

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH



# NORTH TEXAS CATHOLIC



To Guide  
and Guard

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2023  
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# ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL

CATHOLIC *stewardship* IN ACTION



Love one another  
as I have loved you.

*“I give you a new commandment, says the Lord;  
love one another as I have loved you.”*

*~ John 13:34*





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# Adopted in love

It was loud, it was hot, it was stinky, and it surprised me with a reminder of how much we are loved by God.

My husband and I went to Fort Worth's animal shelter to select one dog among the nearly 500 available. We'd lost our previous dog to cancer this spring, and our hearts and home were ready for another four-legged friend.

Stepping foot into the shelter was overwhelming. Which dog should we choose? Surely all these dogs deserve a good home, but we could adopt only one.

After a quick meet-and-greet with a trusting tail-wagger, we signed the adoption paperwork. The receptionist emphasized that this decision was permanent. This stray now had a place he belonged — with us, forever.

And once again, like so many times before, the generosity of God's love hit me. He wants to adopt each one of us as His children, to free each one of us and give us a home for all eternity.

In that moment, I thought of one of my favorite verses — *1 John 3:1*. "See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are."

A child of God. Let that sink in. How abundant is His love that He has made us His children.

It's not our character or behaviors that elicit God's love. It's who He is. He delights in us, simply for being His children.

Nothing that I do can weaken or strengthen God's love, because of who He is.

Too often I derive my worth from my relationship to others, what I've accomplished, or how I've behaved instead of recognizing that my dignity and value derive from being a daughter of the King. Jesus has called me by name, and He has redeemed me. This reality is beyond my understanding, but I trust in His goodness and His word.

As for our dog, each morning he wakes up seemingly grateful and happy for a little attention, a walk, and some kibble.

As for myself, I am a child of God. How much greater is my debt of gratitude for His perfect love?

*Susan Moses*

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# Immaculate Heart of Mary in Abbott marks 75 years



The Haferkamp family presents the gifts to Bishop Michael Olson. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

**ABBOTT**— For the parishioners at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Abbott, it was a celebration more than 75 years in the making, despite a few delays due to COVID, parking lot construction, and a gap between priests.

On Sunday, August 13, parishioners held a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at the church with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Olson and the church’s pastor, Father Thomas Jones.

Several notable guests joined in.

“Everything was great, and we were just very blessed to have the Bishop and Father Joe Keating, who was a former pastor [of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish]. We had Monsignor Henry Petter, who grew up in the parish and became a priest for the Diocese of Dallas,” Deacon Terry Timmons said. Deacon Denver Crawley from Penelope, who also is assigned to Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, was in attendance, as well.

To Den. Timmons, the most memorable thing about the celebration was “just the joy of being able to celebrate as a community with the Eucharist in a place that is very meaningful for so many people and has brought so much joy and comfort for generations.”

– Lance Murray

## A good start

Teachers begin with Mass, convocation

**KELLER**— Hundreds of educators from the 17 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Fort Worth gathered together at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Keller on Monday, August 14, to attend the diocese’s annual Catholic School Convocation Mass and ceremony in celebration of students and staff returning to school in the following days.

In his homily for the memorial of the priest and martyr St. Maximillian Kolbe, Bishop Michael Olson urged the congregation of dedicated educators to remember, “Our responsibility is to remind each other and our students and their families by words and actions in our example, that God, and particularly Jesus, offers and invites each of us to friendship and love to remind them that not only does God exist, but He cares about them.”



Kasey McKernon (left) and other teachers make the Sign of the Cross. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

In his address at the convocation, Bishop Olson affirmed how Catholic education has always been known to help students gain a sense of identity,

supporting them throughout every stage in their lives.

– Christina Benavides



# Views from the Pews

Parishes from all 28 counties of the diocese let the Son shine this summer in events near, such as Vacation Bible Schools, and far, such as a mission trip to Chicago and a pilgrimage to World Youth Day. Here's a sample:

**Light of Christ.** A symbol of enduring faith, the congregation of St. Paul Parish in Electra reconsecrated a newly illuminated cross on the site of the long-retired Mt. Carmel Catholic Church and adjacent to the parish cemetery, which is still used today.

**Quo Vadis.** About 60 high school boys attended this annual retreat, which is Latin for "Where are you going?" During the day, they learned how to deepen their faith, pray well, and grow in virtue, as well as took some time for sports and board games.

**Appreciative Knights.** About 350 attended the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Knights of Columbus Priest and Religious Appreciation Dinner. The Knights presented a check for more than \$214,000 to the diocese for seminarian education and deaf ministry.

MORE PHOTOS



See more photos of these and other events by scanning the QR code or visiting [North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com](http://North-Texas-Catholic.smugmug.com)



NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Juan Guajardo



NTC/Juan Guajardo

# Shrine of Light

New Marian shrine shines light on Burkburnett's bright Catholic community



A view of the new Marian statue at St. Jude Thaddeus Parish. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

**BURKBURNETT** — Blessed with grit, a close-knit community, and strong leadership, the parishioners of St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett consecrated their Marian shrine on August 15 after working together for two years to complete a central focus on outdoor fellowship as well as a sanctuary for private prayer.

The parishioners' perseverance to complete the project was evident throughout the "various stages of construction" and was the reason for its continuous momentum and ultimate success, pastor Father Joseph Moreno said. One parishioner found a brick artisan who custom made the shrine; another selflessly donated funds for the purchase of the Italian marble statue of Mary, the last available in the U.S. at the time; and one more congregant, with an ardent passion for gardening, volunteered to cover the cost of landscaping. Once they "finally got the statue into its shrine," parish families then contributed to the brick courtyard that leads up to the shrine, with each member placing in a paver by hand.

"Everything was homegrown; that was kind of the beauty of it," Fr. Moreno said.

He hopes that the shrine, which sits in clear view of the road, will be a clear sign to the city of Burkburnett that this church is "an unashamedly, unapologetically Catholic parish."

— Christina Benavides

## Safe Environment

### BY THE NUMBERS

"Bishop Michael Olson established and fortified safe environment programs that emphasize our commitment to creating and sustaining a secure and supportive space for everyone who participates in the worship, fellowship, and activities of our parish and school communities in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

"Through our programs, we mandate and verify that all clergy, employees, and volunteers undergo safe environment training, background checks, and additional screening before they serve in any ministry.

"These ongoing efforts, championed and endorsed by Bishop Olson, enable us to safeguard the vulnerable and foster a culture of safety and respect for all."

— Sandra Schrader-Farry  
Director of Safe Environment

**175** facilitators, the majority of whom are volunteers, run the sessions.



**908**

safe environment sessions were offered in 2023.

**35,702**

adults have taken the "Protecting God's Children" **basic training session**.

**15,353**

adults have taken the **renewal session**, which is required two years after the initial training.

**3,098**

adults have taken the new renewal session, "A Plan to Protect."

Trainings are offered in **5** different languages.



See more news from around the diocese online at [NorthTexasCatholic.org](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org).

# First day of school



HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC SCHOOL (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON SCHOOL (NTC/Rodger Mallison)



NOLAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

## An exemplar of education



Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School named in Newman Guide

**KELLER** — The Cardinal Newman Society, since 2007, has researched and published a list of “model Catholic colleges ... with strong policies and standards that uphold Catholic identity,” as the organization states on its website.

This year, for the first time, the organization selected K-12 schools

that “stand as an exemplar of faithful Catholic education.”

Only seven elementary, middle, or high schools nationwide were chosen to be recognized this year. Among the exclusive list: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School in Keller.

Sharon Barmore, who teaches pre-K3 through



Sharon Barmore at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School. (NTC/Rodger Mallison)

third grade religion, said the school’s teachers “want to

proclaim the faith as it should be, to do our best to live it.”



# Diocese expands adult faith formation program



Robin Harris (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

How do you make a good thing even better? Offer more of it.

Last year, the Diocese of Fort Worth revised its adult faith formation curriculum and enrolled more than 500 in the program.

Based on that success and a growth in demand, this year the diocese will offer 24 courses, including online in English and Spanish, up from 16 last fall.

Increasing availability is a priority for Diocesan Director of Evangelization and Catechesis Jason Whitehead. “The intention is to ensure that everyone who wants to be properly catechized in the faith throughout the entire diocese has relatively easy access to it,” regardless of where you live, he said.

Robin Harris, an instructor and director of faith formation at St. Michael Parish in Bedford, said the classes “convey the richness of the faith through the beautiful material of the liturgy, Scripture, and the

*Catechism* ... delivering the consistent message of God’s gracious love for us through Jesus and through the Church God has given us.”

In 2022, the Diocese of Fort Worth simplified its two programs of adult education — the St. Junipero Serra Institute and the St. Francis de Sales program — to focus on the Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The difference in the St. Junipero Serra Institute classes and the St. Francis de Sales program boils down to frequency. Classes in the St. Junipero Serra Institute are held weekly, and the St. Francis de Sales program offers monthly classes.

The courses, which begin in September, are offered in English and Spanish, including online or in person at parishes in Wichita Falls, Weatherford, Keller, Arlington, Bedford, and Fort Worth. To learn more or to register, visit [fwdioc.org/st-francis-de-sales](http://fwdioc.org/st-francis-de-sales) or [fwdioc.org/st-junipero-serra-institute](http://fwdioc.org/st-junipero-serra-institute).

## Top of the class

 Cassata Catholic High School’s Kenneth Scagel selected as a top Tarrant County teacher

**FORT WORTH** — Kenneth Scagel was firmly ensconced in his corporate job when he got a phone call from a mentor. The call changed his life.

A former teacher of his, a person he admired, asked him to leave his corporate job and become an educator. The request required not only deliberation but concurrence from his wife, Elizabeth, as the move would significantly impact the finances of his young family.

But, as Scagel put it, the corporate job “just wasn’t right.” He was good at what he

did, but the job “wasn’t good for my soul.”

Today, some 20 years later, Scagel and his wife have seven children, and he is a teacher at Cassata Catholic High School in Fort Worth being recognized in *Fort Worth Magazine* as one of the top educators in the city.

Scagel is passionate about his profession as well as the school where he is an English, Latin, and theology teacher. Cassata, a nontraditional diocesan high school with a student body from a variety of backgrounds and faiths,

places an emphasis on supporting students who deal with learning differences, academic and medical accommodations, and other hardships.

“We are a tight-knit group of teachers at a unique and remarkable school,” he said. “This is recognition for all of us.”

— Brenda Raney



Kenneth Scagel  
(NTC/Rodger Mallison)

# ASSIGNMENTS

BY MOST REV. MICHAEL OLSON

## REV. THOMAS D'SOUZA, SAC

Previously Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Mineral Wells and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Graford, has been appointed **Priest-in-residence**, effective June 30.

## REV. JIM NGO-HOANG KHOI, CRM

Previously Pastor of Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in Wichita Falls, has been **recalled** by his religious order, effective June 13.

## REV. RONALD MOHNICKEY, TOR

Previously Parochial Vicar of Good Shepherd Parish in Colleyville, has been **recalled** by his religious order, effective May 1.

## REV. MICHAEL TRAC PHAM, CRM

Returning to the Diocese of Fort Worth, has been appointed **Pastor** of Immaculate Conception of Mary Parish in Wichita Falls, effective June 16.

## REV. JOSEPH TETLOW, SJ

Previously assigned to Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House, has been **recalled** by his religious order, effective June 18.

## REV. ANH TRAN

Previously Parochial Vicar of St. John the Apostle Parish in North Richland Hills, has taken a medical leave of absence, effective July 10.

### RELIGIOUS SISTERS

## SISTER ANNA BOSCO - MINH HUE NGUYEN, OP

Previously assigned to St. Rita Catholic School in Fort Worth, has been **recalled** by her religious order, effective July 31.

## SISTER IMMACULATA - THUY KIEU NGUYEN, OP

Previously assigned to Holy Family Catholic School in Fort Worth, has been **recalled** by her religious order, effective July 31.

# IN MEMORIAM

SISTER ANDREA LORAN



Sr. Andrea Loran

Sister Andrea Loran, age 96, a member of St. Scholastica Monastery, died July 13 in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Sr. Andrea was born August 26, 1926, in Rhineland to Liberatus and Bertha Strubel Loran, and she was named Helen. She was the eighth child of eleven born to the Loran family.

Sr. Andrea entered St. Scholastica Monastery on September 2, 1940, joining her sister, Sister Martha, as a Benedictine. Sr. Andrea made her final profession on June 24, 1952.

Educated in dietetics and food service, she will be remembered for her hospitality.

## Budding Formation

Please pray for our seminarians as they begin another year of formation.



Seminarians are honored during the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Priest and Religious Appreciation Dinner hosted by the Knights of Columbus. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

# 29

Seminarians in the Diocese of Fort Worth

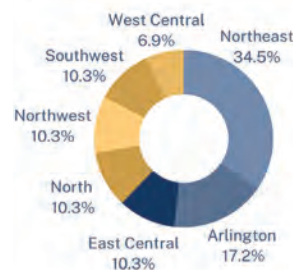
### DEMOGRAPHICS:

**55%** Anglo-Caucasian  
**24%** Hispanic  
**21%** Asian/Middle-Eastern descent



# 6 OUT OF 29

Seminarians attended Catholic school for elementary or high school.



### SEMINARIAN DEANERY BREAKDOWN

The seminarians originated from eight deaneries located within the Diocese of Fort Worth.



Deacon Daniel Zavala speaks about the role of Catholic faith in caring for his elderly mother-in-law at the Aging with Grace conference on July 18. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

# A Well-Planned Finish

Aging with Grace workshops give Catholic perspective on spiritual, medical, and legal aspects of advanced age

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Committed to caring for her elderly parents in the best possible way, Mary Dederichs attended the Aging with Grace workshop on July 18 at Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth, hoping information gleaned from the presentations would guide her role as a caregiver.

“My mom has dementia, and my stepdad has Alzheimer’s. Dealing with that situation, I want to better understand the medical power of attorney I have and make sure I’m doing everything properly for them,” the St. Andrew parishioner explained.

Hearing how others coped with the behavior of aging parents with kindness and empathy was an added bonus. Dederichs added, “At the end of the day, when I make decisions for loved ones, I want to have peace in my heart and know I’ve done the best for them.”

Sponsored by the diocesan Respect Life Office, Advancement Foundation, and

the St. Thomas More Society Fort Worth, the four-hour seminar addressed spiritual, medical, and legal end-of-life issues from a Catholic perspective. Organizers expected 40 people to sign up for the first-time diocesan event.

“We doubled that,” observed Terri Schauf, Respect Life coordinator. “I think that speaks to the need for something like this. It was eye-opening for those of us who planned it.”

The pro-life advocate said the exceptional turnout affirmed the decision to bring the seminar to other parts of the diocese. Sacred Heart Parish in Wichita Falls will host the next Aging with Grace seminar on Thursday, Oct. 26.

“Offering the workshop in Spanish is in the plans, but the date isn’t settled,” Schauf continued. “Holy Trinity also has expressed interest in hosting one in the Azle area in November.”

Empty nesters, retirees, and caregivers

of elderly relatives attending the event heard from several lawyers who discussed the importance of preparing documents like wills and advanced directives as well as Church teaching on making ethical medical decisions.

Deacon Daniel Zavala helped the audience understand caring for the sick and elderly not just from the side of knowledge, but also from the heart. “As we age, we have more time to reflect on what we learn and what God has taught us about the real meaning and purpose of our lives,” he said.

Currently going through the process of estate planning for himself and relatives, Good Shepherd parishioner Alan Store found the workshop timely.

“Getting the Catholic perspective is why we’re here,” he said. “Understanding the guidelines is important. A stroke happens, and you’re forced to consider things you haven’t thought of before. It’s best to plan for the future.” 🇺🇸

# 25 YEARS OF joyful service

The joy of Christ infuses Father Philip Brembah's ordination anniversary, celebration, and service

By Matthew Smith

A contagious sense of gleeful bonhomie emanates from Father Philip Brembah of Arlington's St. Vincent de Paul Parish, coupled with a disposition to focus on positivity and opportunity in a world too often seeming to lack both.

