%	40%	\$220	Assumption BVM - Decatur	\$25,000	\$14,603	58%	9%	\$292
St. Jude Thaddeus - Burkburnett	\$15,700	\$15,865	101%	31%	\$317	St. Mary - Quannah	\$1,980	\$1,150	58%	5%	\$383
Holy Trinity - Azle	\$29,800	\$30,101	101%	12%	\$519	St. Boniface - Scotland	\$7,500	\$4,242	57%	33%	\$193
Santa Rosa - Knox City	\$4,150	\$4,185	101%	37%	\$322	Sacred Heart - Muenster	\$97,600	\$52,829	54%	24%	\$292
St. Ann - Burleson	\$79,300	\$79,068	99%	14%	\$364	Christ The King - Fort Worth	\$41,400	\$22,204	54%	10%	\$285
St. Maria Goretti - Arlington	\$128,600	\$127,781	99%	14%	\$528	All Saints - Fort Worth	\$45,500	\$24,310	53%	15%	\$276
St. John the Baptizer - Bridgeport	\$17,400	\$16,488	95%	5%	\$375	St. Mary - Windthorst	\$28,200	\$14,872	53%	38%	\$169
St. Philip the Apostle - Flower Mound	\$202,600	\$190,648	94%	8%	\$561	St. Joseph - Cleburne	\$22,800	\$11,343	50%	14%	\$106
St. Joseph - Rhineland	\$16,500	\$15,327	93%	18%	\$589	St. George - Fort Worth	\$21,900	\$10,692	49%	6%	\$297
St. Theresa - Olney	\$5,750	\$5,338	93%	22%	\$485	St. Mary of the Assumption - Fort Worth	\$40,350	\$19,514	48%	4%	\$205
Our Lady of Guadalupe - De Leon	\$7,100	\$6,579	93%	32%	\$178	St. Stephen - Weatherford	\$105,150	\$48,976	47%	3%	\$505
Most Blessed Sacrament - Arlington	\$216,000	\$199,279	92%	14%	\$1,038	Our Lady of Fatima - Fort Worth	\$54,800	\$25,460	46%	17%	\$277
St. Patrick Cathedral - Fort Worth	\$152,000	\$139,415	92%	7%	\$766	St. Thomas Aquinas - Pilot Point	\$42,100	\$17,735	42%	11%	\$236
St. William - Montague	\$8,300	\$7,565	91%	19%	\$582	Korean Martyrs - Fort Worth	\$11,900	\$4,983	42%	18%	\$453
Jesus of Nazareth - Albany	\$3,850	\$3,500	91%	22%	\$700	Holy Name of Jesus - Fort Worth	\$61,900	\$25,060	40%	12%	\$154
St. Jerome - Bowie	\$6,400	\$5,755	90%	35%	\$411	Our Mother of Mercy - Fort Worth	\$10,150	\$4,089	40%	8%	\$241
St. Francis of Assisi - Grapevine	\$158,250	\$141,922	90%	11%	\$511	St. Teresa of Calcutta - Roanoke	\$10,900	\$4,377	40%	178%	\$274
St. Matthew - Arlington	\$96,200	\$84,772	88%	26%	\$123	Immaculate Conception - Denton	\$118,100	\$46,145	39%	2%	\$346
Our Lady of Lourdes - Mineral Wells	\$18,700	\$16,345	87%	6%	\$711	St. Thomas the Apostle - Fort Worth	\$78,000	\$29,919	38%	6%	\$389
Our Lady of Mercy - Hillsboro	\$16,650	\$14,432	87%	14%	\$222	St. Francis of Assisi - Graford	\$11,400	\$4,104	36%	37%	\$316
Immaculate Heart of Mary - Fort Worth	\$81,950	\$70,233	86%	14%	\$159	St. Rita - Ranger	\$2,700	\$921	34%	5%	\$230
Immaculate Conception of Mary Wichita Falls	\$5,100	\$4,320	85%	31%	\$108	St. Rita - Fort Worth	\$33,200	\$10,824	33%	2%	\$349
Immaculate Heart of Mary - Abbott	\$21,500	\$18,022	84%	27%	\$347	St. Joseph - Crowell	\$1,600	\$500	31%	5%	\$500
St. Michael - Bedford	\$143,000	\$119,618	84%	5%	\$532	St. Paul the Apostle - Fort Worth	\$23,000	\$7,100	31%	5%	\$215
St. Mark - Denton	\$266,000	\$221,855	83%	13%	\$653	Holy Angels - Clifton	\$13,940	\$4,035	29%	11%	\$202
Vietnamese Martyrs - Arlington	\$64,900	\$53,178	82%	10%	\$174	Our Lady of Guadalupe - Morgan	\$2,700	\$715	26%	5%	\$179
St. Mary of the Assumption - Megargel	\$4,200	\$3,440	82%	67%	\$344	St. Jude - Mansfield	\$112,400	\$29,486	26%	3%	\$314
Our Lady Queen of Peace - Wichita Falls	\$57,500	\$44,199	77%	16%	\$293	Our Lady of Guadalupe - Wichita Falls	\$23,800	\$5,524	23%	1%	\$395
St. John - Strawn	\$3,600	\$2,763	77%	13%	\$345	St. Mary - Henrietta	\$6,100	\$1,234	20%	31%	\$154
Holy Rosary - Cisco	\$4,900	\$3,730	76%	25%	\$207	Our Lady of Guadalupe - Fort Worth	\$81,200	\$16,221	20%	9%	\$186
Holy Redeemer - Aledo	\$65,000	\$48,159	74%	21%	\$472	Retired Priests		\$5,250	NA		\$2,625
St. Frances Cabrini - Granbury	\$66,000	\$48,513	74%	11%	\$309	Direct Gifts		\$34,403	NA		\$297
St. Mary - Jacksboro	\$2,650	\$1,881	71%	24%	\$111	TCU Catholic Community		\$104	NA		\$104
St. Joseph - Nocona	\$8,450	\$5,936	70%	23%	\$424						
						TOTALS	\$5,000,000	\$6,024,145	120%	9%	\$637



PARTICIPATION ON PURPOSE

St. John the Apostle in North Richland Hills and Sacred Heart in Wichita Falls both received increased goals in 2025. Undeterred by this, Father Jack McKone and Father Jonathan Demma, respectively, encouraged each parishioner to participate in the Annual Diocesan Appeal in some way. In a homily, Father Jonathan reflected on the Lost Sheep Parable, reminding his parishioners that their contribution to the Appeal is an answer to Christ's request to "feed my sheep." The Appeal literally feeds the hungry with parish grants to support food pantries in parishes. And the Appeal is feeding the souls of the parishioners in formation and education classes, of deacons and seminarians in formation and the parishioners who receive new priests and deacons in their parish.

Every person, with their God-given blessings is essential to the Body of Christ in the Diocese of Fort Worth. Your purpose and your participation make a difference in the lives of thousands. Participation is fundamental to Catholic Stewardship in Action. Working together as the Body of Christ completes the whole picture of generosity. There are many ways to give to the Annual Diocesan Appeal, such as online, via text, company matching gifts, and gifts of stock or other appreciated assets. **Every gift, no matter the amount, is essential to this yearly appeal.** The average gift to the Appeal is \$637, or \$50 a month. Some can give more, some can give less. The St. Francis Circle is a group of donors at all levels who commit to a recurring monthly gift, saving the Foundation nearly \$25,000 in printing, postage and processing expenses. Further details about these options for giving can be found at www.fwdioc.org/ada.

TOGETHER AS ONE BODY OF CHRIST, ONE CHURCH

Why Do You Give?

Every Catholic has a story behind their gift—an inner "why" that moves them from thought to action.

Some give because they want to **help others who are not as fortunate**, recognizing that they themselves have been greatly blessed. Their generosity reaches small parishes and schools in struggling areas through parish operating grants—ensuring the Church is everywhere for everyone.

Others give because the Annual Diocesan Appeal allows them to **impact multiple ministries they could not support alone**.

Through the Appeal, every gift fuels a wide range of ministries: **gratitude and support for clergy, diaconate formation, seminarian education, retired priest care, and ongoing formation for those who serve our parishes**. It strengthens **Catholic education** by funding **school security, learning specialists, teacher salaries, and tuition assistance**. It also provides **general operating support** for parishes and ministries across the diocese.

It meets urgent human needs through **poverty intervention, Respect Life initiatives, parish food pantries, and correctional ministry**—while sustaining **evangelization, youth ministry, marriage**

and family life programs, marriage support, campus ministry, stewardship education, and parish fundraising support.

For many, the motivation comes from **living out the corporal works of mercy**. Thousands of food-insecure families are served through parish pantries each year. Imprisoned men and women encounter Christ through sacraments and volunteers. Each ministry supported by the Appeal is a living expression of the Gospel in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Some give because they **want the Catholic faith to continue for generations**. Their contributions support catechesis and evangelization—part of why the Diocese of Fort Worth is now the fastest-growing diocese in the United States, with a 72% increase in converts from 2023 to 2024 (National Catholic Register).

In the end, giving is **an act of trust** in God's providence and in the Church's care for the resources entrusted to it. A sacrificial gift is an act of faith, hope, and charity that will be shared with others and multiplied in impact.

What is your "Why?"

A PLAY ON PARABLES

Father Mike Schmitz brings
Parables Tour to Fort Worth



Father Mike Schmitz during the Parables Tour. (courtesy/Ascension Press)

By Susan Moses

A priest who is internet famous will soon visit Texas in real life. Father Mike Schmitz, the renowned Catholic priest, podcaster, speaker, and author, is visiting a dozen cities nationwide with the Parables Tour, which ends in Fort Worth at Dickies Arena on October 23.

Ahead of Fr. Schmitz's Parables Tour event in Fort Worth, the Minnesota priest shared his thoughts on parables, campus ministry, and the importance of community with the faithful of the Diocese of Fort Worth.

The full interview can be found on "Lights, Catholic, Action!" — the podcast of the Diocese of Fort Worth — available on YouTube and podcast channels.

Unlike his popular Bible-in-a-Year and Catechism-in-a-Year podcasts, Fr. Schmitz said the Parables Tour enables the faithful community to gather in person and to ask questions.

The evening comprises a 45-minute talk with Fr. Schmitz, followed by a

45-minute question-and-answer session. "I put a lot of effort into the talk, at least I think I do, but it's the Q&A part at the end ... that's been a really big deal," Fr. Schmitz said.

Proceeds from the tour help build a Catholic chapel and student center at University of Minnesota Duluth, where Fr. Schmitz has served as chaplain for more than 20 years.

Selecting four parables to highlight from the 40 parables Jesus shares in the Gospels was a challenge, he explained.

"What are the important and urgent parables that moved my heart?"

These are four parables that have changed my life," he said.

"There's a point to every parable. The message [of the parables selected] needs to be both urgent and important — this is something people need to know, and they need to know this now," said the priest,

who added that parables reveal the heart of God.

The Parables Tour, Fr. Schmitz suggested, is also welcoming and relevant to non practicing Catholics and even non-Christians.

"We try to be as open and inviting into the Christian life as possible," he said.

"October 23 is going to be hopefully well done enough that your non practicing or non religious friends would say 'This was a good next step for me. God had something for me,'" Fr. Schmitz said.

Fr. Schmitz anticipates everyone who attends, from

avid subscribers to his Ascension Presents YouTube videos to the Catholic curious, will leave "with more hope than less. One of my big hopes is that, October 23, people leave excited to continue to let the Lord speak, and excited — eager — to be saints. That's ultimately what it is," he said. 🇺🇸

HEAR
FROM
FR. MIKE!