All such attributes were ever present July 18 as parishioners and guests gathered to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fr. Brembah's ordination. Many who attended the celebration remained on hand to personally visit with and thank Fr. Brembah during a reception featuring speakers and the music of his native Ghana.

It feels a lifetime ago yet only yesterday, Fr. Brembah said of his July 1998 ordination in the Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana.

"I am filled with joy," Fr. Brembah said during his homily. "Since [1998], so many things have happened, but it also seems to be not too long of a time ago."

A cause for celebration and gratitude, Fr. Brembah's anniversary also serves as a reminder to focus on something bigger than himself.

"First I give thanks to God," Fr.

Brembah said. "Because it is by His grace that I am where I am and what I am today. I thank God every day for being with me, guarding me, protecting me, and bringing me this far."

Fr. Brembah has served in the Diocese of Fort Worth since 2008, having previously served at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington, Holy Family of Nazareth Parish in Vernon, St. Joseph Parish in Crowell, and St. Mary Parish in Quanah before coming to St. Vincent de Paul about five years ago.

God works in mysterious ways, Fr. Brembah mused.

Despite his close friendship with his namesake and mentor Father Philip Boateng as a youth growing up, Fr. Brembah initially harbored dreams of studying law or politics, or becoming a soldier, instead of entering the seminary. Enter he did, however, and after a discernment year, he realized he was where God needed him to be.

Tragedy struck soon after.

"My father died when I entered the seminary that first year," Fr. Brembah said.

"I became responsible for the upbringing of my younger siblings, and that was a heavy time."

Saddened but determined, Fr. Brembah continued his journey toward priesthood, and thanks to support from his mother and siblings, he persisted, and ultimately succeeded.

"I thank my mother and my siblings," Fr. Brembah said. "This is what I seek in my life, that I will live this vocation until the end."

Of God's mysterious ways, Fr. Brembah can't help but smile.

"I never thought about or wanted to teach," Fr. Brembah said with a laugh. "Naturally, my first appointment was to teach at the school where I had gone to seminary."

From there, Fr. Brembah's priestly duties took him to the Netherlands, then back to Ghana, and, finally, to Texas. A journey of unexpected twists and turns at times, Fr. Brembah said, but all in service of Christ.

"It has been a very beautiful and



Father Philip Brembah receives a gift from Monsignor Francis Boakye Tawiah during a reception honoring Fr. Brembah's priestly anniversary on July 18. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

wonderful journey, and I do not regret for one moment being a priest," Fr. Brembah said. "I hope and believe [my father] would be very happy and proud to see his son become a priest."

Fr. Brembah's sole moment of sadness during the celebration was that his father did not live long enough to see him become a priest.

"Please remember me in your prayers, and pray for the departed soul of my dad," Fr. Brembah said.

Fr. Brembah thanked Monsignor Francis Boakye Tawiah of St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound with whom he attended seminary.

"A brother, a friend," Fr. Brembah said. "You give me counsel and feed me. Thank you for being here tonight to support me."

Special thanks, too, went out to the parishioners and staff of St. Vincent de Paul.

"Since the moment I stepped into this parish, I have always been happy, and the reason for my joy is you," Fr. Brembah said.

Joy comes, Fr. Brembah said, from being part of a vibrant parish of roughly 60 active ministries.

"I remind my staff that we are doing ministry and that ministry is more than a job," Fr. Brembah said. "I remind our parishioners that we are not a social society but here as part of the Body of Christ and, as such, an extension of the sacraments we celebrate here and carry out into the world."

Celebrating the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, is the best part of being a priest, Fr. Brembah said. Challenges, he added, are to be met rather than fretted over.

"I don't become disheartened over challenges because I see too many opportunities through collaborating and cooperating through ministry," Fr. Brembah said.

Parishioner D'Ann Gonzalez characterized Fr. Brembah as welcoming, active, and involved. Gonzalez' husband, Daniel Gonzalez, agreed.

"He's so personable and likable, just always available," Daniel Gonzalez said.

"He comes to all the meetings, hangs out when we're barbecuing, doing fish fries."

Fr. Brembah expressed appreciation for the well wishes but reiterated the importance of maintaining a Christ-centered life in an often dark world.

"Distractions are all around that come from within and the outside," Fr. Brembah said. "Once we focus on Christ, the distractions still come, but we can sidestep them, maintain focus and drive, and not get offtrack." 🇺🇸

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# A TRIP of Faith

World Youth Day pilgrims return with purpose to Fort Worth Diocese

By Kiki Hayden

**F**rom Aug. 1 to Aug. 6, over a million Catholics from many nations made the pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. Texan pilgrims returned bearing witness to all they had experienced: the beauty of their Catholic heritage, the universal Church, their individual callings, and the need for Eucharistic revival.

Alex Lopez, 28, has been saving and planning for this trip ever since he learned that World Youth Day would be hosted in Lisbon, which is very close to Fátima

where Our Lady appeared in 1917. Before the trip, Lopez, the choir director of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth, told the *North Texas Catholic* that he looked forward to seeing “different cultures come together and seeing how that worship is unified through the Mass and through the sacraments.”

Lopez anticipated being immersed in the rich history of European Catholicism and planned to visit many old churches, to “really pray there and not just take pictures, not just look around,” he told the *NTC*.

“We’re pilgrims, not just tourists,”

said Father Johnson Le. “We need to let God lead us.” The 38-year-old priest grew up at Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Arlington and currently serves as pastor of St. Ann Catholic Parish in La Vernia in the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

Fr. Le’s love of sharing the Eucharist with others started when he was young. At Vietnamese Martyrs Parish, he coordinated the altar servers. A youth leader and external vice president during those years, Fr. Le was highly involved with the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement.

Fr. Le believes the “love of the Eucharist [he gained] through the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement” and serving at the altar “helped shape me to where I am now as a priest.”

Lucy Rojas also leaned heavily on her Catholic heritage as she made the pilgrimage to World Youth Day. At 27, she was the first in her family to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

“I was so blessed, and I was so thankful that my parents supported me in this journey,” she told the *NTC*. She also received encouragement from her coworkers at Immaculate Conception Parish in Denton where she works as receptionist and assistant bookkeeper.

Before World Youth Day officially started, Rojas and her group attended Mass in Fátima. Reminded of her grandmother’s deep devotion to the Rosary, Rojas was overcome with emotion.

“I was so proud to be Catholic; I was so proud to know the Rosary and the prayers; I was so proud of being part of

the family and ... this whole community,” she said. “I wasn’t just Mexican; I wasn’t a Texas girl; I was part of this Catholic community — this Body of Christ.”

On Aug. 4, Rojas and her group arrived at the park more than four hours early to have a clear view of World Youth Day’s Way of the Cross event. There they encountered folks from all over the world, including some new friends from El Salvador, Puerto Rico, and Mexico.

When the Pope was about to arrive, “the crowd chanted: ‘Ésta es la juventud del Papa!’ [Spanish for ‘This is the youth of the Pope!’] and ‘Papa Francisco!’ [Spanish for ‘Pope Francis!’], and I was in tears,” Rojas recalled.

A Spanish teacher at Nolan Catholic High School, 37-year-old Faviola Ojeda is passionate about exposing students to Spanish outside the classroom. Alongside math teacher Duc Nguyen and two parent chaperones, Ojeda accompanied 14 Nolan students on a pilgrimage through Spain and Portugal, culminating in their experiences at World Youth Day.

“[World Youth Day] did a good job of rotating languages,” said Ojeda. “Especially for the Stations of the Cross. They would do one station

in English, the next station in Spanish, and then they’d do Portuguese and French. They also had the translations on the radios,” Ojeda said. “The Church is universal, and this was a perfect example of that.”

Ojeda felt the effects of World Youth Day may not be immediately known, believing “it might just be that it happens

later, in a couple of years, when they reflect back on it, [thinking] that was God calling me there.”

For some, though, the impact feels immediate.

Thirty-year-old Katrina Bernhard described her reaction as “shaken, overwhelming, and transforming.”

Bernhard attended World Youth Day with Fr. Le’s group, the San Antonio Archdiocesan delegation.

Shortly before her trip, the Holy Spirit led her from teaching music in New Braunfels to her current position as donor management specialist for the Advancement Foundation for the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth.

Bernhard told the *NTC* she planned to adopt the pilgrim’s mentality of “rolling with the punches.” That attitude turned out to be very important. Traveling with a large group meant there were unexpected delays and other challenges.

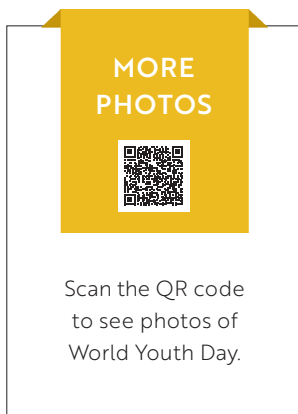
But there were good surprises too. One unexpected experience was adoring the Eucharistic miracle of Santarem.

“I encountered the Father like I never had before,” she wrote via email.

Bernhard was taken aback by the wide range of attitudes she encountered. For example, she was moved to see so many people on their knees approaching the chapel commemorating Our Lady’s appearance at Fátima. On the other hand, she also noticed some people streaming soccer games or smoking cigarettes during Mass.

“Having these encounters with different people in different walks” was both encouraging and conflicting for Bernhard. She realized “the call for the Eucharistic revival is very important.”

Returning to Fort Worth, Bernhard said, “I left feeling like I had a mission.” 🇺🇸





Deacon Daniel Zavala distributes Communion during Mass July 30 at John M. Tidwell Middle School in Roanoke. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

A year after its inaugural Mass, St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish looks to God for growth and direction

By Susan Moses

**M**ilestones in the history of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Fort Worth include Franciscan missionaries arriving in the 1500s, a French priest establishing St. Patrick Cathedral in 1876, and early Catholic settlers offering their homes for Mass in the late 1800s in many towns including Gainesville, Henrietta, and Weatherford.

History is still being made as the Catholic Church grows in the diocese. In September, the diocese's newest parish, St. Teresa of Calcutta in Roanoke, celebrates its one-year anniversary.

Following the lead of the Holy Spirit, Pastor Father Brijil Lawrence, SAC, and Deacon Daniel Zavala have led the parish through the challenges and triumphs of its momentous first year.

The 92<sup>nd</sup> parish in the diocese celebrated its first Mass on Sunday, Sept. 4, 2022, in an existing portable building which seats about 100 on 13517 Alta Vista Road. Located north of U.S. Highway 170 and east of I-35W, the parish was established by Bishop Michael Olson due to tremendous population growth in Tarrant and Denton counties.

Within weeks of celebrating the



inaugural Mass, the parish added a Saturday Vigil Mass and moved Sunday Mass to the cafeteria of nearby John M. Tidwell Middle School to accommodate a larger assembly, which now nears 200 on Sunday mornings.

## FROM SCRATCH

Since its first Mass, according to Dcn. Zavala, “People have just come out of the woodwork — ‘Can I help here?’”

From mowing the 31-acre property to washing altar linens, volunteers have stepped up to handle many of the practical tasks of maintaining a parish.

Sherrie and Chad Degner embody the cooperative disposition of parishioners.

They visited the parish shortly after it opened and offered to assist where needed. Now she coordinates the Mass readers, and he serves as head usher and started a Knights of Columbus Council at the parish.

“I’ve never been on the ground floor of a new church before. All the people want to help. It’s uplifting,” Sherrie said, adding that volunteers have organized several social and charitable activities.

Still, Dcn. Zavala admits, he and the parish’s lone staff member, Mike Waldon, “wear 52 hats.” For example, removing wasp nests, cleaning bathrooms, and running wires through ceilings, to name a few. All the while, they are also planning for the future needs of the growing parish.

“We’re doing what we can to start this [parish] from the ground, from scratch,” Dcn. Zavala said.

Introducing a faith formation program is a priority for this fall, especially sacramental preparation. Dcn. Zavala added, “We weren’t even thinking of doing RCIA, but then we had a lot of people inquire. So okay, we’re going to do RCIA.”

Waldon, a deacon candidate, meets frequently with individuals and families. He said listening to the needs of the congregation is paramount. “It’s the Lord’s parish; it’s the Lord’s church. We have to



A St. Teresa of Calcutta parishioner takes down a sign after the July 30 Mass at John M. Tidwell Middle School in Roanoke. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

listen, to be open, to pray about what He wants, and to be patient,” said the deacon candidate, who was previously director of evangelization and faith formation at St. Patrick Cathedral.

Another objective is building an all-purpose hall that will seat about 400 and serve as a worship and meeting space until a church is built later. The hall would save the expense of renting Tidwell’s cafeteria, plus eliminate the time of transporting and setting up all the necessary items to celebrate Sunday Mass in the school.

Dcn. Zavala would appreciate having a larger, permanent facility, but he’s focused on building the church. He said, “People ask, ‘When are we going to have a church?’ Well, we are a church already. We’re building our church community right now, and that’s far more important than the building that we will end up in someday.”

The deacon takes inspiration from the parish’s humble patroness, St. Teresa of Calcutta, thinking “it is fitting that we have very little, and what we do have is old. We’re doing the best with what we have, and that helps connect me with her, because she did the same thing.”

Waldon agreed. “What we’ve got,

what we have or don’t have doesn’t limit us. The Lord will take us where He wants us to go,” he said. “It’s daunting, but it’s God’s church. People have stepped in. God provides. We’ve never been without. The Lord multiplied the fishes and the loaves, so we bring what we have and He takes care of the rest.”

## BUILD UP

Each week, Dcn. Zavala notices new faces at Mass, some new to North Texas and others who used to drive 25 minutes to a different parish. He said, “So many of them say, ‘I live five minutes away.’ Just look around. You’ve got apartment buildings, and then you’ve got whole neighborhoods just for miles. I’m impressed that Bishop Olson pulled the trigger and got a church going.”

Waldon commented, “Our diocese is an exception. So many dioceses are closing or consolidating parishes, and we are expanding. What the Lord is doing — developing and growing — excites me to no end.”

The parish leaders are careful to take their plans to prayer, seeking God’s will with every decision.

“One thing that Bishop Olson asked me when he gave me this assignment was to make sure that I build the community around Christ, and Christ in the Eucharist,” Dcn. Zavala recalled. “This is building God’s kingdom. It’s for the good of souls, and it doesn’t get more important than that.” 🇺🇸

**MORE PHOTOS**



Scan the QR code to see photos of St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish.



# Legacy and Outreach

Catholic Daughters of the Americas celebrate 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary

By Matthew Smith

**B**efore a June 22 Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral, sounds of laughter, playful fun, and friendships — renewed and newly formed — mixed with a sense of dignity and purpose to celebrate the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Court Louise No. 209 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas. The court is one of several Catholic Daughters chapters throughout the Diocese of Fort Worth.

“[Catholic Daughters] started in 1903 when the wives of Knights of

Columbus members chartered it,” Court Louise event chair and newsletter editor Juanita Zarate said. “They couldn’t have a Knights chapter for women because that was for men. So this gave Catholic women opportunities too.”

Court Louise No. 209 — new courts are numbered sequentially as they are established — began in 1913 with 46 charter members.

The members named their new court Louise in honor of Sister Louise Hays. One of the Sisters of St. Mary of

Namur, Sr. Louise served as superior of St. Ignatius Academy, adjacent to St. Patrick, from 1889 until her death in 1905.

“Our chapter calls two churches home now,” Zarate said.

Earlier members met at St. Ignatius and later established Our Lady of Grace nearby Pennsylvania Avenue, which was used until it closed in 1968.

“They had to find another location for meetings at that point,” Zarate said. “[Holy Family Church] was building a

THERE'S  
MORE!



Check out more photos covering the Catholic Daughters of the Americas' anniversary at:  
[NORTH-TEXAS-CATHOLIC.SMUGMUG.COM](http://NORTH-TEXAS-CATHOLIC.SMUGMUG.COM)

new church, so they allowed us to meet there, and we combined members of both.”