Watch "Lights, Catholic, Action!" by scanning the QR code or visiting [YouTube.com/@CatholicDioceseofFortWorth](https://www.youtube.com/@CatholicDioceseofFortWorth)



Seminarian Peter Nguyen credits social media for prompting him to consider a call to the priesthood. *(NTC/Juan Guajardo)*

Creator's Content

Local Catholics create and consume social media content to bring themselves and others closer to God

By Christina Benavides

For nearly two millennia, evangelists have shared God's love through example, word, and deed. With July's Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Catholic Influencers, Pope Leo XIV recognized a new form of evangelization taking root in the modern age — one that is drawing souls to the Church through the digital mission field: online evangelization.

In his address to Catholic digital missionaries and influencers, the first American pope stressed the need for disciples who “voice to the ends of the Earth the hope that Jesus gives us,” and he acknowledged, “Today, we find ourselves in a new culture, deeply characterized and formed by technology.” However, online missionaries, influencers, and the faithful alike must “ensure that this culture remains human.”

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, the faithful are using the power of digital media to grow closer to God in His Church and to share the Good News through this rapidly evolving medium.

A VIRTUAL CALL

Peter Nguyen now studies theology at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., but the fifth-year seminarian said he wouldn't be discerning the priesthood if not for social media.

“The internet is the reason I'm here,” he

told the *North Texas Catholic*.

Having grown up in a “very Protestant town with a lot of Protestant classmates,” the parishioner of Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in Wichita Falls took to the web to learn about the faith in more depth.

“It drew me deeper into what it means to be Catholic,” Nguyen said. “Being able to really study that through the internet, I think, brought me only so far ... but learning more about my faith drew me to go attend Mass more intentionally, partake in the sacraments more intentionally.”

His online searches introduced him to further study on praying the Liturgy of the Hours, understanding the Eucharist, and learning more about the saints, all of which supplemented his religious education classes.

After absorbing the Catholic content, he would log in to his Twitter (now known as X) account to express his thoughts, observations, and questions online. With time, Nguyen found and helped cultivate an online community of lay and religious faithful who were eager to encourage and extend his inquiries and exploration of the faith.

Drawn in by Nguyen's musings on the faith, a priest he'd never met reached out to his account via direct message. “Judging by what

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Holly Nguyen, parish volunteer coordinator at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Keller, has seen social media bring the parish together.
(NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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you're sharing and commenting, you should really consider going into the seminary," he told Nguyen.

They had never met in person, but Nguyen felt seen, and the message stayed with him. After three months of prayer, he entered seminary.

"I wouldn't be here if it weren't for him," he said.

The seminarian continues to interact with his online community of religious supporters, both virtually and annually in person. His online activity has lessened since entering seminary, but Nguyen still periodically logs in to share his thoughts and appreciation for the faith with his 5,815 followers on X.

Every so often, he reminds his brother seminarians to resist the impulse to reject the internet entirely, thereby missing the beauty of how the network can call people to Christ, like it did for him.

"We have a mission from Christ to go preach to all the nations, and there are people from all across the world who look at social media," Nguyen said. "There are huge opportunities to engage with the world, so I think the Church being out there on the frontier is very good. With moderation, of course — it has to lead back into face-to-face encounters with other people in a faith community."

FROM VIEWS TO THE PEWS

The large corner room in the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish office used to be the pastor's office and loft. Now, it's home for the Keller church's growing communications department.

There, sitting on a beanbag next to a spiral staircase that leads to a photo studio and storage area, you might find Parish Volunteer Coordinator Holly Nguyen wearing her hat as the parish's social media content creator.

Having learned some tricks of the trade in her previous job, Nguyen began growing the parish's online presence last December.

"Social media is not actually a part of my job, so it's not a mundane task for me," she said. "It can just be fun, and it gives me my creative freedom to just be silly and goofy but still honor the Church and tradition to share our faith with others."

The parishioner of 13 years often brainstorms ideas with the parish priests, Father James Flynn and Father Benjamin Grothouse, as well as her fellow parish staff.

Spotlighting parishioners living out the liturgical year; rallying aid after recent Texas Hill Country floods; sharing



meaningful moments from Mass or silly interactions with the priests have become a tool for building community and connection.

"You can come to Mass here every Sunday at the same time and still not know anyone that sits near you, so in that sense it's been a blessing to see our community come together in some of the posts that we've had," Nguyen said.

Earlier in June, she did some extra work to help advertise the parish's Knights of Columbus daddy-daughter dance. The fruit of her work became clear at the event, when a father and daughter, who aren't members of the parish or even Catholic, shared they had attended the dance after seeing Nguyen's Facebook post appear on their feed.

"It was an opportunity to evangelize and invite them to come back. I thought that was a really cool way to reach our community in a different way," she said.



AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN JOY

Laura Nelson invites those learning to evangelize to look to Jesus for pointers first.

“He smelled like the people, right? He got in there and He lived alongside people in their real existence and showed them how to live a real life His way, which is, you know, the way, the truth, the life,” said Nelson, diocesan director of faith formation.

To be effective evangelizers, whether in person or online, one must be honest about struggles, unafraid of sharing authentic stories “because our struggles are what bring glory to God,” she added.

Since July 2020, full-time evangelist Ali Hoffman traveled the globe, visiting different Catholic communities to encourage others to live joyfully for the Lord. For the former youth minister of Colleyville’s Good Shepherd Parish, digital media is an extension of her ministry and evangelization.

“What I personally feel called to share is my own joy living a relationship with the Lord,” Hoffman said. Sometimes, what she chooses to share with her followers may be the result of prayer or something that made her giggle or pensive about the faith. Often, it’s a view of her day-to-day life or a retelling of her experience and testimony of how the Lord has changed her.

Her message resonates. On Facebook, Hoffman has 49,000 followers; almost 13,000 followers on her personal Instagram; and about 19,000 Instagram followers on @theoodlesofdoodles account, which features her handmade Scripture letter art.

People are drawn to beauty, Hoffman said, and to authentic portrayals of everyday life of living with the Lord. “The pitfalls, the struggles, as well as the joys of life. I’m just trying. I’m a person who is living in the 21st century who is trying to balance

Continued on Page 42



▲ Logan Koch created his TikTok and Instagram social media channels to keep his friends at Tarleton State University informed about the 2025 SEEK Conference. Within months, he had 8,000 followers. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

▶ Diocesan Director of Faith Formation Laura Nelson encourages authenticity on Catholic social media, sharing struggles as well as joys. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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all of the things to become a disciple of Jesus.”

Early in her time as an evangelizer and online creator, Hoffman posted a video of herself dancing with her father in the family’s kitchen while they were quarantined during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The video instantly went viral and currently sits at 3.3 million views on YouTube.

“The thing is, in this clip we did, we didn’t say anything. We were literally dancing to a song, and it was just a moment of joy that sparked something,” Hoffman said.

Recently, the former youth minister received gratitude from a follower on Facebook, who reached out to tell her about the personal impact that the three-minute dance video held in the heart of the follower’s mother.

“Her mom watched our dance video over and over again, literally just on repeat, because it brought her Christian joy,” Hoffman described.

“When you’re just your true



authentic self, living a life of joy in the Lord, the Holy Spirit will do what He needs to do and He'll use that," she said.

A MEDIUM TO SHARE

When Logan Koch realized many of his friends from Tarleton Catholic Campus Ministry wouldn't be able to attend the 2025 SEEK Conference in Salt Lake City, he decided to create a social media channel.

"The idea was to bring SEEK to them by interviewing SEEK speakers and maybe some other people they might not have been able to meet," Koch said.

Once there, he interviewed several of the speakers at the conference, including Bishop Michael Olson, Catholic speaker and influencer Paul Kim, and several religious men and women.

Koch was mindful that many viewers were not Catholic and tailored the questions accordingly.

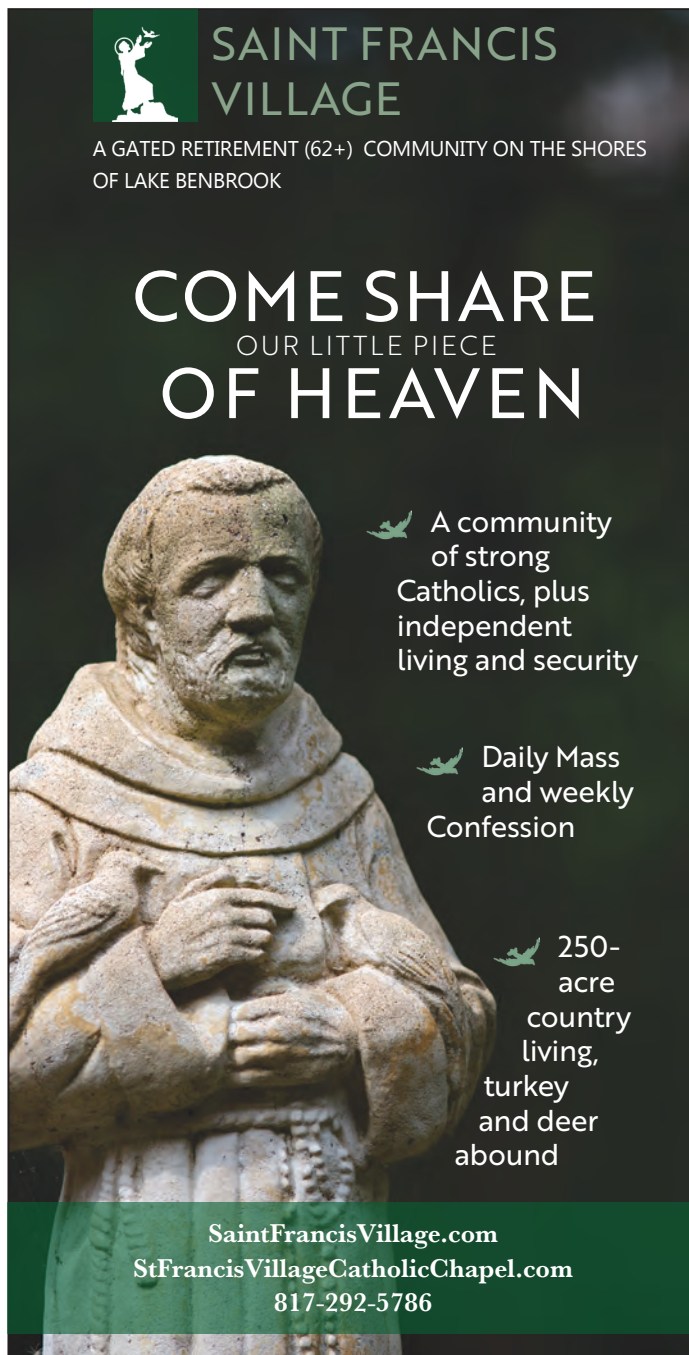
"I was basically asking common questions that they might get from a non-Catholic, of why we as Catholics believe what we believe."

Upon his return, Koch continued to create more content, drawing inspiration from the questions and continuing to address misconceptions of the faith.

"I'm looking to actually show what we believe and what we stand for as a Church," Koch said.

As he begins his sophomore year at Texas A&M

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◀ Traveling evangelist Ali Hoffman uses Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram to reach her audience, including @theOodlesofDoodles Instagram platform. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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University in the fall, Koch plans to continue creating content for 8,000 total followers on TikTok and Instagram.

“I think it definitely is a way for me to express myself,” he said.

A NEW FRONTIER

When used as a tool for evangelism, digital media can serve the flock in a multitude of ways. It can “reinforce the believer, help grow and nurture their faith, and in another sense, build and grow community,” said John Cuccaro, diocesan communications director.

Still, embracing digital media hasn’t always come easily.

The St. Philip the Apostle parishioner

said, “As far as I can see, the traditional Church really got a little behind in embracing social media. In the beginning, as a lot of people did, they felt like social media was a little like the Wild West — it was a little unwieldy, unpredictable, and potentially harmful. ... But I think over time, we realized that not only is it here to stay, but it can be a very valuable tool, especially if it’s managed correctly.”