Participating members from other parishes joined as well.

“Our members [represent] churches of all the Diocese of Fort Worth,” Zarate said. “I’m from St. Ann Church in Burleson. We’re open to all Catholic women in the diocese — which I put in the newsletter we send out — and invite all Catholic women to join us.”

Zarate will celebrate her 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a member of Catholic Daughters in September.

“I attended the celebration for [Court Louise’s] 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and that’s how I got hooked,” Zarate said with a laugh. “My second response was to join soon after.”

Although Zarate previously served as the court’s vice regent, she joked that she’s happier behind the scenes as a doer rather than a leader.

“My husband calls me a permanent volunteer,” Zarate said. “But this one is my favorite. It keeps me in my spirituality in the Church.”

For Zarate, participation in Catholic Daughters brings friendship and support. More importantly, it creates opportunities to join with other Catholic women to help each other and grow in faith together.

Louise Court Vice Regent Dolores Gutierrez feels much the same.

“This is a national organization,” Gutierrez said. “But I was in awe when I joined. Everybody keeps in touch. There’s always something going on with the groups of all the courts, and we share. It’s amazing and awesome.

Spiritually, I’ve always been close to God, but this has brought me closer [to Him] and to our Blessed Mother.”

Both Zarate and Gutierrez highlighted the important works of Court Louise and Catholic Daughters in general.

Court Louise members helped establish Fort Worth’s mission Our Lady of Guadalupe and, in 1922, opened St. Ann’s Business Women’s Home, a nonsectarian home for working girls.

“We welcomed young women coming to the big city to work,” Zarate said. “That gave them the safe haven of an apartment until they got on with their careers or married. We ran that until 1968.”

Court members volunteer for Gabriel Project among other charitable outreach activities and host an annual Lenten retreat, which attracts about 100 women from throughout the diocese.

“They’re invited every year to join Catholic Daughters or just go on the retreat,” Zarate said. “We put no pressure.”

Since 1983, court members, along with area KOC members, have co-hosted the American Way Awards program honoring eighth grade boys and girls from each diocesan school who are judged to best exemplify devotion to God and country.

Unique among Catholic Daughters chapters, Zarate said, is Court Louise’s \$1,000 annual scholarship to mothers hoping to continue their education.

“We have two young ladies who recently became teachers because of help from that scholarship,” Zarate said.

In a nod toward their court’s

namesake, Court Louise members continue to support retired Sisters of St. Mary of Namur at the Our Lady of Victory Center through donations of food, household, and other items.

Father Hoa Nguyen, who serves as chaplain for Court Louise, spoke of God’s call of purpose to all.

“All [Catholic Daughters members] here today have answered that call,” Fr. Nguyen said during his homily. “To live your lives, to bring justice, and serve through charitable work. To reflect the light of God, live humbly like our Mother, bring Jesus into the world, and participate in the work of the Church.”

The Louise Chapter’s membership remains faithful if small, Gutierrez and Zarate said.

State Regent Carolyn Ritchey, who traveled from Sealy to attend, characterized the state’s 15,000-plus Catholic Daughters members as a sisterhood of faith and camaraderie.

“It’s not the size of your court that matters,” Ritchey told Court Louise members. “It’s the huge hearts you all have that continue to grow in love and in sisterhood. God is truly smiling down on each and every one of you, and I say never stop what you’re doing.”

Court Louise Regent Jan E. Law spoke of the chapter’s devotion to the Blessed Mother and desire among members to live their lives the way Christ wants.

“We’re glad to be here doing our part among the magnificent things people are doing in the diocese,” Law said. “Our group, men’s groups, other Catholic Daughters, and everyone doing our parts to follow in God’s footsteps.” 🇺🇸



Father Anto Vijayan Carloose, SAC, (left) and Father Sam Jesu Antony, SAC, pose inside their new rectory adjacent to St. John the Baptizer Church in Bridgeport on July 6. New rectories include a chapel, a common area, and a study area. (NTC photos/Juan Guajardo)

# a place to call home

Four rectories completed, three more under construction in diocese

By Matthew Smith

**W**here other dioceses are closing or converting former church-related buildings, the Diocese of Fort Worth is building and updating.

Several New Jersey Catholic churches, rectories, and schools have been converted into private homes, community centers, and other secular uses, according to a 2023 *NJ.com* article. Additional news articles report similar trends throughout the U.S. and the world.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, however,

work is underway to replace aging rectories or add them to parish campuses that previously lacked a rectory.

Fort Worth, Keller, Wichita Falls, and Bridgeport parishes received new rectories over the past four years while construction at three more is expected to be complete by year's end.

The plan, Diocese Senior Construction Manager Tom Ross said, is to continue building.

"Of our 92 parishes, some won't require a change in rectory location for

some time," Ross said. "Some, because of age or condition, we'd like to change as soon as possible, but finances are a hindrance. As time allows and money becomes available, we'll look at addressing those."

Most older parishes included a rectory on their campus. Trends changed for churches constructed mid-century on.

"There were several factors to that," Ross said. "One being the size of the parish campus and whether it could accommodate a rectory or not. Some can't. So, in many cases, it became looking at housing

within the neighborhood and checking if there was available housing close by, using that as opposed to building a rectory... A lot has changed, and the trend now is we're trying to build new rectories on campuses, if possible."

New rectory benefits range from relocating priests closer to their parish to updating safety and convenience amenities to security. Housing a priest, or priests, on campus also goes a long way toward discouraging parish vandalism or break-ins. And although rectories function as homes, they also include private chapels, common areas, work and study areas, and often house more than one priest.

"In conversations we've had with priests and building committees involved, we've stressed that we're not building these rectories for a specific priest," Ross said. "Priests will change over the years, so we're designing for the duration of the life of the rectory."

In the pursuit of making these long-lasting structures for current and future priests, however, challenges arise from the fact that parishes, not the diocese, are responsible for raising construction funding. Other difficulties include discerning what changes can be performed on rectories designated as historic.

To meet the fundraising challenge for their rectory, Fort Worth's St. Andrew Parish sold an older home several blocks from the church previously used as a rectory to help pay the debt on their new building.

As for the layout of the rectory, the diocese employed architects to develop three models of varying square footage able to accommodate two to three priests and a guest bedroom.

Of the rectories so far completed, the response has been positive, Ross said.

"This is a beautiful new home that contributes to our work and the parish," said Father Anto Carlose, SAC, of Bridgeport's St. John the Baptizer Parish.

Bishop Michael Olson blessed the St. John the Baptizer's new rectory in April, and parish members toured it on May 7. Fr. Carlose and Fr. Sam Antony, SAC, then moved in on May 8.

Both priests serve what they call a tri-parish area consisting of Bridgeport's St. John, Jacksboro's St. Mary Parish,



and Decatur's Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish.

"We had an old, smaller rectory at Bridgeport," Fr. Carlose said. "But we never had a proper office for the three parishes, so our plan is to convert that old rectory into an office. We're getting quotes and working on that now."

Father Wilson Lucka of Azle's Holy Trinity Church likewise expressed gratitude for the new rectory soon to be built on his church campus.

Holy Trinity functioned as a mission of St. Thomas the Apostle Church from

1982 until 2019 when Bishop Olson established it as an independent parish.

"I'm the first full-time priest at the parish, and this will be our first rectory," Fr. Lucka said. "It will be on the same campus as the church. And the rectory will belong to the parish as opposed to renting a house."

"It will have more room and conveniences. It will have a guest room so, if another priest comes, he can stay there. More than that, I think it will help to better work with parishioners and the church." 🗺️

# ALL OF US AS ONE

African Catholics in North America celebrate unity and inspire outreach at African National Eucharistic Congress

By Sandra Engelland

For several members of the diocesan delegation who attended the African National Eucharistic Congress in Washington, DC, the gathering helped them focus on the reality of Christ in their midst and called them to reach out to fellow Africans and to their broader communities.

Monsignor Francis Boakye Tawiah, parochial vicar at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Flower Mound, said he was reminded to focus on the Lord's presence, both in the Eucharist and in daily life.

"We are to promote the sense that the Lord is with us in whatever we do," Msgr. Tawiah said. "It's not just about the Eucharist, but a practice to share with people you meet every day."

The African National Eucharistic Congress (ANEC), held at the Catholic University of America on July 21-23, brought together hundreds of Catholics from Africa now living in North America and a number of priests and sisters from both the U.S. and African nations. The Diocese of Fort Worth sent a delegation of 13, including three priests and 10 laypeople.

Established in 2006, ANEC takes place every five years.

Emma Uwaniyigena, a parishioner

at Our Mother of Mercy in Fort Worth, appreciated the opportunity to meet Africans from many different countries and backgrounds who speak different languages but have the "same hope" in Christ.

"We also saw the impact of the African community in growing the priesthood," she said. "It was the first time for me to see more than 10 priests from Africa in the U.S. There were more than 100 priests there. It was very exciting and promising."

Emmanuel Ogidan, a parishioner at Holy Family in Fort Worth, said he sensed a calling to revival and "bringing hope to the hopeless."

Ogidan said the worship in Adoration and Mass was both solemn and joyful — a solemn opportunity to seek healing and restoration and a joyful celebration with drums.

Nana Aafia, a parishioner at St. Joseph Parish in Arlington and a student at the University of Texas at Austin, said she was inspired to share unity in Christ with both her Ghanaian community at St. Joseph and with friends at the UT Catholic Center.

"I realized the two didn't need to be separated," Aafia said. "They showed us how we may all be one and how we get the most unity."

Amadeus Mlay and his wife Stella Meela Mlay from St. Brendan Parish in Stephenville said the highlight of the congress was being able to celebrate the Eucharist with so many cardinals, bishops, archbishops, priests, sisters, deacons, and many Africans from different countries speaking different languages, yet still understanding each other in the Mass and Adoration.

"We celebrated Mass with our own languages and cultures," Stella said. "This was only possible through Jesus Christ in the Eucharist — that 'We may all be one as He and the Father are one.'"

Several of the Fort Worth delegation said the event reminded them of the beauty and vibrant faith in African Catholic Churches. The Mass at ANEC lasted a few hours and included drums and African hymns.

Msgr. Tawiah, originally from Ghana, said most African Catholics experience worship culture shock when they first attend Mass in the United States. He was surprised to find that Americans and Europeans tend to keep their Mass strictly at one hour, and the style of worship is usually subdued and classical.

African churches have a different way to worship the same Christ.

"We sing, we dance and play our drums," he said. "It's not about an hour's



Augustine Abotsi and Monsignor Francis Boakye Tawiah were in the diocesan delegation that attended the African National Eucharistic Congress. (Courtesy Photo/Augustine Abotsi)

Mass. It's about being there until it's done."

Ogidan found the worship brought back a lot of good memories. Back in Nigeria, Mass often lasted two to three hours. "It's led by the Spirit, and you can't be in a hurry," he said.

He wants to build understanding with believers from across different cultures.

"We're worshipping the same God, and we stand to gain more for advancing His Kingdom when we respect each other and deal with each other's differences," Ogidan said.

Aafia said the experience renewed her gratitude for the Ghanaian community at St. Joseph where she can worship in the African cultural tradition.

"Going back to school, I'm able to educate people around me about different ways to worship," she said. "There are many different ways that the Lord calls us

to be close to Him, and that's okay."

Msgr. Tawiah is grateful for the Congress calling him to identify African Catholics in North Texas and encourage them to return to the Church.

He knew of several African Christians who left the Church in America to join a Pentecostal church. They didn't feel like they belonged in the more classical Western Catholic style of worship.

Catholics can call them back by offering community and deep meaning, he said.

Uwaniyigena, originally from Rwanda, said she wants to "try to inspire our youth to keep our Catholic identity. She said that offering activities for young people in addition to Mass would help build community.

Ogidan said that when he came to the United States from Nigeria in 2001, he felt welcomed by St. Matthew Parish in

Arlington. Parishioners went out of their way to help his family get to church.

Ogidan became a lector and made many friends, including a white couple who became godparents to his son. His older brother, who arrived in America in the 1980s, didn't feel welcomed by his local Catholic church, so he left and joined an African Protestant church.

At ANEC, Ogidan was inspired to connect with other Africans in his home parish and encourage African Catholics who left the Church. He also wants to help Africans who are new to North Texas feel welcome.

"It boosted my confidence that I'm not a lone African Catholic. I'm on the right path," he said. "It boosted my confidence that we can achieve so much, and there are actually a huge number of African Catholics who are still living the faith." 🇺🇸

# GRATITUDE AND giving

Support for the Annual Diocesan Appeal helps build  
God's kingdom now and for future generations

By Susan Moses

**E**nsuring that the next generation learns to love and practice the Catholic faith requires both individual and collective action from the faithful.

On an individual level, it begins with parents, who are the first teachers of the faith. As a collective action, it extends to Catholics who give their time, treasure, and talents so those on society's periphery — by geography, poverty, or even imprisonment — can hear the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Church He founded.

The Advancement Foundation of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth sponsors the Annual Diocesan Appeal, inviting all the faithful of the diocese to impact lives beyond their individual parishes to reach their brothers and sisters in need in the diocese's 28 counties.

The Appeal supports rural and financially struggling parishes; Catholic Charities Fort Worth; formation for deacons and seminarians; mothers in crisis pregnancies; tuition assistance, security, and learning support in Catholic schools; and other needs in the 92 parishes, 17 schools, and various ministries of the diocese.

The faithful responded generously

to last year's Annual Diocesan Appeal, exceeding its goal of \$3.5 million by more than 6%.

Rachel Martinez, Advancement Foundation director of annual giving and grants, said, "The faithful looked at their lives and at God's generosity and chose stewardship throughout the year by supporting the Annual Appeal."

The Advancement Foundation has kicked off the 2023-24 Annual Diocesan Appeal, which will support 36 parish and nine school grants, among other purposes.

## COLLEGE LESSONS

The Appeal helps fund campus ministry at University of Texas at Arlington, Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, and Texas Christian University, among other universities in the diocese.

Campus ministry is an investment in the future of the Church.

Josh Hubbard, who recently began a campus missionary assignment with St. John Paul II University Parish in Denton, explained, "College is such a crucial place to intercept Catholics going out on their own for the first time because they really do make that choice of whether they're going to stick with the tradition of faith they had growing up."

Campus ministry provides faith formation and community to young adults on campus, plus it prepares the students to become parish lay ministers and catechists when they graduate and join new parishes.

Campus missionaries from St. John Paul II Parish reach out to Catholic students at University of North Texas and Texas Women's University.

Funding from the Annual Diocesan Appeal assists with their ministry, which begins with introducing themselves to students and inviting them to Mass, a Bible study, or a community night. The campus outreach also offers two retreats each semester. For those wanting to lead a Bible study, one-on-one discipleship is available.

Last year, Sam Macaraeg was the first campus missionary employed by St. John Paul II Parish. This year, Hubbard and Veronica Pyles have joined the staff.

"Our ministry is able to grow as quickly as we are willing to put work in," said Macaraeg, a UNT graduate.

Pyles served as an intern and Bible study leader before becoming a full-time campus missionary this year. She said it's rewarding to see a student who is lukewarm in their faith become a reignited, enthusiastic Catholic who goes on to lead





## HELPING WITH MISSIONS

(L-R) Veronica Pyles, Sam Macaraeg, and Josh Hubbard are on the missionary team at St. John Paul II University Parish in Denton. The Annual Diocesan Appeal funds part of their salaries. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Bible studies.

The three have big dreams for the long-term growth of the campus missionary program (as many as eight missionaries!), and even larger hopes for the universities they serve: that one day the universities will be known for their thriving Catholic communities as much as their academic programs.

The parish, with the help of the Appeal, is also developing future cantors and choir directors, according to David Gilmore, director of music at St. John Paul II University Parish.

The parish received a grant to help fund scholarships for section leaders — soprano, alto, tenor, and bass — for its choir. The scholarship recipients sing at both Sunday morning Masses, serve as cantors, and help recruit other musicians to the choir. Some past scholarship musicians have written original music for the parish.

Gilmore appreciates the support from the diocese. Not only does offering choral scholarships improve the quality of the music, but “it’s a vital part of the diocesan outreach. There are parishes that have to have help to get things going until they’re self-sufficient. Our parish is only 11 years old,” he said.

## PARISH LIFE

Another parish receiving support from the Annual Diocesan Appeal is nearing 100 years old.

Our Mother of Mercy Parish in Fort Worth, which was founded in 1929 for African American Catholics, applied for its first parish grant from the Annual Diocesan Appeal this year.

Most of the 36 parish grants are given to small rural parishes who request help with priest and staff salaries. But any parish may apply.

In this instance, Our Mother of Mercy parishioner Tim Jacquet took the lead in requesting funds.

Deacon Tom Giovannitti, parish life coordinator for Our Mother of Mercy, explained, “As a deacon, I had done a lot of liturgy in the past, but not [grant applications]. I knew it existed, and I knew we needed it, but I didn’t even know where to start.”

The two discussed what would best help the parish and determined that salary support for a new employee to help with youth ministry and

Continued on Page 26

## GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

The Annual Diocesan Appeal granted funds to St. Paul the Apostle Parish for their weekly food pantry, where Erin Rader (center) picks food items. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

### From Page 25

community outreach was a great need.

Jacquet, who volunteers with liturgy and development at the parish, envisions this employee will be an essential resource in the parish's mission "to go out, evangelize our parish and in the community, and do what God said to do — to bring people into the Church," he said.

Just five minutes from downtown or Fort Worth's medical district, the neighborhood around East Rosedale Street has been experiencing a revitalization with new homes and businesses. Dcn. Giovannitti has noticed a recent increase in health professionals attending daily Mass.

They foresee a similar revitalization in the parish. "Having that outreach person ... is perfect timing," said Jacquet.

"To have growth, you have to have young people, or young people with even younger people," said the deacon, who came out of retirement to serve at the parish.

Jacquet and Dcn. Giovannitti welcome both former and new parishioners to make a home at Our Mother of Mercy: young couples who grew up at Our Mother of Mercy then moved to the suburbs, plus newcomers to Fort Worth, whether they hail from neighboring Louisiana or distant Africa.

Jacquet said, "The roots of it is the African American experience. It's what makes us really unique and sought after. And it's the only one in the diocese."

"It's a small parish, and they feel welcomed... It's important that we're open to others, and one of the ways you do that is by having youth programs," added Dcn. Giovannitti.

Although its resources are limited, the parish maintains a food pantry and helps



Deacon Tom Giovannitti and Tim Jacquet at Our Mother of Mercy Parish. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

connect community members with social services and resources from Catholic Charities Fort Worth.

Dcn. Giovannitti explained, "You give, because that's what Christians do. They, from the very beginning, from apostolic times, up to this time, the Church has always gone out and helped those who need help — financial,

emotional, spiritual, whatever that help is."

## STUDENT SUPPORT

The Annual Diocesan Appeal helps make Catholic education more accessible by offering tuition assistance and by helping accommodate students with learning differences.

Immaculate Conception Catholic



## GIVING BACK WITH EDUCATION

Nine diocesan schools, including St. Peter the Apostle Catholic School, Fort Worth received grants from the Annual Diocesan Appeal to help fund learning specialists and dyslexia therapists. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

School in Denton is one of nine schools in the diocese receiving salary support for learning specialists and dyslexia therapists from the Annual Diocesan Appeal.

Principal Frank Perez said one full-time and two part-time specialists provide small group one-on-one instruction to supplement classroom instruction for students needing extra help.

And with learning specialists present on the 175-student campus, faculty can quickly identify and assist students with learning struggles. “We can support those [pupils] more quickly and get in front of it,” Perez said. “Without these interventions here, [the students] would have to go off campus, to the public school, and into the big system.”

The Appeal opens the possibility of Catholic education for students who may have been excluded previously due to financial hardship or learning differences.

Perez said, “If we want to have a Catholic Church in the future, the best way to ensure that is by making sure all kids are getting a Catholic

education.

“Catholic education, in Catholic schools or religious education at the parish ... is how you get these students to understand that they’re living for something greater than themselves,” he concluded.

## WAYS TO GIVE

In September, pastors will announce the Annual Diocesan Appeal, and pledge materials will be available at the parishes.

Advancement Foundation’s Martinez notes a significant increase in online giving. The number of members of the St. Francis Circle, who make a monthly gift through an autodraft from a bank account or credit card, grew from about 615 to 840 donors in two years.

Eight giving societies, designated by various levels ranging from \$500 to \$50,000, contribute about 60% of the total Annual Diocesan Appeal.

Bishop Michael Olson said, “A commitment to the Annual Diocesan Appeal is an outward expression of our discipleship call to live as stewards of God’s blessings.” 🇺🇸

# PRAYING THEM HOME

How prayer, patience, and authenticity can help adult children who have stopped practicing the faith return to Mass

By Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Attending an all-boys Catholic school for most of his young life didn't prevent Garrett Martin from straying from the faith in college. The Missouri native already felt resentful toward God when a parent's job promotion forced him to leave his high school friends and relocate to Chicago. That alienation only grew at Michigan State University where drinking, partying, and fraternity life took precedence over anything Church-related.

"I was involved in a lot of self-serving activities," admitted the 28-year-old who continued the lifestyle when an internship brought him to Fort Worth after graduation.

Waking up with a hangover on a Saturday morning made him rethink the trajectory of his life.

"Sitting up in bed, I realized there had to be something more than just going out with friends and drinking," said the business analyst. "It was a big moment that started my reversion to the faith."

He went to Mass the following day at St. Patrick Cathedral where he sat in the last pew and soaked in the familiar rituals.

"I spent the next five or six months praying and trying to reconnect," Martin remembered.

Now he shares his journey back to

the faith with teenagers at St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth.

"I want to evangelize and give some words of wisdom before they go off to college," the youth leader added. "I lived the party lifestyle and tell them not to go down that sinful path."

## WHY THEY LEAVE

Martin's story isn't atypical. Data shows declining church membership across all denominations with the Catholic Church experiencing the steepest loss. The number of Catholics belonging to a parish dropped from 76 percent in 2000 to 58 percent in 2020 and, according to Pew Research, eight in 10 people who leave the faith do so before age 23.

These aren't middle-aged Americans disgruntled by Vatican II changes, Brandon Vogt asserts in his 2015 book, "Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church."

"They're disenchanted teenagers and young adults," he wrote. "They're on social media every day, but there's one place they're not: in church."

Reasons for shunning the faith vary but come down to two main findings, according to Vogt. People simply drift away from religion or leave for specific spiritual and theological reasons.

A general distrust of institutions, authority figures, and Church hierarchy keeps some young people from following any religious tradition. These unaffiliated adults are labeled the "nones" because they check the "none" box when questioned about religious preference.

An experienced youth and young adult minister at both the parish and diocesan level, Jeff Hedglen sees a dichotomy when it comes to millennials and the Church.

"In my experience right now, it seems like a small percentage of young adult Catholics are very involved in the Church. If you're in, you're all the way in," suggested the campus minister at the University of Texas at Arlington. "And if you're out, you're all the way out."

Young, committed Catholics go to Mass one or more times a week.

"And others don't go at all," Hedglen pointed out.

An increasing number of young Americans consider themselves spiritual but not religious.

"Because religion comes with rules and people don't want to deal with rules," he explained. "They want to live their own life, their own way."

A changing attitude toward same-sex attraction is also contributing to the growing number of "nones,"



- ▲ A portrait of St. Monica stands in the St. Martin de Porres chapel during Eucharistic Adoration at the weekly Millions of Monicas meeting. (NTC/ Juan Guajardo)
- ◀ A woman prays during the Millions of Monicas Eucharistic Adoration. (NTC/Carolina Boelter)

according to Hedglen. Many young people are very accepting of peers who are different from them, especially those who identify as LGBTQ.

“Organized religion doesn’t support that so it’s one of the reasons they are distrusting,” Hedglen surmised. “They don’t know why organized religion has

issues with homosexuality, but that’s what non-churched young adults are thinking and going through.”

A Pew Research study of America’s Changing Religious Landscape found for every person who becomes Catholic, approximately 6.5 leave the faith. But the campus minister sees signs of hope in

his own student community. At least one person has joined the Church or been confirmed during every one of his 21 semesters at UTA.

“It happens all the time but not in huge numbers,” Hedglen observed. “From my conversations with them, it’s because the life they were living didn’t give them meaning. Even among people who aren’t attending church, there is a hunger deep inside of them that’s calling.”

### A SENSE OF BELONGING

A drop in church involvement is noticeable among college and high school age Americans, but the desire to skip Mass

Continued on Page 31



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After leaving the Church during college, Garrett Martin, seen here at St. Patrick Cathedral, returned to the faith and volunteers with youth at St. Andrew Parish in Fort Worth. (NTC/Kevin Bartram)

### From Page 29

may start as early as the fourth and fifth grade, said Victoria Ramon, diocesan director of youth, young adult, and campus ministry.

“It has to do a lot with parents not practicing their faith at home. Going to Mass is hit or miss because of sports and leagues they belong to,” she explained. “It’s not a priority.”

Just as church attendance drops off, middle and high schoolers are at the age when they start asking pivotal questions like: What is our purpose? Where do we come from? What do we believe?

It’s imperative young people know they can turn to the Church for answers.

“They belong to the Church. It’s their family,” the director stressed. “My hope and prayer is that the aging community in our parishes welcomes the young adults coming in.”

Making room for younger Catholics on parish councils and other leadership roles may inspire others to stay involved.

“Their ideas — the freshness in the way they think — is different from the aging population of the church,” Ramon said. “We need them to lead the Church into the future.”

### BE AUTHENTIC

When he asks young people why they don’t attend church services, the response Deacon Benjamin Grothouse hears most often centers around authenticity. Impressionable souls see people who claim to be Christian but don’t act Christ-like.

“If the witness we give isn’t authentic and doesn’t show a life that’s been transformed and converted to that of Jesus Christ, we’re just part of an old tradition,” the deacon explained. “They don’t see the love that is brought about by living the Catholic faith, so young people fall away especially if their faith is weak.”

Faith formation, starting at an early age, is important. Playing catch-up with teenagers is more challenging.

“Never force someone into believing something. That’s not the way to win

hearts and souls,” advised the 27-year-old who is in his final year of studies for the priesthood. “It starts with education, but the most important thing is showing Jesus Christ to them through our actions and how we pray. Build an authentic prayer life in the home.”

### PRAY LIKE ST. MONICA

Millions of Monicas, a national prayer ministry, provides parents with an opportunity to pray together for their children who have abandoned the faith.

Once a week, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and godmothers gather in front of the Blessed Sacrament to pray not only for family members but growth in their own holiness. Patroness of the ministry is St. Monica, whose prayer and example led her pagan husband to Christianity and her son, St. Augustine, to conversion.

In July, St. Martin de Porres Parish in Prosper launched the first Millions of Monicas chapter in Texas. Participants

Continued on Page 32



Eileen Keller leads a prayer for members of the Millions of Monicas ministry at St. Martin de Porres Church in Prosper on August 9. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

### From Page 31

gather each Wednesday from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the daily Mass chapel.

“It’s not counseling or a support group, just quiet prayer,” explained organizer Eileen Keller.

With the exception of an opening and closing song, the only spoken word is a prayer intention. There’s no other sharing.

The Holy Hour has attracted visitors from Sherman, Denton, and Louisiana.

“Being able to intercede for our children and other people’s children is something sorely needed in our Church, and we’re seeing fruit from this,” said the mother of two daughters. “People come here with smiles on their faces and hope in their heart. They are so burdened but find peace and joy.”

### REACHING OUT

To engage undergraduates in the faith at Texas Christian University, Gabe Gutierrez tries to offer low pressure “on ramps” of opportunity, like trivia night, to build community. Although immersed in social media and technology, many students are lonely.

“It’s a generation more connected than ever before in history, but those connections are not personal,” explained the campus minister. “Add a distrust of institutions and you have the perfect storm of lonely people who don’t know where to turn.”

Most students won’t just walk through the doors of TCU’s Catholic Newman Center.

“It can be intimidating, so you have to be willing to go out, share your faith,

and meet people where they are,” he said. “Start with a relationship then invite them into something deeper like Mass or Bible study.”

Gutierrez and his brother, Tony, a Catholic school teacher and former associate editor of the *North Texas Catholic*, are both committed Catholics. He’s often asked what kept them in the fold.

“My mom prayed the Rosary for my family every night,” he disclosed. “I see our involvement with faith as a fruit of her prayers.”

He encourages parents to follow the example of St. Monica.

“Be persistent in prayer,” he urged. “But also live your faith. If you want your children to remain Catholic, practice the faith yourself and never stop inviting them to join you.” 🇺🇸



# Report on the gifts to the **2023** Annual Diocesan Appeal

## GENEROSITY • IMPACT • ACCOUNTABILITY



Thanks to their parish grant, Father Eugene Nyong and parishioners of St. Mary in Graham and St. Theresa in Olney were able to sustain their youth and family programs this year.

Thank you! For the year ended June 30, 2023, we reached our Annual Diocesan Appeal goal. You helped support parishes, outreach ministries and the vital programs of the Diocese of Fort Worth by answering the *Call to Gratitude*. This report offers a comprehensive account of how gifts to the Annual Diocesan Appeal were used throughout the year.

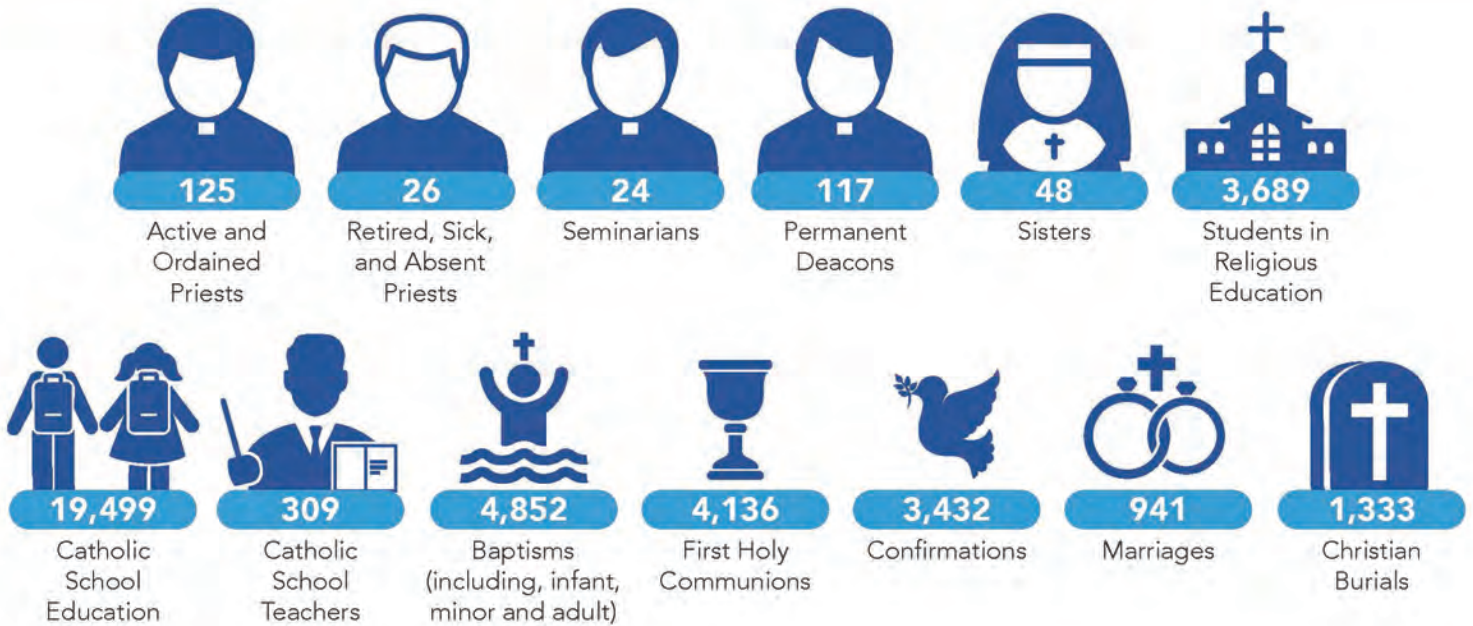
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# 2022-2023 at a Glance



The Annual Diocesan Appeal for the Diocese of Fort Worth distributed \$3,692,167.91 to the following ministries, organizations, services and purposes in the year ending June 30, 2023

**\$1,539,472**  
Stewardship and Development Initiatives

Providing expertise services to parishes for parish stewardship training, capital campaign management, and fundraising support



**\$216,000**  
Respect Life Ministry  
Supporting the Gabriel Project of Catholic Charities and Diocesan Respect Life ministry



**\$597,696**  
Catholic Schools Tuition Assistance, Learning Support and Development



**\$148,348**  
Campus Ministry

**\$839,000**  
Parish Support

Assisting small parishes with the means for vital ministries as well as the hiring of essential positions such as Directors of Religious Education and Youth Ministers. 36 parishes received operating grants totaling \$828,000



**\$20,000**  
Family Life

**\$10,000**  
Retired Priest Care

**\$205,000**  
Seminarians



**\$110,000**  
Permanent Deacon Formation

**\$10,000**  
Jail Ministries



# Your Gift Counts Unique ways you make an impact



St. Francis Circle members make the environmentally-conscious decision to donate to the Annual Diocesan Appeal through recurring electronic giving. This saves the cost of printing, mailing and postage for reminder statements and check payments which protects the resources given to us by God. The average gift is \$65 per month. Last year, St. Francis Circle Members saved **\$20,535**, that was directed to grants and ministry support instead of overhead expenses.