Cuccaro oversees the diocese’s various forms of digital outreach, including its “Lights, Catholic, Action!” podcast, which has been watched or heard almost 9,000 times collectively in its 26 episodes; the *North Texas Catholic* newsmagazine, delivered to more than 78,000 subscribers; and 23 social media channels across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and X, amounting to 53,000 cumulative followers.

The different platforms highlight the Good News in the diocese, Cuccaro said. “We’re showing faith in action, and we’re showing faith in all its forms, meaning its manifestations through different types of people, walks of life, pursuits, activities — Christ abounds in all of that.”

The more positive content that is pushed, the higher the likelihood of reaching someone who needs to receive a nudge in the right direction, namely toward the Church.

“You’re not going to reach everyone, but you’re just hoping you’re giving an opportunity for people, and this is key. We’re actually doing all this so people and souls come to you, thus Christ. It’s giving them the invitation to come to Christ,” he said.

DUAL RESPONSIBILITY

When he considers his personal consumption of online content, Cuccaro acknowledges how easily a user can adopt a passive faith of “just absorbing, absorbing, absorbing. It can be distracting to the point of harming you, because it can freeze you and keep you from taking action.”

The consumer of social media must be intentional, Cuccaro insisted. People need to look for content that will “remind you you’re there to serve others, help others. That’s what being Christlike is.”

Seminarian Nguyen agreed, stressing the importance of personal responsibility to take the content you interact with online and letting it guide you to interact with the Church.

“We have the ability to gain so much knowledge about the faith, but that isn’t going to suffice for faith itself. We have to be drawn into the life of faith,” Nguyen explained. 🇺🇸



Juan Guajardo (right) serves as the producer and director of the diocesan podcast, "Lights, Catholic, Action!" (NTC/Carolina Boelter)

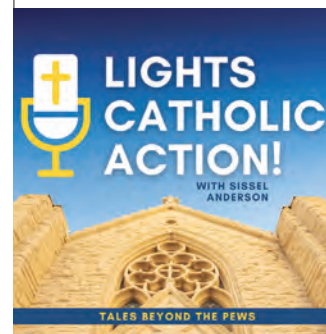


Director of Communications John Cuccaro at the studio at Nolan Catholic High School, where the podcast is taped. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

EVERY
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All episodes of "Lights, Catholic, Action!" can be found on YouTube or your favorite podcast channel. Scan the QR code or go to:
youtube.com/@CatholicDioceseofFortWorth



Shining lights

Light of Christ honorees use their gifts to deepen the life of the Church in their parish

By Lisa Moore

For the fourth annual Light of Christ stewardship awards, the Advancement Foundation for the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth partnered with parish priests.

Each pastor nominated from within their parish an individual or couple who exemplify the four pillars of Christian stewardship: prayer, hospitality, formation, and service.

A total of 38 individuals or married couples were honored at one of five events held in July and August throughout the diocese.

At the five ceremonies, held in Mineral Wells, Fort Worth, Denton, Wichita Falls, and Granbury, the Advancement Foundation also acknowledged the parishes that will receive operating grants for the coming year. The parish operating grants are funded by the Annual Diocesan Appeal, which also supports deacon and seminarian formation, Catholic education, Catholic Charities Fort Worth, and other ministries.

A list of all the honorees may be found at [AdvancementFoundation.org/Stewardship-Awards](https://www.advancementfoundation.org/Stewardship-Awards), and below we highlight two couples that exemplify using God-given gifts to serve their parish.

ARTHUR AND CYNTHIA SANFORD **Our Mother of Mercy Parish, Fort Worth**

Arthur and Cynthia Sanford have based their 46-year marriage on “doing what needs to be done,” supporting each other in service at Our Mother of Mercy Parish in Fort Worth.

“If you are based in faith, there’s no

way you can’t be a team,” Cynthia said. “God is the center of your marriage.”

Cynthia was raised with nine siblings by her widowed mother in the tight-knit community of Fort Stockton, where “everybody raised everybody.”

Born and raised in Fort Worth, Arthur credits his Catholic education to his grandmother, who helped him and his brother attend Our Mother of Mercy’s former parish school and Nolan Catholic High School.

Arthur has served on the parish council and school board as well as being an usher, greeter, and Eucharistic minister. He was a school board member for both Our Mother of Mercy and Cristo Rey Fort Worth College Prep. He still volunteers with Nolan, where he was inducted into their 2024 Hall of Fame, an honor shared with their beloved daughter, Tiana Jean Sanford.

For years, Cynthia volunteered extensively at Our Mother of Mercy’s school library, cafeteria, Christmas drives, and as a substitute teacher. At first, “you had to bend my arm back,” she said, laughing, but in the end, she found herself increasingly saying, “yes.” “Your church becomes your community, and you want it to thrive.”

For Arthur, the Knights of Peter Claver are nearest his heart, where he has served in almost every role since 1988. For Cynthia, serving in the St. Vincent de Paul Society for nearly a decade has brought her the most joy. “I like St. Vincent because it gives you that opportunity to treat people like you want to be treated and give them the opportunity to seek God through us. It gives

me that opportunity to show God’s love.”

Together, they note, their ministries help one another out, just as they support each other as spouses.

“All these things we get involved in all revolve around service. It strengthens the union we have and enables us to go through life’s journey realizing that we have a stronger power that has blessed us,” Arthur said. “I am a firm believer that God will instill grace if the person opens up for that grace. And the cup will run over: If I’m doing the things I think are good and strong and solid in service, then the grace will run out of me and actually run into others.”

BERT AND CHRISTY HESSE **Sacred Heart Parish, Muenster**

Bert and Christy Hesse were born and raised in Muenster, attending Sacred Heart Parish and school together. Having grown up together in a close-knit community, Bert and Christy “led a parallel existence” as friends until dancing together one night during Christy’s sophomore year at Midwestern State University. They’ve been a couple since, marrying in 1987.

Christy taught first grade and kindergarten at the Montessori program at Sacred Heart Catholic School before and after raising their nine children. She’s been a cantor since high school, first accompanied by her mother on organ and piano.

Bert, a retired engineer, has been developing his woodworking skills since childhood and has been oil painting and



Bert and Christy Hesse and their family from Sacred Heart Parish, Muenster, pose before the Light of Christ Award ceremony at St. John Paul II Parish in Denton, July 30. (NTC/Thomas Otto)

drawing since the early encouragement of his aunt, Sister Roberta, a missionary nun.

Recently, Bert provided his wood-working expertise installing the new organ in Sacred Heart's choir loft. He assisted constructing and designing the chapel and its altar, as well as making its steeple. He builds caskets on request and painted the new outdoor mural for Fischer's Meat Market.

The Hesses both grew up and raised their own family supported by Muenster's tight-knit, Catholic community and school. "We were immersed in [Catholicism] growing up," Christy said. Much of their extended family on both sides also lives in Muenster.

As a family, they study the saint of the day each morning. On the way to Sacred Heart School, they pray the morning consecration when they drive over their cattle guard. "We try to incorporate little things like that. We do the best we can. It's not perfect, for sure," Christy said.

Last year, Bert and Christy went on "the trip of a lifetime," hiking 425 miles in five weeks of prayer on the Camino de Santiago through Spain, in a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. James the Apostle, also



Maria Barks, Michael Barks, Cynthia Sanford, and Art Sanford from Our Mother of Mercy Church pose before the Light of Christ Award ceremony at Nolan Catholic High School, July 29. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

significant for them as a couple: They possess a first-class relic of St. James the Apostle and were married on his feast day, July 25.

The Hesses ask the readers of *North Texas Catholic* to pray for an increase in vocations.

Regarding the lifetime of service, Bert

and Christy have given to Sacred Heart, Bert's advice is simple: "Do it."

"Don't be afraid — whenever you're invited or asked — to go ahead and just do your best," Christy added. "Whenever you try to work for the glory of God instead of yourself, you'll honor that." 🇺🇸



LONG-LASTING FRUIT

A Most Blessed Sacrament lector reflects on 97 years of living and serving the Church

By Christina Benavides

You might call Richard Lenz “reserved” for his unassuming service to the Church, or “strong-willed” for the force of his convictions — but never “soft spoken.”

At 97, the longtime parishioner at Most Blessed Sacrament Church felt called to the ambo so that everyone — those who are hard of hearing or seated in the back pews — can clearly hear the Word of God.

“You gotta get some people that speak out loud,” Richard recommended to the church committee nearly 15 years ago.

Leaving his walker at the pew with his wife Margaret, known as Peggy, Richard makes his way up four steps to read the Scripture with a clear and loud voice at least once every month.

A VOW TO UPHOLD

With their firm Catholic upbringing, Richard and Peggy, 95, let nothing keep them from practicing their faith and attending Mass each weekend in person — whether it be age, his debilitating leg injury, or her struggles with dementia. The two have been married for more than 70 years.

“I made a vow to take care of her, and that’s exactly what I’ve done,” Richard said.

Having grown up in a small coal mining town called Gallitzin in the mountains of Pennsylvania, Richard traveled by train each day to receive Catholic education in the city of Altoona. He remembers first catching a glimpse of Peggy while they attended Altoona Catholic High School. She was a freshman, walking down the opposite side of the hall with her classmates.

“I saw her, and I fell in love,” Richard recalled.

◀ Margaret, known as Peggy, and Richard Lenz at their parish of more than 50 years, Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in Arlington. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Peggy remembers the day of their wedding with clarity.

“The sun, I mean, it was unreal. It was a gorgeous, warm day, just as it was meant to be,” she said.

The two are parents to six children, grandparents of 10, and great-grandparents of two, soon to be four, and 11 step-grandchildren.

MAKING THEIR MARK

The Lenz family moved several times before settling down in Arlington about 50 years ago, after Richard’s job transferred him from New Jersey to Dallas. The family attended St. Maria Goretti Parish briefly before joining their sons for Mass at the University Catholic Community at the University of Texas at Arlington. Then the Lenzes made their way to a newly constructed Most Blessed Sacrament, where they’ve remained.

As the eldest Knight of Columbus of the parish council, Richard has served the local church in several capacities.

“I went to Fort Worth every Thursday at five o’clock in the morning to get the food [for Arlington Charities from] the food bank,” he said. “I went there for 26 years.”

Richard and Peggy also serve in the parish bereavement committee.

“They have been regulars for a long time,” said Karen Donnelly, who leads the ministry. “You know, it’s kind of amazing that they are both motivated to do what they can do, and they really seem to look forward to coming out for a luncheon.”

Peggy is known for her spinach florentine casserole and pistachio delight salad, and Richard for his warm welcome as he helps with the plates.

“I have to say he and Peggy are an important part of the bereavement committee,” Donnelly said, adding her admiration for the couple’s “acceptance

of life as it is and making the adjustments that they need to make over time. I think that’s in their faith, which has helped them through life, so they still are able to do what they can do.”

Donnelly first met Richard and Peggy at the Arlington YMCA, where the two would volunteer and share in fellowship with the center’s Special Friends program for adults with disabilities.

“We interacted with them weekly at the YMCA,” said Donnelly, whose father-in-law had dementia and was close friends with the Lenzes.

Peggy and Richard enjoyed their time serving there.

“I worked with them for almost 26 years,” Richard said. “I volunteered, and I stayed with them, my special friends.”

“Yes, they don’t forget us,” Peggy added. “It just gives you such a wonderful feeling.”

LIFELONG CATHOLICS

Richard recalls singing in German at Mass as he grew up.

His widowed mother raised her sons firmly in the Catholic tradition, with all six serving as acolytes and singing in the choir.

“I’ve been a Catholic all my life, and Peggy’s been a Catholic all her life,” Richard said. “Even with all of our issues ... we don’t miss Mass very often.”

“No, we don’t miss it — it’s ingrained,” Peggy added.

Holy Days of Obligation, Stations of the Cross, and ministry work with the



Richard Lenz reads the second reading during Mass at Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in Arlington. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

Most Blessed Sacrament’s Bereavement Committee — they do their best to attend.