Thank you to all the recurring monthly donors. Continuous giving...never stop thanking God!



## Leadership Giving Societies

Membership in one of eight giving levels recognizes generous gifts to the Annual Diocesan Appeal. These 1,629 donors contribute 60% of the total Annual Diocesan Appeal. We are deeply grateful to the donors that made gifts of \$500 or more to the 2023 Annual Diocesan Appeal. For a full listing of members in 2022-2023 please visit our website: [www.advancementfoundation.org/annual-diocesan-appeal-giving-societies](http://www.advancementfoundation.org/annual-diocesan-appeal-giving-societies)

Society	Members	Total Gifts	Average Gifts
Our Lady of Guadalupe \$50,000	2	\$100,000	\$50,000
Our Lady of Victory \$25,000-\$49,999	4	\$110,500	\$27,625
St. Katharine Drexel \$10,000-\$24,999	11	\$131,972	\$11,997
St. Stanislaus \$5,000-\$9,999	60	\$338,223	\$5,637
St. Alice \$2,500-\$4,999	99	\$293,611	\$2,966
St. William \$1,500-\$2,499	181	\$316,424	\$1,748
St. Patricio \$1,000-\$2,499	420	\$438,833	\$1,045
St. John \$500-\$999	851	\$469,105	\$551

Thank you for your gifts of stock, IRA distributions, charitable gift annuities, employer match, real estate, vehicles, and other unique ways you make an impact.

Know that each gift you have made is restricted for the purposes of the Annual Diocesan Appeal. We take seriously the role of stewarding your sacrificial donations. We know that you spend time praying and discerning how to best show gratitude for God's blessings. You have trusted us with some of your blessings from God and we hold in high esteem the responsibility to pass along your generosity.



Xergio Chacin and the Immigration Services team at Catholic Charities Fort Worth on August 7. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

# Forty years of trustworthy guidance

By Mary Lou Seewoester

In the early years of Catholic Charities Fort Worth's Immigration Services, one employee, working from All Saints Parish in Fort Worth, served about 400 clients each year.

As Immigration Services approaches its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this December, the program now serves about 4,000 clients a year with the help of an immigration attorney, administrative assistant, and six Department of Justice accredited immigration representatives.

That adds up to more than 72,000 cases opened since 1983 to help clients negotiate the complex journey through U.S. immigration paperwork.

CCFW Immigration Services Director Xergio Chacin said team members have developed specific skills that are "laser focused" for immigration work. They also have worked through the process for themselves or a family member.

"There is no one on the staff that hasn't been, at some level, personally involved in the process," Chacin said,

"and that gives us a tremendous level of empathy and understanding."

Though the number of immigrants and their countries of origin varies from year to year, the program served 4,400 clients from 64 different countries in 2022. Refugees accounted for 569 of those clients.

"We have never served only one nationality," Chacin said. "But, due to our location in Texas, the largest number of immigrants are from Mexico, and they make up more than the other 63 countries combined."

Chacin said the process itself presents a challenge: "A system to legally immigrate to the U.S. exists, but it's not always functional," he said. "And the time frame for the process is years — sometimes decades or more."

Immigrants often hear "get in line and come into the U.S. the right way," he added. "But there's not one line and all the lines that exist are not moving."

For example, Chacin said his team currently serves many clients who first petitioned for a green card in the early

2000s, with some from the mid-to-late '90s. In addition to the complexity and glacial pace of the system, Chacin noted yet another challenge: the process is still paper-based "both in how you apply, and how the government communicates with you."

"That's why our [administrative assistants] have such an important role," Chacin continued. "Their job is to make sure the mass of mail keeps moving as it should."

Despite the team's expertise and dedication, some clients hear "that's not possible," because CCFW Immigration Services only provides what the law allows, no more and no less. Though immigration work is intense and repetitive, Immigration Services has little turnover because team members "understand what it takes and how it feels," Chacin noted, adding that his motivator is faith.

"I think, 'What if this was the Lord's paperwork? If I were filling out the Lord Jesus' application, I'm going to try to do my best and not cut corners,'" he explained. ✝





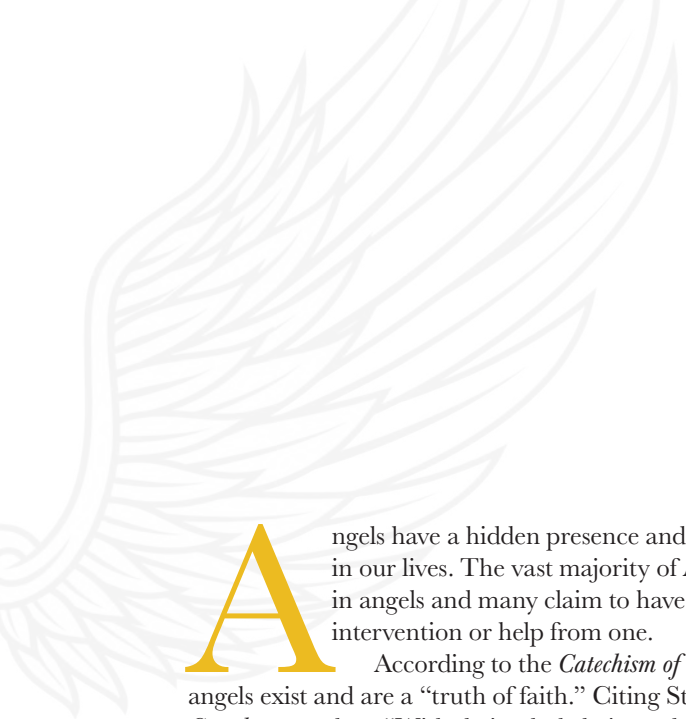
# messengers of God

Angels are real and powerful spiritual beings  
revealed in sacred Scripture and sacred tradition

Article by Joan Kurkowski-Gillen

Photo illustrations by Juan Guajardo  
and Jillian Brearley





**A**ngels have a hidden presence and powerful influence in our lives. The vast majority of Americans believe in angels and many claim to have experienced divine intervention or help from one.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, angels exist and are a “truth of faith.” Citing St. Augustine, the *Catechism* teaches, “With their whole beings, the angels are servants and messengers of God. Because they always behold the face of the Father who is in heaven, they are the mighty ones who do His word, hearkening to the voice of His word” (329).

Present since creation, angels serve to remind the material world of the spiritual dimension of existence. They belong to the communion of Saints, intercede for us, and invite people to have a greater, more beautiful image of God.

Guardian angels in particular are entrusted with our care. These celestial companions are often credited with saving lives, preventing life-altering mistakes, and influencing mortals to do good. The Church celebrates the Memorial of the Guardian Angels on Oct. 2.

“From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession. Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life” (CCC 336).

## WATCHING OVER US

Kathy M. is certain an angel protected her from bodily harm after she lost control of a minivan on a rain-slick road 30 years ago. The mother of three young children at the time was about to hit a tree when the vehicle’s engine suddenly quit.

“I was inches from the tree. I knew in my heart, my guardian angel stopped the car,” she said, recalling the near accident as if it happened yesterday. “There was no damage to me or the car, and it turned right back on, so there was no mechanical failure.”

People often feel the presence of angels at times of grief and death. Early Church fathers believed angels help the soul escape the sufferings of death and assure the dying of a peaceful transition. Surviving loved ones receive comfort and healing.

A stranger eased Eileen Bain into a moment of acceptance as she waited outside a hospital’s cardiac unit to hear word of her gravely ill mother’s condition. Bain, a parishioner at St. Joseph in Arlington, watched intently for the unit’s door to open when a man she didn’t know suddenly tapped her on the shoulder.

“I spun around, and he said, ‘Isn’t it a beautiful night? My wife just had a baby!’ before walking into an elevator door that just opened,” Bain remembered.

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*Angel of God, my guardian dear,  
To whom God's love commits me here,  
Ever this day be at my side,  
To light and guard, to rule and guide.*

## From Page 40

The remark prepared her for what came next.

"I smiled. He reminded me how my mother always taught us the circle of life was birth then death," she continued. "That man was my angel. Minutes later, a doctor came out to tell me my mother died."

If you ask Jason Whitehead if he's ever heard an angel story, the diocesan director of evangelization and catechesis quickly admits, "I grew up with one."

Whitehead's grandfather, a Methodist minister, swore to his dying day that an angel rescued his young family during a snowstorm in upstate New York. Stranded roadside as a blizzard raged around them, the minister's children were on the verge of hypothermia when a man pulled up in a truck.

"He had all the requisite equipment to tow a vehicle out of a ditch, and he did so quickly and effortlessly," Whitehead said, recounting a bit of family history.

His grandfather went to check on the car's passengers, and when he turned around, the man and his truck were gone.

"There was no sign of him or tire tracks. Not anything," the Catholic convert explained. "The only rational explanation for that was an angel."

## MESSENGERS OF GOD

Skilled in theology and Catholic teaching, Whitehead is used to fielding questions like, Why should we believe in angels?

"Because their existence is revealed to us in both sacred Scripture and sacred tradition," the former director of faith formation responded. "Everyone has an angel, and they all possess the beatific vision."

Skeptics often ask where the Bible mentions guardian angels. The answer is found in *Matthew 18:10*, where the Gospel's writer quotes Jesus: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven."

Others question the nature of these supernatural beings. An angel's office is one of mission as messengers of God while their nature is defined as nonphysical,



The Church celebrates the Feast Day of Saints Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel, Archangels, on Sept. 29. A statue of St. Gabriel the Archangel stands outside St. Jude Parish in Mansfield. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

personal, spiritual beings.

“People have the notion that angels are not much different than us, but they most certainly are,” Whitehead explained.

Confusion stems from how angels are depicted in popular culture, like Clarence in “It’s A Wonderful Life” and several TV series like “Highway to Heaven” (1984–89) and “Touched by an Angel” (1994–2003).

In most productions, the angels assume a human form as they intervene in the lives of ordinary people in trouble. Promoting the notion that angels are watching over us, especially in times of uncertainty and crisis, can instill a sense of comfort and well-being in the viewing audience.

But angels are not graduated human beings, Whitehead insisted. Angels are Christocentric, pure spirits devoted to God’s mission — our salvation.

“They were created precisely for service to God and, through service to God, service to us.”

### ARCHANGELS ARE LEADERS

The word “angel” comes from the Greek word *angelos* which means “messenger” in Hebrew. There are nine celestial orders of angels, with the seraphims — “the fiery ones” — ranked the highest. They are the guardians of God’s throne.

Archangels are found just above regular or guardian angels on the bottom of the list. They are recognized as leaders entrusted by God with special duties. The Church acknowledges seven archangels, but only three are named in the Bible — Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael. Their feast day is Sept. 29.

Best known for appearing to the Virgin Mary in the Annunciation (*Luke 1*), Gabriel, whose name means “Strength of God,” is the patron saint of baptism. The significance behind Raphael’s name, “God is my health,” reflects his healing ability. By touching Tobit’s eyes, the patron saint of nurses and physicians cured them of blindness in the Old Testament’s *Book of Tobit*.

Some faith traditions claim Michael was the first angel created. Patron saint of police, firefighters, and soldiers, the archangel led the heavenly forces in casting out Lucifer during a rebellion against God.

St. Michael the Archangel visited the three children of Fatima — Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta — in 1917 to prepare them for the apparition of the Blessed Virgin. His voice also spoke to Joan of Arc, a young peasant girl who led thousands of French troops into battle during the Hundred Years’ War against the English. St. Michael and other saints provided counsel, warned her of danger, and assured her of salvation for accepting God’s mission to free France from its enemies.

### A POWERFUL PRAYER

Deep devotion to St. Michael the Archangel, who strengthens bodies and

Continued on Page 44



### From Page 43

souls against the powers of evil, has existed in the Church since the first century.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth and other parishes across the country, pastors have reinstated reciting the Prayer of St. Michael after Mass as a spiritual weapon against the power of evil.

Written in 1884 by Pope Leo XIII, the prayer was originally said after every Mass in the Latin Rite to defend the Church during turbulent times.

The ritual fell out of practice after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s but was revived by Pope John Paul II in 1994. Today, Pope Francis recommends praying to St. Michael the Archangel to guard against the ongoing spiritual battles present in modern society.

“The prayer to St. Michael is very

powerful,” said Pallotine Father Vijaya Raju Mareedu. “In a world where things are changing so much, and we see so much evil, it makes sense to ask for the intercession of St. Michael to protect us.”

Native to Andhra Pradesh, India, and now pastor of St. Michael Parish in Bedford, Fr. Mareedu asks for help from St. Michael when he visits parishioners to perform a house blessing.

“It’s a prayer I like to share with people and, because our church is named for St. Michael, it’s appropriate to ask for his intercession to guard and guide us from evil.”

The saint’s name — which means “who is like God” — generates recognition and a sense of security, he added. Members of the parish come from 48 different countries and their familiarity with St. Michael and his story makes them

feel at home. The archangel appeals to all people because of his leadership, loyalty to God, and determination to fight for good over evil.

“There is an assurance that he’s protecting God’s Church and that is something I love,” Fr. Mareedu said.

Growing up in India, Fr. Mareedu’s mother often spoke of angels — particularly guardian angels.

A holy card that pictured a winged angel hovering over a young boy and girl as they walk along a path is a favorite childhood memory.

“That small prayer we say to our guardian angel is powerful — especially if it’s said at the beginning of a journey,” he added. “A priest I knew in India always did that.”

Continued on Page 46

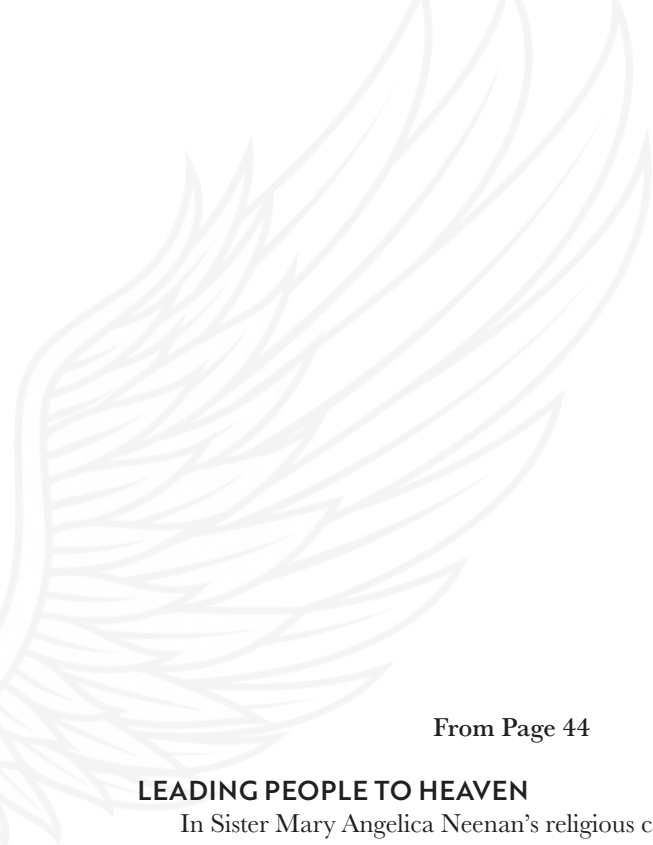
# ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL



*Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.*

*Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil; may God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.*

*Amen.*



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### LEADING PEOPLE TO HEAVEN

In Sister Mary Angelica Neenan's religious community, praying to one's guardian angel before travel is a tradition. The Dominican sister is a theology professor at the University of Dallas where the subject of angels occasionally comes up with students. She emphasizes the point that they are real and should not be disregarded as characters in a fable.

Another common misconception is that angels are childlike cherubs or cupids who are powerless.

"My younger students think angels are just a little voice on your shoulder that say do this or do that," said the moral theology teacher. "But angels do much more than that. They can teach and speak to us if they want to. They're pure spirits, and by their nature, they have a higher intelligence."

More importantly, they see the face of God and pray constantly.

"Angels enjoy the beatific vision and, out of charity, want us to see the face of God like they do," she suggested. "Their primary role is to praise God, but they also try to guide and help us on our life journey."

Sometimes people encounter a human being who happens to be in the right place at the right time during an accident or crisis and wonder, "Was that Good Samaritan an angel?"

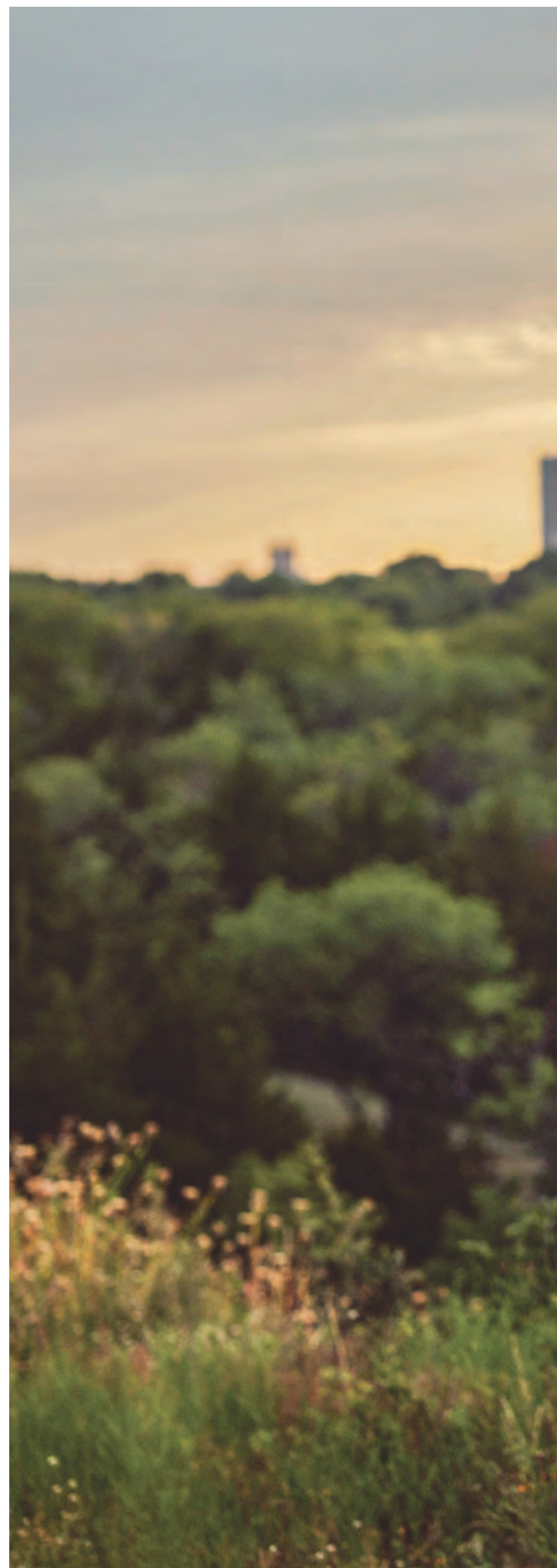
"I think it's possible," Sr. Angelica mused, citing angelic appearances in Scripture to support her opinion. "They appear in human form so as not to scare us. We more naturally receive supernatural things in a natural way."

The Boston native recalled an incident reported by sisters from her community.

"A man helped them on the road when they had car trouble," she continued. "They turned around to thank him and he was gone. There was no trace of him, and he couldn't have walked away that fast. When that happens, I'm pretty sure it's an angel."

Everyone is assigned a guardian angel and some people have more than one, Sr. Angelica said. Along with offering protection, they inspire with thoughts that will lead people to heaven.

"They help us in so many ways to resist temptation and do what is truly good," the theology professor explained. "I don't think we teach enough about how important angels are." ✚







# doing their part

Billy Don and Mary Jane Clark of St. Paul Parish in Electra exemplify that rural parishes flourish with parishioners' stewardship

By Susan Moses

It could be a form of nearsightedness. After being so involved at St. Paul Parish in Electra for more than 50 years, Mary Jane Clark can't see what others see clearly: the service that she and her husband, Billy Don, contribute to the parish is worth noting.

She's quick to deflect any recognition for their stewardship at the rural parish just south of the Oklahoma border.

She said, "St. Paul is a very small parish. It takes all of us. The people at St. Paul all have a job. Everyone contributes. It's not just one person or one family. Everybody has to do their part."

Mary Jane's part includes serving

on the pastoral advisory council and bereavement committee; being a reader; helping with religious education, sacramental preparation, and vacation Bible school; and coordinating snacks for the school kids.

What she's given to the church, she's gotten back "multiple times," she said.

Her most fulfilling service is bringing



◀ Billy Don and Mary Jane Clark and Father Joseph Moreno pose for a photo at St. Paul Church in Electra on July 5. They are recipients of a Light of Christ award for their gifts of time, talent, and treasure to the parish. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

## PHOTO GALLERY



Check out dozens of photos featuring the other Light of Christ Award recipients at:  
[NORTH-TEXAS-CATHOLIC.SMUGMUG.COM](http://NORTH-TEXAS-CATHOLIC.SMUGMUG.COM)

the Eucharist to the sick and homebound of the parish. “It’s a very interesting, very rewarding ministry. The one thing they all have in common is they’re just very, very appreciative,” explained the retired teacher, who shares the devotion to the Eucharist.

Her husband is just as involved in the parish. Like his wife, Billy Don serves on the bereavement committee and the pastoral advisory council, adding the council is “a really small group, and anyone who wants to attend is welcome.”

He chairs the parish finance council and is a reader at Mass.

“We’re a small parish. We all have to pitch in. If we don’t pitch in, we don’t have a parish,” he said.

Father Joseph Moreno, pastor of St. Paul as well as St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Burkburnett and Christ the King Parish in Iowa Park, explained the necessity of parishioner participation. He said, “In small parishes, especially because they are rural, we would not be able to manage without them.”

The time and attention of the pastor is sometimes stretched thin between the three parishes. He said, “I spent 30 years in corporate management before I went to seminary, and I learned to surround yourself with people who have the skills and abilities you don’t have. They have the ability to be there — people who can take care of things, who have ownership in the parish.”

The Clarks, Fr. Moreno said, “are my ‘go-to’ people when something needs to be done.”

Billy Don is a great liaison between the pastor and the community, according to Fr. Moreno. “He knows people.”

Electra’s population is less than 3,000, and it’s likely Billy Don knows almost everyone. He spent 40 years as a librarian, teacher, and administrator at Electra High School and has a long record of community volunteering.

He has been on the Board of Directors of the Electra Hospital District for more than 40 years. He serves on the Nortex Regional Planning Commission and is a former chair of the Electra Public Library Advisory Board.

Fr. Moreno nominated the couple for the Light of Christ Awards, an honor the Advancement Foundation for the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth created to recognize individuals and couples for their service to their parish.

Pastors of each parish were invited to nominate an individual or couple who exemplifies the four pillars of Christian stewardship: prayer, hospitality, formation, and service.

The Advancement Foundation hosted the second annual Light of Christ Awards on June 24 at Holy Family Parish in Fort Worth. At the ceremony, 47 individuals or couples were presented with certificates in appreciation of their stewardship.

Clint Weber, president of the Advancement Foundation, said Light of Christ award winners “exemplify the light of Christ through your lives of Christian stewardship and leadership and live out your baptismal call in an extraordinary way, using your God-given gifts, and deepen the life of the Church through your service in the parish, through your discipleship, embracing stewardship as a way of life.”

Mary Jane said, “We’re stewards. We are given these things, but they are not

ours. They are ours to share. That’s what I feel like I’ve been called to do. It’s not that we have that much, but we have been blessed.”

Lessons in generosity came early in life from her father. She recalled, “I was brought up with the attitude of ‘This is what you’re here for, and you can’t out-give the Lord.’”

The Clarks say stewardship is not a sacrifice, but an investment in the future of the parish and a remembrance of the faithful German Catholics who built a church and school in the nearby German farming community of Mount Carmel in 1907.

Billy Don, who entered the Church after they married, said, “It’s very important to me that we have a Catholic presence in our community. It was founded by people who were very, very strong in their faith. I feel like I owe it to those people to maintain what they started.

“It’s important that others can see our faith and see what it’s like and see how we practice,” he continued.

Mary Jane appreciates the closeness of the small parish of about 100 faithful. “We know everybody. We’re human, and we have our shortcomings, and we have our talents and gifts, but it’s a family.”

Fr. Moreno extended the family comparison, referring to the couple affectionately as the “grandparents of the parish.”

He said the Clarks “treat the parish like it’s their home,” greeting each person with a smile and a kind word. Like so many others in parishes across the diocese, they do their part to live and share their faith for this generation and the next. ✚



## Legacy of faith

By Violeta Rocha

“I promise to be faithful to you in good times and bad times, in sickness and in health...” María Guadalupe and Felipe Muñoz made this promise during the sacrament of matrimony 43 years ago. Together, step by step and “with ups and downs,” they have forged a path, being “two, but only one in Jesus.”

Pope Francis, during a general audience on Nov. 13, 2019, highlighted Aquila and Priscilla, co-workers of St. Paul, “as models of a married couple responsibly committed to serving the whole Christian community... who open the doors of their hearts to Christ and to their brothers and sisters and transform their homes into a domestic church.” The Holy Father referred to his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* and reminded us to turn to God “who has chosen the married couple to be His ‘true living icon’” (11).

**THEY ARE:** Married for 43 years, María Guadalupe and Felipe Muñoz, their daughter and her husband, Sandra and Elías Guadamuz, and their grandchildren, Izabel and Anthony, attend St. Joseph Parish in Cleburne. (NTC/Ben Torres)

Now, even though Felipe and María Guadalupe (nicknamed Lupe) lovingly face Lupe's cancer diagnosis, they continue to contribute to their parish community and to strengthen their love day by day, "living to its fullest the meaning of the sacrament of matrimony."

**GOD DOES EVERYTHING:** When Felipe was young, he thought going to Mass when possible, arriving late, and only receiving the final blessing were enough. However, through Church teachings, Bible study, homilies, other faithful Catholics, and "mainly by the grace of God," he grew to value the Mass and the Eucharist.

Felipe, originally from Durango, Mexico, and Lupe, born in Coahuila, Mexico, feel the beginning of their marriage coincides with their dedication to serving the community of St. Joseph Parish in Cleburne.

"God planted in us the desire to serve," said Felipe, who is an acolyte, lector, and frequent volunteer in the parish. "The grace and the Spirit of God is the one who does everything," he asserted. "We only offer Him the little that we do, and we do it with all our heart."

**GOOD HARVEST:** Lupe remembers joyfully that her three children were altar servers from the ages of 6 to 15. Her daughter, Sandra Guadamur, is currently a catechist and oversees sacramental preparation for confirmation. Her grandson, Anthony, the eldest of her six grandchildren, is also a catechist and helps Sandra.

Lupe is happy to serve at Sunday Mass, either as a lector or as a hospitality minister in the parish they love as their own extended family.

"We feel very happy to be able to serve, that everyone knows us, that the community is growing, and that, by the grace of God, we all work together," Lupe said.

**THE LORD WILL PROVIDE:** Lupe and Felipe are deeply grateful for the great support they have received from the parish community for many years. When both became unemployed, it was thanks to St. Joseph Parish that they

both found new jobs, which they still hold.

"The parish was looking for a person who wanted to work and they hired me," said Felipe, who has overseen the maintenance of the facilities for 39 years.

Lupe also got a job when a parishioner wanted to hire someone who knew how to make bread. She has been working for more than 25 years in the bakery, and she currently serves as a supervisor.

**JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU:** After Lupe was diagnosed with stomach cancer, they both found strength in their faith. "I want to offer strength to my wife during her illness. I ask God to give us both strength," Felipe asserted.

Lupe is immensely grateful for the blessing of having the support of her husband, her children, and the Church. "God has the last word," she assured. She appreciated receiving the sacrament of healing administered by Father Sergio Rizo, the pastor of St. Joseph. "You have to be prepared, if you really have faith," said Lupe.

Felipe said, "God's grace is reflected in our children. They are very attentive to their mother; we are very satisfied the grace of God also moves them and that they are such good children."

**ETERNAL LOVE:** In these difficult moments, "we share more, and we care even more for each other. This does not mean that we did not love each other before, but rather, thank God, in these moments more than ever before, we feel that we are two, but only one in Jesus," said the couple.

They feel happy that "almost all our service has been done together as a couple. ... We have served in various diocesan ministries such as Cursillos and have participated in numerous diocesan activities as representatives of our parish," the couple commented.

"We read the story of Tobias' wedding a lot in the Bible," Felipe said, finding inspiration in the marriage of Tobias and Sarah. "Tobias used to say, 'We can't live like pagans who don't know God,' and we like this verse because it helps us remember our past and see our present." 🇺🇸

## 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](http://fwdioc.org/safe-environment)



# SEEKING GOD'S PATH



NTC/ Juan Guajardo

## Just come and see

I have just started my new assignment at St. Joseph Seminary in Louisiana where 17 of the 29 seminarians for the Diocese of Fort Worth are studying. More than 100 seminarians from different states and dioceses study here to be priests of Jesus Christ.

Founded in 1889, the seminary is connected to a Benedictine Monastery. In fact, my great-uncle, Fr. Columban Wenzel, was a monk and priest for the seminary, and one of its founders. So, I am grateful that Bishop Michael Olson has sent me here to form our future priests and follow in my great-uncle's footsteps! God's providence is amazing!

With over 1,000 acres, the seminary grounds are conducive to prayer and discernment. As part of their formation, the seminarians have jobs on campus. Some entail working outside with their hands to be in contact with nature and follow St. Benedict's motto, "*Ora et labora*" (prayer and work). This helps the seminarians experience the dignity of work, listen to God's voice through silence, and be accountable to others.

One can take many trails through the woods for prayer, reflection, or exercise. At night, one can see the heavens — the

stars and the moon — reflecting in the tranquil lakes around the seminary.