A FRANCISCAN

When Father Binoy Kurian, TOR, arrived at Most Blessed Sacrament to serve as pastor in July of 2024, Richard was delighted.

At their first meeting, Fr. Kurian complimented Richard’s reading.

“I told him, ‘Father, I’m a TOR like you,’” he joked, explaining how his studies at Saint Francis University at Loretto had introduced him to several Franciscan friars, many of whom he still considers close friends. Richard and Fr. Binoy quickly found they shared a mutual friend with Father Richard Davis, who taught Fr. Kurian while he was in seminary in India.

Fr. Kurian holds great fondness for Richard. “We’re like buddies,” the pastor told the *North Texas Catholic*. 🇺🇸



Eyes on the Prize

By Mary Rampellini

“**F**orgetting all that lies behind me, and straining forward to what lies in front, I am racing towards the finishing-point to win the prize of God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus” (*Phil 3:13b-14*).

The Asmussen family, led by Steve and Julie of Most Blessed Sacrament Parish in Arlington, knows something about finish lines — both literally and figuratively.

Steve is enshrined in the National Thoroughbred Hall of Fame for accomplishments that include being the all-time winningest trainer in North America with more than 10,000 victories.

But behind the decades of setting records and collecting trophies from Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie to Meydan Racecourse in Dubai is a family of five that lives a deeply spiritual life.

MEANINGFUL VICTORY

Julie explained what she and Steve teach their three sons. “Life with God is meaningful — without God it’s meaningless. To get through your trials and tribulations, you really have to have that faith. And you want to surround yourself with Jesus’ loving people, believers that rally through life with you,” she said.

FAITH FIRST

Steve grew up Catholic in Laredo. His parents raced horses at small tracks in obscure towns throughout the U.S.

“We ran at different meets every week,” Steve recalled. “No matter where we were going to race, my mom found a Catholic church and we went to church every Sunday.”

It was a firm foundation in faith — and central to dealing with the pressures of professional sport. Steve said he calls on his faith hourly. “Every day you are tested and a lot

of tests I don’t pass,” he said. “My Catholic faith keeps me from giving up on myself.”

STRENGTH IN THE SACRAMENTS

Steve went through a testing time in 1994, when his stable was at Remington Park in Oklahoma City. “I was in a very low place professionally and personally,” he said. “I reached out whole heartedly, was into my third novena continuously, extremely unhappy with where I was at.

“I went to confession. It was face to face and it wasn’t the normal priest. Before I felt like I’d gotten into saying anything, he said, ‘It looks like you’ve put a lot of thought into this.’

“I simply said, ‘I’m not happy with where I’m at professionally or personally and I’m struggling with this.’

“He said to me, ‘Get up tomorrow and do the best you can. You put enough of those days together and you’ll be surprised where you end up.’

◀ Keith, Darren, and Erik Asmussen with their mother Julie, wife of trainer Steve Asmussen, at the barns at Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

“Not an alarm clock has gone off without me thinking of those words. Instead of me worrying about where I’m not or what I’m not getting done, I concentrate on what I do have in front of me. I look back on it and that was my ‘Meet God’ moment.”

Not long afterwards, the horse Valid Expectations began winning some significant races around the country for Steve, in what put his stable on the map.

WHAT GOD BRINGS TOGETHER

Steve and Julie both were born in South Dakota and married there at St. Joseph in Mobridge on Feb. 4, 1997. Their relationship really took flight much earlier.

“Steve’s mom and my mom went to high school together,” Julie said. “I’ve known her since I was a little girl. And his aunt, who was postmaster in our small town of 3,000, asked me to call Steve because she just forever thought Steve and I would be wonderful together.”

Julie was a flight attendant at the time and visited Steve late in 1994. “Steve was training [in Oklahoma City] then,” she said, “so I flew there on a layover and I called him.”

Steve said from there, a few more visits ensued. “I remember giving her a ride back to the airport and telling her if you come back, ‘We’re dating,’” he said. “Somebody that beautiful, coming to visit, I’ve got to man up and ask.”

In time, the couple became engaged and Julie, who was born and raised in the Lutheran church, converted to Catholicism because Steve wanted to raise their family Catholic.

LOVE ON THE ROAD

Travel is a staple in the Asmussen household to this day, and both Julie’s preparations to enter the Church and the couple’s preparations for marriage were conducted at racing meets by a close family friend, the late Monsignor Morgan Rowsome.

Msgr. Rowsome “would do our classes with us and then go to the races with us,” Julie recalled. “And he flew to South Dakota and married us. He’s baptized all three boys.

“Keith was baptized in Laredo. Darren was baptized in New Orleans, and Erik was baptized in the church here, Most Blessed Sacrament in Arlington.”

MY THREE SONS

Keith and Erik are professional jockeys, and Darren is an accountant for the family business. Each one said their parents have played a key part in shaping their spiritual lives. “They’ve shown me the importance of faith through just example,” said Erik, who was racing’s rookie of the year in 2024. “Horse racing is a game of such highs and lows that the consistency of having religion in your life is a necessity. They strongly encouraged it, and I saw with my two eyes the power of it and what it’s done for my life and how blessed I am.”

TRUSTING THROUGH TROUBLES

Keith, who has ridden in the Kentucky Derby, said the daily devotionals and Scriptures he receives via text from his mom helped him navigate his way through a time when injuries had temporarily sidelined his career.

“When you just rely on your understanding on why things happen, or how they come to be, it’s incredibly frustrating,” he said, “so I do think there’s a lot of comfort in just trusting in His plan.”

PRAYER WARRIOR

Darren said, “Time in Scripture, prayer journaling — those are things that happen daily for me, before I sit at my desk to start working,” he said.

“My prayer for my brothers is that their identity and value is not in wins and status or numbers, but just in who God says they are. And they have inherent value because they are made in the image of God.

“My prayer is that they, and my dad, would know that they are loved — regardless if they never win another race again. They are loved by not only by me, but a Heavenly Father whose love is so much more sufficient.”

And that is being a winner in the race to eternal life. 🍌

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



The Five 'buts' of Moses

NTC/Juan Guajardo

Two of our main responsibilities as Christians are to grow in faith and to show our faith.

Many of us are pretty good at growing in faith: We attend Mass, pray, maybe even read our Bibles from time to time. But showing our faith can be more challenging.

We can get caught up in what is often referred to as the five “buts” of Moses. God asked Moses to go to Egypt to free the Israelites from slavery, and Moses responded with five reasons why he was not the right man for the job.

As we will see, our reticence to share our faith can mirror many, if not all, of Moses’ excuses.

BUT WHO AM I?

To kick things off we hear this: “But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’” (*Exodus 3:11*).

We can all fall into the trap that we are not good enough, or do not have enough faith, or are not holy enough. Sharing our faith is not so much about our perfection, but about relationship. We all have some level of experience of God and that is all we are being asked to share.

BUT WHO ARE YOU?

Next, we hear: “But Moses said to God, ‘If I go to the Israelites and say to

them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ what do I tell them?’” (*Exodus 3:13*).

Implicit in this objection is that we do not know enough about God to share about Him. Being a theologian or spiritual master is not a prerequisite. All that is needed is a willingness to share about how our faith in God has impacted our life.

BUT WHAT IF I’M REJECTED?

Moses’ next objection is about how he will be received: “But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me?” (*Exodus 4:1*).

It is natural to worry about being rejected. The way past this concern is to see others with the heart of the Father, the God who leaves the 99 to go after the one. Ultimately it is not about results, but allowing the force of God’s love in our life to propel us to share this love with others.

BUT I’M A MESS!

Moses is running out of excuses, so he turns to his inadequacies. “But Moses said to the Lord, ‘If you please, my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and tongue’” (*Exodus 4:10*).

Haven’t we all felt unqualified or

unable to be an evangelist? We are too busy; we are not a priest or sister; we are not saints; we are not this or not that. But as with the case of Moses, it’s not about what we are not; it is about who God is and who we can be with God by our side.

BUT I DON’T WANT TO!

Moses is finally out of excuses and speaks from his heart: “But he said, ‘If you please, my Lord, send someone else’” (*Exodus 4:13*).

We often just do not want to share our faith; there are a myriad of reasons for this. But it is important to take a step back and realize that we have the faith we have because other people shared the faith they had with us. At some point, it is our turn to do the sharing.

If any of these “buts” have resonated with you, take them to prayer and ask God to turn your reluctance to evangelize into a reason to share your faith. One of the highest compliments any of us can receive is to have our name come up when someone talks about how they have grown in faith.

The only way the faith is spread is by people to people — no ifs, ands, or buts! 🇺🇸



Jeff Hedglen

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



Take Courage!

An undeniable truth of our faith is that nothing happens in this world that is outside of God's providence: "Who speaks so that it comes to pass, unless the Lord commands it?" (*Lamentations 3:37*).

St. Thomas Aquinas writes in "Summa Theologica": "All things, inasmuch as they participate in existence, must likewise be subject to divine providence."

Many of us have a difficult time trusting in God's providence and this can negatively affect our discernment of our vocation from God. We might think, "I have a desire to be a priest. But my past has taught me that I'm too unworthy to be a priest," or, "It would be pretty exciting to be a religious sister, but it just seems impossible for me right now."

Trusting in God's providence can be quite difficult. But a helpful story in the Gospels is Peter and Jesus on the Sea of Galilee (*Matthew 14:22-36*).

The disciples see Jesus walking on water and become terrified: "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear" (25). But Jesus says, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid" (27). Peter is incredulous and says, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you on the water" (28).

Jesus says, "Come." As Peter is walking on the water, he becomes frightened by the wind, begins to sink, and calls

out for help: "Lord, save me!" (30). Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him. 'O you of little faith,' He said, 'why did you doubt?' (31).

This true story offers us many different lessons about God's providence in our calling, our vocation, to follow Jesus. For example, notice how Peter was frightened when he first saw Jesus on the water, thinking He was a ghost.

We also might have found Jesus quite scary when we recognized His presence in our lives: Maybe we realized that Jesus was calling us to give up a sin that seemed too scary to do; or maybe the thought of priesthood or religious life tugged at our heart, but we put it off for fear of what it might cost us; perhaps it was scary to think about what Jesus was calling us to do.

Jesus says to you and me, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." These are perfect words we need to hear, words that should shatter all fears. Jesus Christ is all-powerful, He is omniscient, He is Sovereign Lord: Nothing happens to us without His permission.

Not only that, but Jesus is madly in love with us. He thirsts for our love, our holiness, and our union of our heart to His Sacred Heart. So, there is no reason not to trust Him at every moment of our life.



Fr. Maurice Moon

Yet, like Peter, we don't trust Him. We test Jesus; we doubt. As the waves of temptations and problems arise, we take our focus away from Him, lose faith, and are overwhelmed with temptations.

So, like Peter, we call out to Our Lord again, "Save me!" Jesus immediately, calmly, reaches down to us and brings us to Himself. He says to us, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

God's providence is at work at every moment of our lives, whether we have been a great sinner or a great saint. He never stops helping us, saving us, and thirsting for our hearts. He knows what we need better than we do, because He is God.

Our job is simply to put one foot forward, keep our focus on Him, and trust. And when we fail, which we will, He stoops down to us and immediately takes us back to Himself.

If God is calling you to be a priest or a religious sister, remember this story from the Gospel. "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 🙏

Father Maurice Moon is the Director of Collegian Seminarian Formation and on the formation faculty at St. Joseph Seminary College. For more columns from Fr. Moon and Fr. Brett Metzler go to NorthTexasCatholic.org/seeking-gods-path

Conversion Day by Day

HE IS: Father Rosalino Aguirre Bahena, CORC, parochial vicar of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth.

HUMBLE AND HAPPY: Father Aguirre grew up one of 11 siblings in the town of Zacatepec de Hidalgo in Morelos, Mexico, in a modest household. “We weren’t rich, but thanks to God, we lacked nothing.”

His devout grandmother fostered his faith. During summers, she invited traveling priests from the U.S. to their house to share a meal and learn Spanish. On Sundays, she led the family to Mass.

LED, NOT CALLED: Every time she prayed the Rosary, his grandmother would ask the Blessed Virgin that one of her grandchildren discern to be a priest.

“But it wasn’t me she was praying for, it was my older brother,” Fr. Aguirre recalled with a laugh.

AN UNEXPECTED CHOICE: Before entering seminary, Fr. Aguirre studied to be a physical education teacher. After attending a parish Holy Week retreat, he was invited to discern at the seminary of the Laborers of the Kingdom of Christ (CORC).

Many hear a call, “but I never heard it. For me, it was more like the parting of the Red Sea, with the Lord clearing away all doubts.”

ORDAINED: July 14, 2013, in the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico.

EVERY DAY COUNTS: “The Lord always calls me to keep going. Sometimes, I tell people, you think I don’t also want to sleep in on Sundays? But He calls us to celebrate Mass or to go to confession.”

SEASONED PERSPECTIVE: Before arriving at Holy Name of Jesus in late 2023, he served in parishes in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Mexico and taught in seminary.

“All of my assignments have been very different. I learned you must adopt a different mindset to go from poverty in the Dominican Republic to poverty in the mountains of Mexico. With the threat of the drug cartels and cardboard houses with floors of dirt — it’s a very extreme level of poverty.”

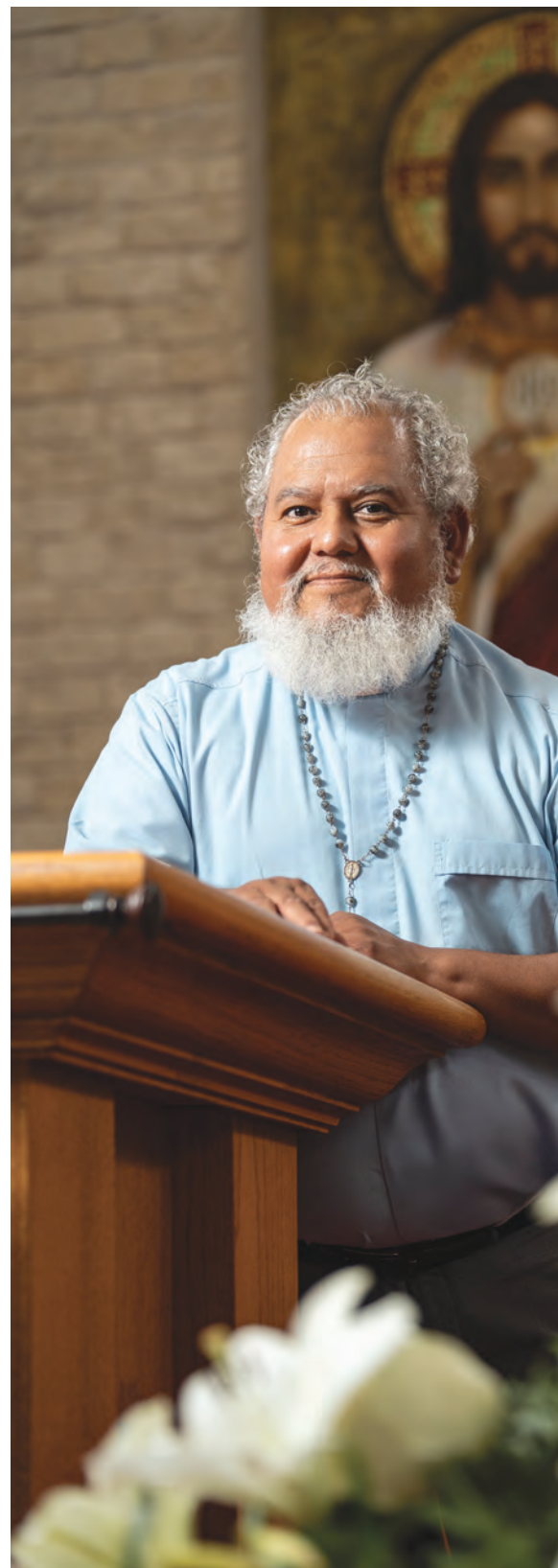
PRAY FOR ALL: Although he has found purpose as a Laborer of the Kingdom of Christ, Fr. Aguirre discerns his vocation every day. “I also struggle with my own worries, which I continue to surrender to God. ... Yes, we may pray for the conversion of those who kill, deal with war and drugs, but we must also pray for our own conversion because it’s just as important.”

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR: “Jesus, when speaking of the commandments, reminds us that you shall love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself. But if I don’t love myself, if I don’t receive God’s forgiveness, if I don’t approach the sacraments, how can I love others? How can I forgive others? That is the reality.”

HOBBIES: Singing, like his grandmother loved to do. Cooking paellas, baking chocolate cakes, making Jell-O, and playing sports.

REPENT WITH HONESTY: Come to the confessional with respect and an honest heart. Make time for it in your schedule and arrive on time. “Everything takes work. For example, you aren’t simply given a car, you must buy it. You purposefully choose to save for it and achieve good credit. It’s the same in the school of God. You need to have a purpose and a genuine desire to grow.”

WISE WORDS: As a rule, he avoids all talk on politics and soccer. When it inevitably does come up, he advises: “Kneel and pray the Rosary for their conversion.” Those who instead give into their anger “lose grace and resolve nothing.” 🇺🇸



Conversión Día a Día

NTC/Juan Cuajardo

DE QUIÉN SE HABLA: Del Padre Rosalino Aguirre Bahena, CORC, vicario parroquial de la Parroquia de Holy Name of Jesus de Fort Worth.

HUMILDE Y FELIZ: El Padre Aguirre fue criado en un hogar modesto junto a sus otros diez hermanos en el pueblo de Zacatepec de Hidalgo, Morelos, México. “No éramos ricos, pero gracias a Dios, no nos faltaba nada”.

Él le atribuye a su devota abuela el haber cultivado su fe. Ella invitaba siempre a su casa a los sacerdotes viajeros de los Estados Unidos durante el verano para compartir una comida y para que aprendieran español. Ella llevaba los domingos a toda la familia a misa.

GUIADO, NO LLAMADO: Su abuela le pedía a la Santísima Virgen cada vez que rezaba el Rosario que uno de sus nietos rezara y discerniera para ser sacerdote.

“Pero no era por mí por quien rezaba, sino por mi hermano mayor”, señala el Padre Aguirre con una sonrisa. “Bueno, Dios no cumple caprichos”. Muchos atribuyen haber escuchado un llamado, “pero yo nunca lo oí. Para mí, fue más como la separación del Mar Rojo, con el Señor disipando todas mis dudas”.

UNA DECISIÓN INESPERADA: Antes de ingresar al seminario, el Padre Aguirre estudió para ser profesor de educación física y, más tarde, consideró la posibilidad de ser técnico en ingeniería industrial. Tras asistir a un retiro de Semana Santa en su parroquia, fue invitado a discernir con los Operarios del Reino de Cristo (CORC).

De los siete hombres que ingresaron al seminario juntos, él era el único que no había servido nunca como monaguillo. “No era religioso de niño... Nadie creía en mí, pero de los siete, fui el único que se ordenó como sacerdote”.

ORDENADO AL SACERDOCIO: El 14 de julio del 2013 en la Basílica de Guadalupe, México.

PERSPECTIVA VASTA DE LA VIDA: Antes de llegar a finales del 2023 a la Parroquia de Holy Name of Jesus sirvió en varias parroquias de la República Dominicana, Puerto Rico y México, además de enseñar en el seminario. “Todas mis tareas han sido muy diferentes. Aprendí que hay que adoptar una mentalidad diferente para pasar de la pobreza de la República Dominicana a la pobreza de las montañas de México. Por la amenaza de los carteles de la droga

y las casas de cartón con pisos de tierra, la pobreza es muy extrema”.

OREMOS POR TODOS: Pese a que encontró su misión en la Orden como Obrero del Reino de Cristo, el Padre Aguirre discernió su vocación a diario. “Lucho también con mis propias preocupaciones, que sigo entregando a Dios... Sí, podemos orar por la conversión de quienes matan, se dedican a la guerra y al narcotráfico, pero también debemos orar por nuestra propia conversión, porque es igual de importante”.

UN VOTO QUE CUMPLIR: Como vicario el Padre Aguirre colabora estrechamente con los feligreses de su comunidad parroquial al recibir los sacramentos y celebrar eventos importantes. La parroquia alberga numerosos bautismos, bendiciones de quinceañeras y se celebran de dos a seis bodas al mes.

“Veo que los fieles locales se esfuerzan por acercarse a la fe”, apunta el Padre Aguirre. Ha aconsejado a muchas parejas que buscan fortalecer su fe mediante la convalidación de su matrimonio.

AMAR A TU PRÓJIMO: “Jesús, al hablar de los mandamientos, nos recuerda que la ley nos manda a amar a Dios sobre todas las cosas y al prójimo como a ti mismo. Pero si no me amo a mí mismo; si no recibo el perdón de Dios; si no me acerco a los sacramentos, ¿cómo podré amar a los demás? ¿Cómo podré perdonar a los demás? Ésa es la realidad”.

PASATIEMPOS: Cantar, como le encantaba a su abuela. Le gusta cocinar paellas, hornear pasteles de chocolate, hacer gelatina y practicar deportes.

ARREPENTIRSE CON SINCERIDAD: Hay que acudir al confesionario con respeto y un corazón sincero. “Reserva tiempo para ello en tu agenda y llega puntual. Todo requiere esfuerzo. Por ejemplo, no te regalan un coche simplemente, debes comprarlo. Eliges ahorrar para ello y conseguir un buen crédito. Lo mismo ocurre en la escuela de Dios. Necesitas tener el propósito y el deseo genuino de crecer”.

SER PRODUCTIVO: Por regla general, él evita hablar de política y fútbol. Cuando inevitablemente surge, aconseja: “Arrodíllense y recen el Rosario por su conversión. Quienes, en cambio, se dejan llevar por la ira, ‘pierden la gracia y no resuelven nada’”. ✝

ELEGIDOS PARA UN PROPÓSITO

Se ordenan siete nuevos diáconos permanentes

By Matthew Smith

Los primeros siete hombres que se ordenaron como diáconos en la Iglesia Primitiva fueron elegidos por su fe, sabiduría y dedicación a la comunidad cristiana.

Esteban, Felipe, Prócoro, Nicanor, Timón, Pármenas y Nicolás de Antioquía fueron ordenados por los apóstoles (*Hechos 6, 1-7*) por su vocación especial de asistir a las viudas y a los pobres.

Dos mil años más tarde, siete hombres de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, que encarnan las mismas cualidades de oración, compasión y voluntad de servir, han seguido sus pasos para servir como diáconos permanentes.

Kendall Robert Coffey, Weldon Alan Franklin, Wilfried Axel Lampka, José Rafael Mateo, Peter Thang Cao Nguyen, Hilario Hoang Huy Trinh y Michael Hugh Waldon recibieron el 8 de agosto el Sacramento del Orden Sagrado de manos del Obispo Michael Olson durante la misa de ordenación en la Parroquia de St. Mark de Argyle. La liturgia vespertina fue celebrada en memoria de Santo Domingo de Guzmán, fundador de la Orden Dominicana de Predicadores. Se reunieron más de mil personas de toda la diócesis para la misa de ordenación.

El Obispo describió a Santo Domingo como un sacerdote mendicante que vivió una vida de pobreza mientras predicaba la Buena Nueva de Jesucristo.

“Es sin duda un ejemplo y amigo para nuestros nuevos diáconos, que se ordenan hoy como ministros de la Palabra, ministros del altar y ministros de la caridad”,

proclamó en su homilía.