We too can see the heavens, i.e. God, when our souls are at peace and conformed to His Son Jesus Christ. All who come to this place get a taste of the beauty and peace of God.

I invite everyone to come for a retreat, as they have retreat houses and conferences here throughout the year.

But I strongly encourage families to help get their high school sons out here for the Come and See retreat. The retreat, held twice a year, is an opportunity for men to see what the seminary is like, meet seminarians, and hear about their daily life and how Jesus led them to discern the priesthood.

When a young man sees this place and meets the seminarians, he has a better image of what it is like to follow Jesus Christ as a seminarian. Many of our seminarians can attest to the powerful experience they had when they went on the retreat, how God inspired their hearts to be here.

Most people's understanding of the seminary is not too accurate. Although seminarians do study and pray a lot, much of the formation takes place in community: living with other seminarians, working with them, developing friendships, learning about one's own

strengths and weaknesses — even learning how to charitably disagree with someone!

Healthy leisure is an important part of a seminarian's life. Sports, movies, and games are some of the recreations they can participate in throughout the week.

So, when the high school boys come here for the Come and See retreat, they see normal guys who love Jesus. They play sports and games with them outside of the chapel time and conferences. These high schoolers leave the retreat with a better impression of what seminary life is and the thought, "Maybe God is calling me to do this, too."

Parents, grandparents, godparents: help your high school sons attend this retreat this fall on November 3 to 5 or next spring on March 22 to 24. It is free. Contact the diocese for registration and more details ([vocations@fwdioc.org](mailto:vocations@fwdioc.org)).

Thank you to everyone for your continued support for our seminarians and for helping to foster more vocations in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

May God bless you abundantly for your sacrifices and generosity! ✨



Fr. Maurice Moon

# Trust in Him

NTC/Juan Guajardo

**HE IS:** Father Jose Ignacio Olvera Álvarez, CORC, pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth.

**PATRON SAINT:** St. Ignatius.

**FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE:** *Psalms 116:12-19* and *1 Peter 5:8-11*.

**A BROTHER'S INFLUENCE:** Fr. Álvarez is one of eight, having two sisters and five brothers. All his brothers entered seminary, but only two discerned to become priests, Fr. Álvarez and his oldest brother. "I didn't think to enter until he really insisted. He'd studied at the Menor de Cristo Rey seminary in Guanajuato, and they were sending him to Spain to continue his studies. Before leaving, we had a very serious chat where he, very formally, asked me to consider whether there was a chance that God was calling me to the seminary."

**ORDAINED:** July 13, 2007, at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

**GREATEST CHALLENGE:** Early in his priesthood, Fr. Álvarez served in the mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico, where the indigenous Aztec and Chatinas communities spoke their native Mixtec and Chatino as well as broken Spanish — a complex

challenge because of their "very distinct way of thinking and living."

**JOURNEY TO FORT WORTH:** He also served in Puerto Rico for 11 years, then his order sent him to the Diocese of Fort Worth to serve as a vicar for the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish before beginning his time as the pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Fort Worth, where he has been for the past eight months.

**BEST PART OF BEING A PRIEST:** When Fr. Álvarez's parishioners come to truly understand that they, too, have the ability to know Christ "is when their lives transform. And then they can assume the responsibility of knowing Christ and treasuring the sacraments they receive. Because it's not just receiving the sacraments but living these sacraments so they can create the impact that Jesus meant for them to have, which is helping us live a new life in Christ."

**STANDOUT SACRAMENTS:** "I place a lot of attention and importance to the anointing of the sick as it's the moment when a person finds themselves in a vulnerable situation and most feel the call to God's presence ... what better time is there to find reconciliation before encountering Jesus Christ? My ability to help deliver His grace to them fills me with joy."

**LOVE FOR THE EUCHARIST:**

Witnessing God's grace and meeting Him at the altar is incredibly special to Fr. Álvarez. "Although we administer the Eucharist daily and many times during the weekend, it never stops being impactful. To then administer the communion to people, being a medium in the process and seeing God's desire to unite with humanity, is an extraordinary thing to behold."

**ADVICE FOR PARENTS:** "It's very important that your children have an example of someone sincerely living out their faith.

Sometimes, we only share an idea of a life of faith, but not the true experience of truly living it. Doing this will really make its mark on a youth, on your kids, and help them learn how to love."

**TAKEAWAY:** "Not everything in life is work, money, or pleasure. Even though they are present in our lives, they're not the most important.

Instead, what's most important is looking after our well-being and strengthening our relationships with Christ. ... Like Pope John Paul II would say, don't be afraid to open the doors to your heart for Jesus Christ because He will be the one to give you the true sense to your life and your existence." 🇺🇸

# A Joyful Noise

Music is not a nice “extra” at Mass — it is such an integral part of the celebration of the Mass that Father Thu Nguyen, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Fort Worth and diocesan director of liturgy, will take two columns to address questions about music.

In this issue, Fr. Nguyen answers general questions about music’s place in the liturgy.

## HOW DOES MUSIC CONTRIBUTE TO THE CELEBRATION OF MASS?

**Fr. Nguyen:** Simply put, sacred music is sung prayer.

Sung expressions of faith within liturgical celebrations strengthen the bond of our faith with God and draw us into the divinely inspired voice of the Church as prayer. Sung prayer makes the liturgical prayers of the Christian community more alive and fervent.

When the celebrating priest *in persona Christi* greets or calls the assembly into the presence of God, the sung acclamations express our hearts and voices in a cohesive

union at that gathering at various parts of the Mass.

Faith grows when it is well-expressed in celebration. Good celebrations can foster and nourish faith.

We see similar principles outside of Mass where songs enhance unity. For example, we sing at birthday celebrations to express our closeness and happiness, or we sing the alma mater to show loyalty to our school and fellow students. Singing bonds us together.



Fr. Thu Nguyen

## IS MUSIC NECESSARY FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MASS?

**Fr. Nguyen:** According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Christian faithful, when coming together as one in expectation of the Lord’s coming, are instructed by St. Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles (39). St. Paul emphasizes that singing is the sign of the heart’s joy.

This tradition of singing before God is rooted from Jewish traditions as described

in the following passages:

- *Deu 31:19* — God said to Moses, “teach it to the Israelites and have them recite it, so that this song may be a witness for me.”
- *Ex 15:1-18* — After they passed through the Red Sea, the chosen people sang as one to the Lord.
- *Jgs 4:4-5:31* — Deborah, a judge of Israel, sang to the Lord with Barak after God gave them victory.
- *II Sam 6:5* — King David and the Israelites made merry with all their might, singing with harps, tambourines, sistrums, and cymbals.
- *Mt 26:30* — Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before their journey to the Mount of Olives.

## WHAT PURPOSE DOES PARTICIPATING IN SINGING SERVE?

**Fr. Nguyen:** Sacred music in the celebration of the Mass uplifts your heart and helps you enter the celebration on a



more spiritual level.

**IS SINGING SACRED MUSIC SIMILAR TO HOW BEAUTIFUL SACRED ART OR STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS CAN ELEVATE YOUR MIND?**

**Fr. Nguyen:** Yes, in fact, Pope St. Pius X said, “The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this preeminence is that, as sacred melody united to words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.”

Shortly after he became pope in 1903, Pius X proclaimed in his letter *Tra le Sollicitudini* that Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony were the official music of the Roman Catholic Church's liturgy.

**CAN YOU EXPLAIN MORE ABOUT GREGORIAN CHANT AND SACRED POLYPHONY?**

**Fr. Nguyen:** Gregorian chant (otherwise known as plainchant) is the Church's sacred music which developed as an intrinsic part of the liturgy of the Catholic Church.

It is unique among all types of music because it has always been used only for worship. Some refer to Gregorian chant as “sung prayer.” Purely melodic, it may be sung by one or several singers who all sing the same notes.

Unlike modern music, chanting has a free rhythm that is uniquely complementary to worship.

Gregorian refers to Pope St. Gregory I the Great (540-604), who played an important, if disputed, role in codifying which chants are sung during the liturgical year.

Polyphony is unaccompanied multi-voiced music that developed from chant. Unlike other forms of music often used in Masses these days, chant and polyphony do not carry associations with worldly things in the listeners' minds.

Next issue, Fr. Nguyen will address more specific questions about sacred music.

For his previous columns on the Mass and the *Roman Missal*, go to: [NorthTexasCatholic.org/understanding-the-mystery](http://NorthTexasCatholic.org/understanding-the-mystery). 🇺🇸

Father Thu Nguyen serves as pastor at St. Paul the Apostle Parish, Fort Worth and Director of Liturgy and Worship for the Diocese of Fort Worth.



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Miembros de la Pastoral Juvenil forman un círculo para rezar juntos durante la reunión el 16 de julio. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

# unidos por la fe

La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana es un ejemplo creciente de fe, perseverancia y compromiso

Por Karla Silva

**T**endemos a pensar que formar un ministerio dentro de la Iglesia podría ser algo fácil. Creemos que sencillamente obtienes permiso de tu párroco, reúnes a varias personas interesadas en tu ministerio, les explicas el propósito y empiezas a reunirte con ellos. Sin embargo, la realidad es que conlleva mucho más que eso. La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, que es parte del Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis de Fort Worth, nos da testimonio del esfuerzo y perseverancia que esto requiere.

La Pastoral Juvenil Hispana tiene como propósito evangelizar a los jóvenes hispanos para que respondan al llamado de ser verdaderos discípulos de Jesús.

Hay una gran necesidad de evangelizar a los jóvenes dentro de nuestra Iglesia. “Las cosas no han sido fáciles y ha exigido mucha fe, esfuerzo y dedicación para iniciar y mantener este ministerio”, expresó Luis Miguel Urrutia, el Coordinador de la Pastoral Juvenil.

“Cuando comencé en esta pastoral, ya había algunos grupos de jóvenes adultos activos, pero en general el ministerio tenía muy poca estructura. Poco a poco, fuimos trabajando para dársela”, comentó Urrutia.

Para crear la estructura adecuada que sostenga este ministerio, “es fundamental conocer las necesidades de los jóvenes. Había que cambiar muchas cosas y en aquel entonces no había mucha gente que quisiera comprometerse”, añadió Urrutia,

feligrés de la Parroquia de Our Lady of Guadalupe de Fort Worth.

No obstante, con gran esfuerzo y dedicación, la Pastoral logró fundar en el 2019 el grupo Jóvenes Católicos en Acción en la Parroquia de St. John the Apostle de North Richland Hills.

Luego de tener sólo tres reuniones, lo inesperado sucedió: la pandemia. Debido a este acontecimiento, todo se detuvo, incluidas las reuniones de los grupos en la iglesia.

Esto hubiera podido desanimar a muchos, sin embargo, ése no fue el caso del ministerio de la Pastoral Juvenil.

“Durante la pandemia, hicimos una transmisión en vivo todos los lunes por medio de nuestra página en Facebook. Invitamos cada semana a diferentes



personas a compartir temas sobre el Catecismo de la Iglesia y variados tópicos acerca de las relaciones humanas y sociales. Al principio, fue algo difícil y exigió mucho trabajo, pero con el tiempo se convirtió en algo que esperábamos con mucha ilusión. No sólo estábamos formando a los jóvenes que nos veían, sino que también la presentación y discusión de los temas durante las transmisiones nos ayudaron a formarnos a sí mismos y fortalecer nuestro ministerio”, comentó Urrutia.

Estos esfuerzos y la formación impartida no fueron en vano, ya que una vez que la pandemia terminó, los tres grupos que estaban todavía activos dentro del ministerio, Juntos con Jesús de la Parroquia de St. Matthew de Arlington, Luz de Juventud de la Parroquia de Holy Name of Jesus de Fort Worth y Jóvenes Católicos en Acción de la Parroquia de St. John, comenzaron a reunirse nuevamente. Sin embargo, la Pastoral se enfrentó a un nuevo obstáculo al poco tiempo: pocos jóvenes regresaron a los grupos.

La perseverancia de este ministerio se hizo notar nuevamente, ya que, en lugar de desanimarse, Urrutia puso todo su empeño y comenzó a visitar los diferentes grupos, a presentar diversos temas y se percató de las necesidades que los jóvenes tenían.

“Me di cuenta de que los jóvenes tienen realmente una gran sed y hambre de Dios”, comentó Urrutia.

Urrutia fue invitado a ofrecer una charla en una de las primeras reuniones del grupo de Juntos con Jesús de la Parroquia de St. Matthew y aprovechó para invitar a los jóvenes a involucrarse con el ministerio de la Pastoral Juvenil.

“La necesidad de los jóvenes era mucha, pero pocos se querían comprometer. En aquel momento yo estaba solo en el ministerio, pero recuerdo bien que cuando hice esa invitación al final de la reunión, Valentín Leos se acercó y me dijo que él estaba dispuesto a comprometerse y ayudar”, dijo Urrutia. “La verdad es que me dio una gran alegría, intercambiamos información, y al poco tiempo, me puse en contacto con él y me dijo que Deicy Martínez quería también ayudar con este ministerio”.

Deicy Martínez, la Subcoordinadora de la Pastoral, comenta que cuando vio



Luis Miguel Urrutia, el Coordinador de la Pastoral Juvenil en la Diócesis de Fort Worth, lleva una discusión de fe el 16 de julio. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

la oportunidad de poder ayudar a este ministerio, no lo pensó dos veces, ya que sabía la necesidad de los jóvenes, no solamente en su parroquia, St. Matthew de Arlington, sino también en las diferentes parroquias de la Diócesis.

Como fruto de esta colaboración se formó una nueva junta de coordinación del ministerio de la Pastoral. En enero del 2022 se llevó a cabo su primer gran evento “El Retiro de Año Nuevo”, a la que asistieron noventa y tres jóvenes.

Ver a tantos jóvenes reunidos no sólo motivó a la Pastoral a seguir organizando actividades, sino que fue un ‘efecto dominó’, pues tanto los grupos activos como los grupos inactivos se motivaron y empezaron a poner más empeño para formar y atraer a más jóvenes, añadió Urrutia.

A partir de ese momento se han seguido organizando eventos por lo menos una vez al mes con diferentes temáticas y se formaron dos grupos nuevos: Juventud Hispana en la Parroquia del Immaculate Heart of Mary y Voces de Esperanza en la Parroquia de St. Thomas the Apostle, ambas de Fort Worth. En resumidas cuentas, se cuenta hoy día con siete grupos de jóvenes adultos que son parte de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana.

Martínez comenta que además de organizar múltiples eventos, la Pastoral proporciona un enfoque y propósito a los grupos de jóvenes y la oportunidad de que puedan expresar lo que necesitan. Se les da también seguimiento; “no se trata solamente de que el joven asista a los eventos, sino que se integre a uno de

los grupos para que lleve esa formación y la pueda compartir tanto en su parroquia como fuera de la misma”.

Martínez nos comparte que, si bien el ministerio quiere seguir añadiendo grupos en las parroquias, su enfoque también es de formar líderes para que estos grupos estén bien fundamentados, sean duraderos y no se disuelvan.

Es palpable el impacto que todos estos esfuerzos han producido. El Diácono Rigoberto Leyva, Director del Ministerio Hispano, ha sido testigo de ello: “cada vez más y más jóvenes se unen a los diferentes grupos de la Pastoral y esto es fruto de la evangelización y de la atención que se les ha dado a los jóvenes”.

“Sin duda, se le ha dado un mayor apoyo a la juventud en nuestra Diócesis, especialmente mediante la Pastoral Juvenil”. El Diácono Leyva concluyó diciendo, “Cada vez más, la Iglesia se ha dado cuenta de la importancia de los jóvenes y lo que necesitan. Los jóvenes son parte del presente y del futuro de la Iglesia y, por eso, es importante darles el apoyo que se merecen”.