Al igual que los primeros siete diáconos nombrados en los *Hechos de los Apóstoles*, los candidatos diocesanos a la ordenación utilizarán su nuevo ministerio para difundir la Palabra de Cristo y conferir los Sacramentos.

“Para poder ser el vehículo de lo que Cristo ofrece a Su pueblo, estos ordenandos deben ser formados, informados y transformados por la Palabra, tal como nos llega en la Sagrada Escritura y la sagrada tradición”, añadió el Obispo.

El Obispo Olson aconsejó a los futuros diáconos con la siguiente exhortación: “Hermanos míos, acojan la Palabra, adoren la Palabra, proclamen la Palabra y den testimonio de ella con obras de justicia, misericordia y caridad. Así es como seguimos a Cristo, perdemos nuestra vida con Él y la preservamos para la eternidad”.

INVOCACIÓN DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO

Al comienzo del Rito Sagrado de Ordenación cada candidato dio un paso al frente según fue llamado, lo que representaba su disposición a asumir las responsabilidades del diaconado y su obediencia al obispo y sus sucesores.

Los candidatos se postraron en el suelo del santuario para demostrar su entrega total a Dios, mientras los fieles cantaban la Letanía de los Santos.

Luego de la oración se levantaron y uno a uno se acercaron al altar. El Obispo Olson, utilizando un gesto heredado de los Apóstoles, impuso las manos sobre la cabeza de cada ordenando para conferir el poder del Espíritu Santo. A continuación, se

realizó la oración de la ordenación.

Los diáconos recién ordenados fueron investidos con una estola y una dalmática, símbolos de su oficio en la Iglesia.

Se acercaron de nuevo al Obispo y recibieron el libro de los Evangelios, mientras el prelado pronunciaba las siguientes palabras: “Cree lo que lees. Enseña lo que crees. Practica lo que enseñas”.

VIDA DE ORACIÓN Y SERVICIO

La ordenación es la culminación de cinco años de formación teológica, pastoral y espiritual para los hombres que ahora asistirán al sacerdote en el altar, proclamarán el Evangelio, predicarán, dirigirán servicios de oración, bautizarán, presenciarán matrimonios, llevarán el viático a los moribundos y oficiarán funerales y entierros. A diferencia de un diácono transitorio, que se prepara para su ordenación sacerdotal, un diácono permanente permanece en el mismo ministerio de por vida.

La clase del 2025 de los nuevos diáconos refleja la creciente diversidad de la Diócesis, según el diácono Rodney Asebedo, Director de Formación Diaconal. Uno de ellos nació en Alemania y otro, en Puerto Rico. Dos de los nuevos diáconos llegaron a los Estados Unidos procedentes de Vietnam y tres de ellos hablan español con fluidez.

“La Iglesia se siente hoy bendecida por eso. Tienen, además, un corazón de siervo para servir al Señor y a los marginados de la sociedad”, señaló. “Como candidatos, estos hombres han estado sirviendo con reverencia en las



Siete diáconos permanentes fueron ordenados por el Obispo Michael Olson durante la Misa del 8 de agosto en la Parroquia de St. Mark en Argyle. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)



ASIGNADO A: St. Peter the Apostle, White Settlement



ASIGNADO A: St. Joseph, Arlington



ASIGNADO A: Holy Redeemer, Aledo



ASIGNADO A: St. Michael, Bedford



ASIGNADO A: St. Teresa of Calcutta, Roanoke



ASIGNADO A: St. Francis of Assisi, Grapevine

cárceles, los hospitales y comedores populares. Sin duda, están dispuestos a servir a los invisibles”.

DISPUESTOS A SERVIR

Si bien todos los cristianos estamos llamados a servir a los demás, los diáconos ejemplifican a Cristo siervo. Ellos son las manos y los pies de la Iglesia y, a menudo, son los primeros en darse cuenta cuando una familia sufre o

necesita ayuda. Lampka comentó que los últimos momentos antes de la ordenación le parecieron surrealistas después de varios años de estudio y oración.

“Estamos ansiosos por ponernos en marcha y servir al Señor”, exclamó Lampka. “Para eso nos formamos”.

La Diócesis de Fort Worth cuenta actualmente con 110 diáconos permanentes, incluidos los siete diáconos recién ordenados. 🇺🇸



ASIGNADO A: St. Maria Goretti, Arlington

LA FE COMPARTIDA Y FORTALECIDA

La Campaña Diocesana Anual brinda mayores oportunidades para parroquias, escuelas y ministerios locales

Por Karla Silva y Jennifer Johnson
Fotos por Juan Guajardo

La Diócesis de Fort Worth invita a los fieles cada año a compartir sus recursos y apoyar colectivamente los ministerios, programas y servicios más allá de su propia comunidad parroquial mediante su participación en la Campaña Diocesana Anual de Advancement Foundation.

Fieles católicos de las 92 parroquias de la Diócesis, que comprenden 28 condados del norte de Texas, respondieron generosamente al llamado del Obispo Michael Olson durante la Campaña del 2025, que concluyó el pasado 30 de junio. Advancement Foundation recaudó un total de \$6,024,945, logrando así dos hitos importantes: las donaciones de la Campaña llegaron por primera vez a los \$6 millones y se sobrepasó la meta fijada para este año por un millón de dólares.

La gran generosidad de los católicos de la Diócesis permitió que Advancement Foundation pudiera responder y satisfacer cada subvención solicitada por las parroquias y las escuelas. Además, más de \$1 millón de la Campaña se utilizó para financiar medidas de seguridad adicionales, incluyendo personal y tecnología para las escuelas.

“Podimos también otorgar becas de ayuda para la matrícula de estudiantes en las 17 escuelas de la Diócesis”, afirmó

Renée Underwood, CFRE, la directora de desarrollo de Advancement Foundation, la organización sin fines de lucro que recauda fondos para la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

Rachel Martínez, CFRE, la directora de donaciones anuales y subvenciones de Advancement Foundation, señaló que los párrocos enfatizaron este año la importancia de la participación de cada feligrés más que la meta de una cantidad específica de dinero. “Se trataba más de que todos en la parroquia participaran y apoyaran a los ministerios, las escuelas y las demás parroquias necesitadas”, añadió.

BENDECIDOS PARA BENDECIR

“Estamos llamados a ayudarnos unos a otros, a ser Cristo para los demás. Al donar a la Campaña Diocesana Anual estamos siendo Cristo para estos niños”, aseveró la Dra. Arnica Serna, la directora del Colegio de All Saints de Fort Worth.

Esta escuela ha servido a la comunidad por 120 años. La población a la que sirve ha crecido inmensamente en los últimos años, así como las necesidades que atiende.

“Después de la pandemia de COVID tuvimos un aumento de 300% en el número de estudiantes diagnosticados con dislexia. Desde entonces, los casos

de dislexia y terapia del habla han seguido creciendo considerablemente. El año pasado aumentaron también los diagnósticos de estudiantes con autismo”, describió la Dra. Serna.

Ante esta realidad la escuela vio la necesidad de contratar un Coordinador de Apoyo Académico. Este puesto es mayormente financiado por los fondos recibidos de la Campaña Diocesana Anual.

Este puesto lo ocupa actualmente Lillian Oexmann, que brinda servicios para estudiantes con dislexia y supervisa el programa de apoyo académico. Ella gestiona y coordina los servicios con diversos proveedores que ofrecen también servicios educativos. “Los estudiantes son diagnosticados y se les brinda los servicios que necesitan más rápidamente, y por consecuencia, se puede ver un gran crecimiento en el progreso de los estudiantes y eso realmente te alegra el corazón; se ven más felices y seguros de sí mismos”, expresó Oexmann.

La Dra. Serna agradece profundamente que parte de los fondos de la campaña hayan podido seguir financiando este puesto. “Vemos claramente la necesidad en la escuela de poder apoyar a nuestros niños de esta manera. Ellos tienen todo el derecho de

El Padre Ariel Muñoz proclama su homilía durante la celebración del Viernes Santo de la Pasión del Señor en 2023 en St. Matthew en Arlington.

tener acceso a la educación católica, sólo necesitan que se les brinde de una manera diferente y hemos sido bendecidos al poder apoyarlos en su aprendizaje”, declaró.

Este año la escuela recibió más fondos y la mayor parte de la subvención estará destinada al apoyo académico. Lo que permitirá cubrir los materiales necesarios para impartir la catequesis de The Good Shepherd y pagar el salario de un Director de Desarrollo, que se encargará de las admisiones y de recaudar fondos para las diversas necesidades de la escuela y los estudiantes durante el año escolar.

“Estamos muy agradecidos de que, 120 años después, la escuela pueda seguir estando presente en la comunidad y podamos seguir ofreciendo educación católica para todos los estudiantes. Definitivamente no podríamos hacer lo que hacemos, si nouviéramos el apoyo generoso de la Diócesis y de los feligreses”, concluyó Serna.

SOLIDARIDAD QUE TRANSFORMA

“Desde nuestra pobreza podemos ayudar a los más pobres”. Estas palabras, pronunciadas por el Padre Ariel Muñoz, el párroco de St. Matthew de Arlington, motivaron a los feligreses mientras hablaba sobre la importancia de contribuir a la Campaña Diocesana Anual.

La Parroquia de St. Matthew participa cada año en dicha campaña; pero hubo una gran diferencia en sus aportaciones este año. Según Rachel Martínez, la directora de donaciones anuales y subvenciones de Advancement Foundation, la meta asignada a la parroquia fue de \$96,200. Se logró recaudar \$84,771, cantidad que representa \$30,000 más que el año anterior. Esto refleja una participación

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA 60



DE LA PÁGINA 59

de 165% más por parte de la comunidad.

El Padre Muñoz atribuye este gran logro a la concientización de la comunidad sobre la campaña. “Al principio fue complicado porque la gente no tenía conocimiento del propósito de la campaña, pero, poco a poco, durante las Misas, les explicamos y les recordamos que la Diócesis nos necesita, que el obispo nos está llamando para colaborar con él y remediar las numerosas necesidades que existen en la Diócesis, que viene siendo también nuestra comunidad”.

Un gran obstáculo que enfrentaron para poder recaudar fondos fueron los proyectos dentro de su parroquia. “El día que comenzó la Campaña fue también nuestro festival anual y, después estábamos trabajando en el proyecto de la cocina parroquial, para el cual también estábamos recaudando fondos. Cuando terminamos con ese proyecto, nos dimos cuenta de que faltaba poco para que la campaña terminara y aún estábamos lejos de la meta”, explicó Diana Construita, la administradora parroquial de St. Matthew.

Ante esta realidad, el Padre Muñoz, junto con el equipo de finanzas, concluyeron que la mejor forma de poder recaudar los fondos era realizar segundas colectas durante los meses restantes, sin dejar de explicarle a los feligreses la importancia de su contribución. De esta manera, aunque no se llegó a la meta asignada, el esfuerzo fue notable, “mostrando así que la participación importa y que, si cada uno aporta algo, eso hace una gran diferencia”, expresó Martínez.

“Estamos en una zona de bajos recursos, pero eso no implica que no podamos ser solidarios con la Iglesia local que nos necesita. El contribuir es una forma de ser parte de la Iglesia, de ser solidarios con el Cuerpo Místico de Cristo y de ser uno en Cristo”, concluyó el Padre Muñoz. ✚

Aprende más sobre la Campaña Diocesana Anual: [AdvancementFoundation.org/annual-diocesan-appeal](https://www.advancementfoundation.org/annual-diocesan-appeal).

Educación de los seminaristas



Preparación sacramental



ADEMÁS DE LAS SUBVENCIONES OPERATIVAS PARA LAS PARROQUIAS Y LAS ESCUELAS, LA CAMPAÑA DIOCESANA ANUAL DA APOYO PARA:

- Matrícula de estudiantes
- Educación de los seminaristas
- Asistencia para la recaudación de fondos parroquiales
- Especialistas de aprendizaje en las escuelas católicas
- Evangelización
- Pastoral Juvenil
- Intervención contra la pobreza
- Salarios del personal docente
- Ministerio matrimonial y familiar
- Proyecto Gabriel
- Seguridad escolar
- Ministerio universitario
- Ministerio de Respeto a la Vida
- Fondo para el cuidado de los sacerdotes jubilados
- Preparación sacramental
- Pastoral carcelaria
- Formación de los diáconos
- Campaña #iGiveCatholic
- Educación para la corresponsabilidad

Matrícula de estudiantes



Pastoral Juvenil





Tres hermanos muestran las Medallas Milagrosas después de la Misa de Consagración a la Medalla Milagrosa, que se celebró el 23 de junio en la Iglesia de Holy Name de Jesús en Fort Worth. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

CONSAGRADOS a la Medalla Milagrosa

La Misa de Consagración a la Medalla Milagrosa
lleva a los fieles a Jesús mediante la intercesión de María

Por Christina Benavides

La catequista Alondra Bravo se emocionó al enterarse de que su parroquia celebraría una Misa especial de Consagración en la Solemnidad del Santísimo Cuerpo y Sangre de Cristo.

“Voy a venir porque necesito aprender”, recordó Bravo haber pensado. “Me encanta este tipo de misas porque aprendo muchísimo”.

Bravo se unió a unos 850 peregrinos de toda la diócesis el 22 de junio en la Misa de consagración a la Medalla Milagrosa de María, celebrada por el Padre Pedro Martínez en la Parroquia de Holy Name of Jesus de Fort Worth que fue organizada

por el Ministerio Hispano de la diócesis.

La Misa se inspiró en la peregrinación del Padre Martínez a Polonia el año pasado, donde un sacerdote Marianista le explicó cómo integraba la Medalla Milagrosa en su devoción a María.

“Vi cómo había muchos testimonios de sanación familiar, de sanación espiritual por la intercesión de la Medalla de María”, dijo el sacerdote durante su homilía. “Hoy, de manera especial, celebraremos también la consagración de nuestras familias mediante la intercesión de María con la Medalla Milagrosa”, señaló además.

La medalla se remonta al 1830, cuando la Santísima Madre, bajo la imagen de la Inmaculada Concepción, se

apareció ante Santa Catalina Labouré de pie sobre un globo con luz emanando de sus manos y aplastando una serpiente bajo sus pies, y le pidió que creara una medalla de esta imagen. “Todos los que la lleven recibirán grandes gracias, especialmente si la llevan alrededor del cuello”, le dijo a Santa Catalina.

La medalla es un sacramental que nos llevará a profundizar en nuestra fe y a la fuente de gracia que es Jesucristo mismo, aseveró el Padre Martínez. “Espero que las personas, nosotros en general, podamos educarnos y catequizarnos para comprender verdaderamente la función del sacramental, que es acercarnos a la vida y al mensaje de salvación en Jesucristo”. 🇺🇸



El candidato al diaconado Steven Bartolotta es voluntario en el área de correo de True Worth Place el 23 de mayo. (NTC/Richard Rodriguez)

más allá de lo académico

La formación lleva a los diáconos permanentes
a servir a los más necesitados

Por Christina Benavides

Los hombres que son llamados al diaconado no se forman solamente mediante la oración y las clases que toman en las aulas; sino que también aprenden a servir dondequiera que las necesidades sean más urgentes y, a menudo, menos visibles.

“Con mucha frecuencia, los enfermos, las personas sin hogar o los confinados sienten que son invisibles, que nadie los ve”, explica el Diácono Rodney Asebedo, Director Diocesano del Programa de Formación Diaconal. “Nuestro objetivo no es sólo verlos, sino aprender a servirlos y acompañarlos”.

Como parte de su formación diaconal se requiere que los hombres que sirvan un mínimo de 10 horas al mes. No

obstante, desde la perspectiva práctica del ministerio, el Diácono Asebedo señala que: “Esperamos que en el interior del corazón del candidato, al servir a estas personas, esto los acerque más al rostro de Dios... que sigan acercándose a Su llamado y que los acerque más a Dios de la manera en que miran a las personas. Nuestro objetivo es que puedan ver a Dios cada día en cada persona a la que sirven, no sólo en la experiencia de la cima de la montaña”.

MÁS ALLÁ DE LAS EXPECTATIVAS

La experiencia del candidato al diaconado Steven Bartolotta de la Parroquia de Holy Redeemer de Aledo en su voluntariado en True Worth Place en Fort Worth le ha abierto los ojos al presenciar la gratitud de la comunidad.

Asevera que “Uno podría pensar: ‘Vaya, vamos a encontrarnos con personas en su punto más bajo y en las circunstancias más difíciles’; y eso es cierto para algunos. Pero no lo parecería cuando los ves y convives con ellos. En realidad, ellos son quienes me levantan el ánimo”.

El candidato afirma que le ha impresionado la vitalidad de la comunidad y que ha adquirido una nueva comprensión de la dignidad humana y la humildad.

“No estamos allí predicando en la calle ni participando en debates o diálogos ecuménicos. Se trata de estar ahí para ellos para demostrarles que sí le importan a alguien, que alguien los ama; y que tal vez, hayan pasado por momentos difíciles y quizás tengan más por delante, pero seguimos siendo una

sola comunidad”, señala.

Recuerda también su duda inicial antes del voluntariado, ya que le preocupaba el tiempo que requeriría y cómo iba a equilibrar el servicio con las responsabilidades de su familia y de su trabajo. Sin embargo, reflexiona que el trabajo “no es nada pesado. De hecho, es muy necesario, y para mí es como si debiera haberlo hecho antes de entrar en la formación del diaconado”.

“Es un ambiente en el que, seamos sinceros, el 95 por ciento de la gente no tiene interés en ayudar. ‘Alguien más lo hará’, es la mentalidad. Bueno, ahora ese ‘alguien más’ tengo que ser yo. Y todos nosotros tenemos que ser como una comunidad”, añade Bartolotta. “Dios nos está llamando a hacer esto, y si constantemente decimos que no, corremos el riesgo de que esa obra de Dios no se realice y que el mensaje del Evangelio no se difunda”.

LIBRES A TRAVÉS DE DIOS

El ministerio carcelario ha sido desde hace mucho tiempo parte de la vocación del Diácono Gustavo García de St. Matthew en Arlington. Incluso, antes de entrar en formación para el diaconado, ya él visitaba a los confinados. El Diácono García sigue hoy día con su compromiso y visita cada lunes la cárcel de Sanders Estes en Venus para servir espiritualmente a los confinados, excepto el primer lunes de

cada mes, en que el Padre Richard Collins, capellán diocesano para el ministerio carcelario, celebra la misa y escucha confesiones.

“Como diácono en servicio, comparto el Evangelio y la Eucaristía, y trato de aconsejarles que se entreguen y dejen todo en manos de Dios, porque Él es quien, en última instancia, nos da la verdadera paz”, comparte el Diácono García. “Es decir, no sólo podemos estar encarcelados entre paredes o en nuestros cuerpos, sino también en nuestra vida espiritual”.

Ver a los confinados lo ayuda a reflexionar y a trabajar en su propia libertad interior, afirma el diácono.

Muchos de los confinados sienten que sus hermanos católicos los han olvidado a propósito, explica el Diácono García. “Sienten como si fueran desechables y como si la sociedad no los quisiera”.

Dos de los hombres en formación diaconal se han unido también a él en la pastoral carcelaria y le ayudan a dirigir los estudios bíblicos.

“Se miran los frutos de nuestro servicio”, expresa. Reflexiona sobre el caso de un confinado, de rostro muy serio, que al principio se unió al estudio sólo para poder salir de su celda. Hoy es uno de los más activos en la oración del Rosario.

“Hay varios casos así, donde podemos ver la obra del Espíritu Santo en los confinados”, añade.

ESCUCHAR MÁS QUE NADA

A casi un año de haber recibido su ordenación como diácono, el Diácono Scott Elder de la Parroquia de Our Lady of Lourdes de Mineral Wells sigue aplicando cada día las lecciones que aprendió durante su ministerio como voluntario en los hospitales.

“Mi formación me enseñó que no hace falta tener todas las respuestas para todos, sino enfocarme realmente en estar presente para las personas. Cristo está siempre presente para nosotros, en la Eucaristía y siempre a nuestro lado”, dice el Diácono Elder.

Cuando comenzó su servicio, él esperaba tener que estar siempre alerta, con una homilía lista antes de entrar a cada cuarto. “Honestamente, fue mucho más escuchar y hablar menos de lo que imaginaba. La mayoría de la gente sólo quiere que estés ahí, que los escuches y sepas en qué momento de su vida se encuentran”.

Servir a fieles de todas las edades y condiciones, ofreciéndoles amor y apoyo, es una de las lecciones más valiosas que se llevó de su tiempo como voluntario en los hospitales, y que sigue siendo hoy día fundamental en su servicio como diácono.

A veces, explica, la labor de un diácono consiste simplemente en “estar presente para las personas, hacerles saber que estás ahí para ellos, y tratar de que sepan que Dios también está presente con ellos”. 📌

¡Muy pronto, un nuevo podcast de la Diócesis: Alumbremos Juntos!



Acompaña a Karla Silva mientras conversa con voces de fe dentro y fuera de la diócesis, empezando con el Diácono Rigoberto Leyva.

creados para AMAR

Fieles participan en retiro de tres días para descubrir el llamado que transforma vidas

Por Karla Silva

““E l amor no es para mí, eso es sólo para los demás”, es una frase común hoy en día, pero también una gran mentira”, expresó Evan Lemoine, fundador y director del Instituto Amar al Máximo, que dirigió el taller de formación Creados para Amar en la Parroquia de All Saints de Fort Worth. Ochenta y cinco personas mayores de 18 años asistieron al taller provenientes de diferentes parroquias de la diócesis.

El retiro de tres días combinó testimonios, videos, música y experiencias personales con el objetivo de “rescatar la esperanza de que todos fuimos creados para amar a imagen y semejanza de Dios, sea cual sea nuestra circunstancia actual o nuestra historia de vida”, señaló Lemoine.

En el primer tema, titulado Amar al máximo, Lemoine explicó que Dios tiene un sueño de amor, abundancia y felicidad para toda la humanidad. Sin embargo, advirtió que el enemigo de las almas ofrece ‘la versión pirata’ de ese sueño, o lo que Lemoine llama ‘agua salada’: algo que se parece a lo que las personas buscan, que está a su alcance, pero que, al tomarlo, lo único que se obtiene es soledad, tristeza y vacío.

“A veces, vemos a Dios como el aguafiestas, como el que nos quiere quitar

nuestra felicidad porque muchas veces no nos ofrece lo que estamos buscando, sin embargo, Él es el ‘agua dulce’, y como dijo Evan, Él viene a rescatarnos, a ofrecernos lo que realmente necesitamos. Él es el agua que sacia”, compartió Audenaigo Esparza, feligrés de la Parroquia de St. Peter Apostle.

Lemoine presentó su propio testimonio personal y familiar, y resaltó ciertas experiencias que marcaron su vida: “Yo tenía una barra libre de ‘agua salada’ y, aunque el ‘agua dulce’ estaba ahí, no la tomaba. Hasta que, en el momento que me sentía más alejado de Dios, fue cuando Él más se acercó, me miró, me sonrió y me dijo: ‘Yo te conozco, yo te creé’. Desde entonces, he ido sanando y transformando mis deseos, llevándolos a lo que realmente sacia”.

Yulissa Valencia, feligrés de la Parroquia de St. Matthew de Arlington, confesó cómo estas palabras resonaron en su vida: “Saber que Dios toma incluso nuestras peores decisiones y las convierte en bendiciones, sin importar la edad que tengamos o el momento de nuestra vida que estemos pasando, me devuelve la esperanza y llena de fe mi corazón”.

Lemoine explicó cómo Dios ama siendo un Don - Dios Padre se dona por completo a Dios Hijo; - Comunión - Dios Hijo recibe por completo a Dios Padre y responde con Su entrega total; y Creador

- Dios crea al universo y a la humanidad. “Por lo tanto, como fuimos creados a imagen y semejanza de Dios, nosotros estamos llamados a amar siendo Don, Comunión y Creador. Éste es el verdadero sentido de nuestra vocación de amor, abundancia y felicidad”.

Ahora bien, ¿cómo vivir este llamado de amor? El segundo tema del retiro, titulado El gran misterio y el llamado al amor, abordó esta pregunta.

“El gran misterio de Dios, es que Él vive en eterna comunión de amor, y nuestra vocación eterna es vivir en plena comunión de amor con Él. Este llamado empieza desde ahora, sea cual sea tu estado de vida. Él toca nuestro corazón porque quiere crecer en armonía y unidad con cada uno de nosotros. Nadie queda fuera”, afirmó Lemoine.

Él señaló que Dios hace muchas cosas para enamorarnos y nos pide que le demos lo mucho o poco que tenemos para Él transformarlo. “Si no tienes tiempo para orar es porque algo en tu vida sobra”.

“Al elegir vivir en comunión con Dios, no sólo lo dejo entrar en mi corazón, sino que también me lleva a amar a los demás como Él lo hace conmigo: con paciencia y misericordia. Como mencionó Evan, el amor de Dios es un amor libre, total, fiel y abierto a la vida; por lo tanto, así debe de ser también el amor dentro de mi matrimonio”, expresó Gloria Martínez,



Evan Lemoine, fundador y director del Instituto Amar al Máximo, dirige el taller de formación Creados para Amar en la Parroquia de All Saints de Fort Worth el 5 de agosto. (NTC/Scott Wagner)

feligrés de la Parroquia de All Saints.

Otra pregunta que surgió entre los participantes del retiro fue: “¿Qué proyecto podemos trabajar junto con Dios para ser reflejo de su amor? La respuesta de Lemoine fue: “Donde mis talentos y mi pasión busquen llenar las necesidades de los demás, y donde mi proyecto personal sea compatible con mi proyecto profesional”.

El tercer y último tema del retiro se tituló Barreras, que no nos permiten amar y cómo superarlas. Lemoine explicó que la soberbia, el miedo, el egoísmo, el idealismo, la superficialidad, el consumismo y la lujuria son obstáculos que nos impiden amar y convertirnos en Don, Comunión y Creador. “Dios nos invita a amarnos como Él nos ha amado. Dios quiere que te ames con un amor infinito. ¿Es posible amarte demasiado? No. Sin embargo, sí es posible amarte de una forma que podría hacerte daño y que

podría perjudicar también a los demás”.

Angel Zubia, joven adulto y feligrés de la Parroquia de St. Matthew, dijo que en este taller aprendió a “tener una mayor apertura a Dios y dependencia de Dios; a tener temor de estar apartado de Él y a buscar amistades que sean socios en la felicidad, en lugar de cómplices en el relajamiento, para así llegar a amar al máximo a Dios y, por consecuencia, a sí mismo y a los demás”.

Lemoine concluyó el retiro invitando a los participantes a descubrir el amor de Dios en sus vidas, a dejarse amar por Él y corresponder a ese amor; para así poder responder a la vocación a la que todos hemos sido creados: amar. 🇺🇸

Consulte la página web de la Oficina del Ministerio Hispano para buscar información sobre éste y otros eventos: FwDioc.org/Ministerio-Hispano

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 al Director Diocesano de Ambiente Seguro: (817) 945-9334 y dejar un mensaje.
- ▶ Llamar al Canciller de la Diócesis: (817) 945-9315.

Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha de Abuso:

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

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

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





NTC/Rodger Mallison

Sonia y José Aguero posan con el Padre John Perikomalayil, HGN, en Nolan Catholic High School, donde recibieron el reconocimiento de la Luz de Cristo.

Luces de Cristo

Dos feligreses de la Parroquia de St. Mary of the Assumption en Fort Worth reciben reconocimiento por servir con amor

Por Violeta Rocha

Desde hace dos décadas Sonia y José Agüero han servido en su parroquia ofreciendo su “tiempo y dones” ante las necesidades de su comunidad parroquial. El servir ha sido “una gran bendición” para ellos; pero el ser reconocidos con el premio “Luz de Cristo”, además de inesperado, lo consideran “un gran regalo de Dios.”

Es “como si Dios nos estuviera diciendo “bien, bravo, sigan adelante,” asevera Sonia Aguero, 58, originaria de Chihuahua, México.

El reconocimiento “Luz de Cristo” se entrega cada año a nivel diocesano para destacar a los servidores que con sus dones hacen un impacto en sus comunidades parroquiales.

Llevan 36 años de casados y pertenecen a la Parroquia de St. Mary of the Assumption en Fort Worth,

desde hace 27, y señalan que luego de 7 años de solo asistir a Misa dominical, comenzaron a involucrarse “poco a poco”, “creciendo en fe y servicio.”

“Por muchos años solo íbamos a Misa de Domingo y regresábamos a casa, pero al ver la necesidad que tiene la iglesia, no podía ser egoísta para no ayudar,” dijo José, 57. Ante la necesidad, apunta, no solo sintieron la “responsabilidad de servir,” sino de “hacerlo bien, porque de no ser así, no nace el fruto que se intenta sacar,” dijo quien es originario de Zacatecas, México.

José y Sonia son ujieres durante la Misa dominical en español de 12:15 pm, miembros de Cursillistas, y son instructores de la clase de Bautizo en español. Además José es Coordinador de Ambiente Seguro, en español, mientras que Sonia es miembro de la Sociedad del Altar, así como del grupo de Guadalupanas.

Su párroco, el Padre John Perikomalayil, HGN, señaló en su , que el matrimonio Aguero, son “siempre confiables y nunca dudan para ayudar, ni para ser voluntarios.”

“La parroquia de St. Mary of the Assumption está muy agradecida de feligreses como esta pareja quienes van más allá de las expectativas de la comunidad parroquial,” enfatizó el Padre Perikomalayil. “Son increíbles líderes en la parroquia y los dos ejemplifican la Luz de Cristo”, señaló al hablar sobre el matrimonio Aguero.

Para Sonia y José este reconocimiento, además de ser “un aliento y una invitación a otros para servir”, es “para la Gloria de Dios”, aseguran, pues es Dios quien “nos da las condiciones para servir”, dijo José. “Esperamos que en los próximos años alguien más de nuestra parroquia reciba también este reconocimiento”, agregó. 🇺🇸



NUESTRO PASTOR HABLA

Obispo Michael F. Olson, STD, MA

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

 @BpOlsonFW



La Distinción entre los Inmigrantes Exige una Reforma Migratoria

La crisis ocasionada por las personas que ingresan ilegalmente a los Estados Unidos por nuestra frontera sur se ha mitigado en los últimos meses mediante una aplicación más estricta de las leyes del país, lo que ha resultado en pocas entradas ilegales o ninguna. Además de esta táctica, se ha visto un aumento en el número de arrestos de personas que se encuentran ilegalmente en los Estados Unidos, incluidos miembros de carteles y pandillas; y de delincuentes que han cometido delitos violentos, ya sea aquí o en su país de origen. La mayoría de las personas razonables reconocen estas medidas como una contribución positiva al bien común de la sociedad. Nadie quiere vivir con la amenaza de la violencia perpetrada contra las personas vulnerables, especialmente las personas que viven cerca de estos delincuentes.

El debate actual sobre el trato que se le da a los extranjeros indocumentados y la aplicación de las leyes de inmigración incluye desacuerdos sobre la pertinencia de la distinción entre quienes se encuentran aquí ilegalmente con el propósito de cometer delitos violentos y quienes no tienen estatus legal, pero han viajado aquí para buscar trabajo con el fin de sustentar a sus familias, y que, de otro modo, se enfrentarían a la indigencia. Una opinión que escuchamos mucho es que no es necesario considerar la situación particular, una vez que se establece que alguien está aquí sin autorización legal. “No pertenecen aquí; envíenlos a todos de regreso”, es el estribillo contundente. No obstante, esta

actitud no nos prepara espiritualmente para el juicio que nos espera: “Fui forastero y no me recibieron”.

A pesar de todo, en medio de toda la polémica y la turbulencia en torno a las deportaciones de personas indocumentadas que se encuentran aquí, es preciso señalar que no he escuchado todavía ninguna petición de sanciones más severas para aquellos que violan la ley al contratar a personas que no tienen documentos legítimos para obtener autorización legal para trabajar. Parece que, con demasiada frecuencia, estos empleadores no rinden cuentas o pueden pagar fácilmente las multas, si es que éstas se aplican. Enfatizo que no me refiero a los traficantes, sino a los patronos que emplean ilegalmente a personas que, con frecuencia, pertenecen al grupo de extranjeros indocumentados que buscan empleo para mantener a sus familias. Muy pocas quejas se escuchan para que estos empleadores rindan cuentas por su incumplimiento de las leyes de inmigración. Los empleadores deben seguir el proceso de verificación de elegibilidad de empleo I-9 para asegurarse de que sólo contratan a empleados legalmente autorizados para trabajar en los Estados Unidos, lo que exige también examinar los documentos que demuestran su elegibilidad. La verificación de dicha información se realiza a menudo de manera superficial.

Si quienes defienden la deportación sin mayor consideración de las razones por las que alguien se encuentra aquí sin autorización legal fueran consecuentes, favorecerían una aplicación más estricta de sanciones más severas contra quienes

emplean a personas sin autorización legal para trabajar en los Estados Unidos. De ello se desprende que, si las leyes se aplicaran con mayor rigor, o si la reforma migratoria incluyera sanciones más severas, el problema de la inmigración ilegal podría resolverse.

Sin embargo, esto ha sido precisamente por más de treinta años la razón principal de nuestra negativa como nación a abordar este problema. La falta de aplicación de las leyes de inmigración, e incluso de una legítima rendición de cuentas por parte de los empleadores, sigue sin control, ya que existe una necesidad mayor de mano de obra en estos sectores de servicios y agricultura que la que permite la ley actual. El resultado es que muchos trabajadores que trabajan sin autorización legal con frecuencia son explotados con salarios injustos, falta de beneficios de salud y amenazas de intimidación, mientras que contribuyen económicamente al Seguro Social y sólo buscan mantener a sus familias.

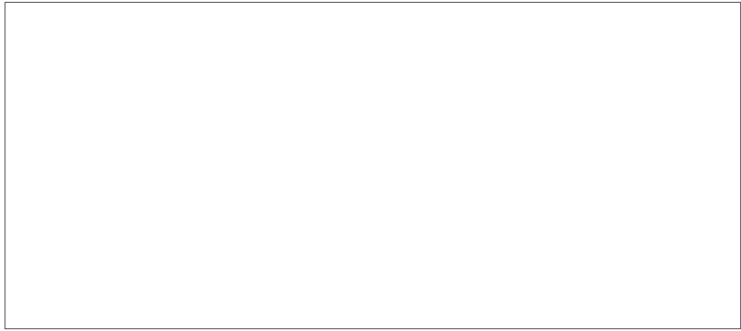
La crisis relativa a la aplicación justa de las leyes de inmigración no se resolverá con un discurso hostil ni con la negativa a hacer una distinción pertinente porque no nos gusta la inconveniencia de la rendición de cuentas. La distinción entre delincuentes involucrados en el tráfico de drogas o la trata humana, y las personas que han llegado a nuestro país sin autorización legal y que han trabajado productivamente entre nosotros, en muchas ocasiones durante décadas, es una distinción importante para una reforma migratoria justa, razonable y compasiva. ✚

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