De acuerdo con los miembros de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, el crecimiento de su ministerio como parte del Ministerio Hispano de la Diócesis de Fort Worth es un testimonio inspirador de fe, perseverancia y compromiso. A medida que continúa organizando eventos, formando líderes y respondiendo a las necesidades de los jóvenes hispanos, la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana sigue siendo un faro de esperanza y evangelización para toda la comunidad. 🇺🇸

# RODEADOS DE LA Luz de Cristo

Feligreses José Carlos y Lupita Espinoza son ejemplares de la corresponsabilidad

Por Christina Benavides

El Padre Óscar Sánchez les dijo que estuvieran pendientes de su correo, pero no fue hasta que regresaron de su viaje para visitar a sus familiares en México que José Carlos y Lupita Espinoza descubrieron la invitación de la Diócesis de Fort Worth para asistir a la ceremonia de los premios de Luz de Cristo.

“Nos llegó de sorpresa”, dijo José. “El Padre Óscar nos dijo que uno de estos días nos iba a llegar una carta de la Diócesis. Nos preguntó varias veces, ‘¿Ya les llegó? ¿Ya les llegó?’, pero no nos llegaba nada. ‘Bueno, les va a llegar’, nos decía cada vez. No sabíamos de qué se trataba”.

Tras recibir la carta, José y Lupita fueron cuanto antes a compartir la noticia de este premio y honor con su comunidad de la Parroquia del Immaculate Heart of Mary de Fort Worth, en la que han sido feligreses por nueve años. Ambos estaban sumamente emocionados y deseosos de compartir la noticia con todos en la parroquia y, en particular, con los miembros del ministerio al cual pertenecen.

“Queríamos compartirlo, pues es un trabajo de todos. Nosotros sólo los representamos a ellos”, aseveró José.

La ceremonia anual de Luz de Cristo les brinda a los sacerdotes de la Diócesis de Fort Worth la oportunidad de nominar feligreses ejemplares que dedican su tiempo, talentos y tesoro a la

Iglesia y al prójimo, con un espíritu de agradecimiento a Dios que los bendice. Cuarenta y dos individuos y parejas laicos de la Diócesis fueron reconocidos el 20 de junio por poner en práctica en sus vidas los cuatro pilares de la corresponsabilidad: el servicio, la formación, la oración y la hospitalidad.

El Padre Sánchez describe a los Espinozas, que llevan casados treinta años y tienen tres hijos varones adultos, “como líderes de la comunidad parroquial que siempre han trabajado animando a los demás para que se involucren más en la vida familiar, la vida matrimonial y la vida parroquial. Sobre todo, tienen una gran dedicación al ministerio”, afirmó el sacerdote.

Los Espinozas atribuyen los logros de su servicio a la vibrante congregación con la que están involucrados y los ministerios de la Parroquia de Immaculate Heart of Mary.

“Es una parroquia muy viva”, dijo Lupita. “Nosotros hemos conocido varias iglesias y esta parroquia es una muy viva y activa en todos los sentidos”.

El Padre Sánchez considera al matrimonio Espinoza como un gran ejemplo para otros matrimonios y otras parejas de la parroquia por “su constancia y porque siempre los otros matrimonios pueden acudir a ellos ... para consultar, preguntar y aprender mucho”.

José y Lupita están involucrados en varios grupos matrimoniales y familiares, incluidos los Matrimonios Unidos Para Cristo y el Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial. Participan además de muchos ministerios de la Iglesia: la pastoral de los enfermos; participan en el ministerio litúrgico; y asisten a los matrimonios a crear relaciones más centradas en Dios.

El matrimonio Espinoza dedica la mayor parte del tiempo al ministerio de los Matrimonios Unidos Para Cristo, que se enfoca en ayudar a los esposos a crecer en su conexión con Dios para que Él siempre esté presente en la familia porque “si el matrimonio no está lleno del amor de Dios, entonces no puede transmitir ese amor a su familia”, afirmó Lupita.

José y Lupita conocieron este ministerio matrimonial cuando tenían sólo dos años de casados y vivían todavía en California. Desde entonces, han estado bien involucrados con este ministerio y se han dedicado a promover el crecimiento del programa en la Diócesis de Fort Worth.

“Nosotros quisiéramos llevar el ministerio de los Matrimonios Unidos Para Cristo a más parroquias porque ha sido una bendición muy grande en nuestras vidas”, Lupita comentó. “Estamos en Saint Matthew de Arlington y ya llevamos dos años en esa parroquia.”

Para ser parte del ministerio de los



José Carlos y Lupita Espinoza fueron reconocidos con el premio de la Luz de Cristo el 24 de junio. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

Matrimonios Unidos Para Cristo, las parejas tienen que asistir a un retiro del Encuentro Matrimonial Mundial. Pasan luego por diferentes etapas como si estuvieran en una escuela “donde se enfatiza primero el amor de Nuestro Señor”, añadió Lupita.

Después del retiro, las parejas y sus hijos se invitan para congregarse y reunirse cada ocho días para recibir formación y crecimiento en su relación con Dios y participar activamente de la liturgia. Se espera que, a través de este proceso, “toda la familia se enamore más de su Señor Jesucristo y viva fervientemente su fe”, explicó Lupita.

La vivencia de este ministerio incluye que los padres se reúnan para compartir consejos y conversar sobre los problemas comunes de la familia y el matrimonio. Al mismo tiempo, los niños aprenden y estudian el Catecismo de la Iglesia dirigidos por los sacerdotes y algunos voluntarios.

“Los sacerdotes nos han apoyado mucho siempre”, comentó José. “Nos han ayudado y han facilitado mucho nuestro trabajo, ya que todo el proceso

es complejo. Como nos reunimos con toda la familia se ocupa mucho espacio y se necesitan muchas personas que estén cuidando a los niños. Aparte de eso, los adultos necesitamos formarnos para transmitir la fe correctamente”.

El tener ministerios tan activos para los feligreses exige mucho trabajo de los sacerdotes de la parroquia, aseveró José. Lupita cree que la Parroquia del Immaculate Heart of Mary es la parroquia donde ella ha visto que más gente acude a la Confesión que en ninguna otra. Ella añade que esto “es muy bueno para nosotros como creyentes, en nuestra vida espiritual y como personas”.

La comunidad parroquial, Lupita agregó, está muy agradecida del apoyo de sus sacerdotes y de la dedicación que tienen para servir a los feligreses. Los miembros del ministerio son muy dedicados, pues siguen el ejemplo de sus pastores. Al igual que la pareja de los Espinozas, hay muchos miembros que participan activamente de la liturgia y sirven como ministros de la Santa Eucaristía, lectores, catequistas, acólitos y

monaguillos, afirmó José.

“Parte integrante de la visión del ministerio es que, junto con la comunidad parroquial, servimos a todos, aún más allá del propio ministerio,” dijo José. “Vamos cada vez acercándonos más unos a otros, realizamos más dentro y fuera del movimiento del ministerio, y eso hace que nuestra parroquia sea muy activa y tenga una fe vibrante”.

Al contar con una comunidad tan viva y llena de la gracia de Dios, los Espinozas se sienten rodeados de la Luz de Cristo. “Nosotros vemos este reconocimiento no como algo que es sólo de nosotros, sino de todo el grupo porque vemos que ellos trabajan muy duro”, señaló Lupita.

Le dan gracias al Padre Sánchez por el gran honor, pero también reconocen la grandeza de Dios. “Yo siempre le digo al Señor ‘¿quiénes somos nosotros para que Tú te fijes en nuestras miserias?’ Con Su gracia, podemos hacer tantas cosas que uno mismo se sorprende, pero es la gracia de Dios que actúa en cada uno de nosotros y a través de nosotros”, concluyó Lupita. ✝



# Legado de Fe

Por Violeta Rocha

“Prometo serte fiel en la prosperidad y en la adversidad, en la salud y en la enfermedad...” María Guadalupe y Felipe Muñoz hicieron esta promesa al consagrarse mutuamente por el Sacramento del Matrimonio hace cuarenta y tres años. Juntos han forjado un camino que, paso a paso, “con sus altas y bajas”, ha florecido como resultado de su mutuo amor en la fe, siendo “dos, pero uno solo en Jesús”, asevera el matrimonio Muñoz.

Felipe, de 69 años y originario de Durango, y Lupe, de 61 años, nacida en Coahuila, México, sienten que hablar del inicio de su unión matrimonial es sinónimo de su dedicación al servicio de la comunidad de la Parroquia de St. Joseph de Cleburne, en la que no sólo

han visto crecer a sus hijos y familia, sino también a su comunidad.

Pese a que el matrimonio Muñoz enfrenta con amor la enfermedad de Lupe, tras ser diagnosticada con cáncer, ellos continúan entregando sus dones y esfuerzos a su comunidad parroquial y fortaleciendo su amor día a día, “viviendo a plenitud el significado del Sacramento del Matrimonio”.

**DIOS LO HACE TODO:** Felipe cuenta que cuando era joven, pensaba que ir a Misa cuando él podía o llegar tarde y sólo recibir la bendición final eran suficientes.

Sin embargo, mediante “las enseñanzas que recibimos de la Iglesia a lo largo de los años, del estudio de la Palabra de Dios, los sermones de los sacerdotes, el ejemplo de nuestros compañeros de ministerio y principalmente por la gracia de Dios”,

se hicieron más conscientes de su fe y del valor de la Misa y la Eucaristía”, añadió.

“Dios sembró en nosotros el deseo de servir”, afirmó Felipe, que es acólito, lector y que realiza varios otros ministerios en la parroquia. “La gracia y el Espíritu de Dios es quien lo hace todo”, aseveró. “Nosotros sólo le ofrecemos lo poquito que hacemos y lo hacemos de todo corazón”.

**BUENA COSECHA:** Lupe recuerda con amorosa alegría que sus tres hijos fueron monaguillos desde los 6 años hasta los 15 años. Su hija Sandra Guadamur es actualmente catequista y tiene a su cargo la preparación al Sacramento de la Confirmación. Su nieto Anthony, de 18 años y el mayor de sus seis nietos, es también catequista y ayuda a Sandra en la preparación a la Confirmación.

Lupe se siente muy “feliz” de

◀ La Familia Muñoz: María, Felipe y su hija Sandra Guadamuz con su esposo Elás y sus hijos, Izabel, de 14 años, y Anthony, de 18 años. 2 de julio en la Parroquia de St. Joseph de Cleburne. (NTC/Ben Torres)

servir en la Misa dominical, ya sea como lectora o como Ministro de Hospitalidad, y de ver a su esposo, “cabeza de nuestra familia”, como acólito, en la parroquia que aman como si fuera su propia familia.

“Nos sentimos muy contentos de poder servir, de que la gente nos conozca, que la comunidad está creciendo, y que, por la gracia de Dios, todos trabajamos juntos”, Lupe señaló agradecida.

**EL SEÑOR PROVEERÁ:** Lupe y Felipe viven profundamente agradecidos del gran apoyo que han recibido de la comunidad parroquial por tantos años.

Cuando los dos se quedaron desempleados, fue gracias a la Parroquia de St. Joseph que consiguieron un nuevo trabajo, que ambos conservan aún luego de muchos años.

“En la parroquia estaban buscando una persona que quisiera trabajar y me contrataron”, apuntó Felipe, que ha estado encargado del mantenimiento de las instalaciones desde hace treinta y nueve años. Lupe consiguió también trabajo cuando “una persona de la parroquia buscaba a alguien que supiera hacer pan”. Desde entonces lleva trabajando por más de veinticinco años en la panadería; y actualmente sirve como supervisora.

**JESÚS, EN TI CONFÍO:** Luego de que Lupe fuera diagnosticada con cáncer de estómago, ambos encontraron fortaleza en su fe.

“Quiero ser esa fuerza para mi esposa durante su enfermedad. Pido a Dios que nos dé fortaleza a los dos,” aseguró Felipe.

Por otro lado, Lupe agradece inmensamente la bendición de tener el apoyo de su esposo, sus hijos y la

Iglesia.

“Dios tiene la última palabra”, aseveró y se siente muy agradecida de recibir los Santos Óleos administrados por el Padre Sergio Rizo, el párroco de St. Joseph. “Hay que estar preparado, si de verdad tienes fe,” afirmó Lupe.

“Le damos gracias a Dios por todas las bendiciones que nos ha dado a lo largo de nuestras vidas,” dijo Felipe.

Felipe añadió que “la gracia de Dios se refleja en nuestros hijos. Ellos están muy pendientes de su mamá; estamos muy satisfechos de que la gracia de Dios también los mueve a ellos y de que sean tan buenos hijos.”

**AMOR ETERNO:** En estos momentos de dificultad, “compartimos aún más y nos cuidamos más el uno al otro.

Esto no significa que antes no nos queríamos, sino que, gracias a Dios en estos momentos, más que nunca, nos sentimos que somos dos, pero uno solo en Jesús,” afirmó el matrimonio Muñoz.

Se sienten alegres de que “casi todo nuestro servicio lo hemos realizado juntos como pareja”.

“Hemos servido fielmente a la parroquia y estamos orgullosos de haber pertenecido a ella por tantos años. Hemos servido en varios ministerios diocesanos como los Cursillos y hemos participado en numerosas actividades diocesanas como representantes de nuestra parroquia”, comentó la pareja.

“Leemos mucho la historia de la Boda de Tobías en la Biblia”, dijo Felipe, pues encuentran inspiración en el matrimonio de Tobías y Sara.

“Tobías decía, ‘no podemos vivir como los paganos que no conocen a Dios’, y nos gusta este pasaje bíblico porque nos ayuda a recordar nuestro pasado y ver nuestro presente”, concluyó Felipe. ✝

## AMBIENTE SEGURO

### Para Reportar Mala Conducta Sexual:

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

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

### Para Reportar Abuso o si Sospecha de Abuso:

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

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

Para más información sobre nuestros programas de prevención de abuso, visite [fwdioc.org/safe-environment](http://fwdioc.org/safe-environment)



# GRATITUD Y GENEROSIDAD

La Campaña Diocesana Anual da un apoyo inmenso  
a las escuelas y parroquias de la Diócesis

Por Christina Benavides

**R**esponder al llamado de dar con sacrificio nunca es fácil. Sin embargo, los fieles de la Diócesis de Fort Worth demostraron una vez más que entienden realmente la exhortación de Jesús de "amarse unos a otros como Yo los he amado". Las donaciones del rebaño de la Diócesis a la Campaña Anual 2022-2023 superaron la meta fijada por más de \$100,000.

"Las parroquias pusieron en práctica lo que predicán", apuntó Rachel Martínez, la Directora de donaciones y subvenciones anuales de Advancement Foundation. "Los fieles de nuestra diócesis son increíblemente generosos".

Como resultado de la campaña contamos este año con un fondo de \$3.6 millones. Las donaciones recibidas ayudarán a atender las grandes necesidades de muchas comunidades en toda la Diócesis, incluidas las 36 parroquias y 9 escuelas católicas. La Campaña Diocesana Anual aporta también fondos a la formación de los seminaristas y diáconos; el ministerio de Respeto a la Vida; el ministerio universitario; la pastoral carcelaria; y el cuidado de los sacerdotes jubilados y otros ministerios diocesanos.

## PARROQUIA Y DESPENSA DE ALIMENTOS

El Padre Thu Nguyen está profundamente agradecido de que la Parroquia de St.

Paul the Apostle de Fort Worth haya sido seleccionada como receptora de una subvención de Advancement Foundation. El párroco quiere utilizar los \$30,000 asignados para ayudar a pagar los gastos operativos básicos de la parroquia y asistir a su ministerio de despensa de alimentos.

St. Paul the Apostle es una de las treinta y dos parroquias que necesitan asistencia para pagar los salarios de su personal. El Director de Servicios Litúrgicos explicó que, en su parroquia, "se necesitan aproximadamente \$5,500, pero nuestra colecta semanal promedio recauda solamente \$4,500 ó menos".

Cuando el párroco, que habla vietnamita, inglés y español, llegó a la Parroquia de St. Paul en julio del año pasado descubrió que la parroquia de trescientas familias, cuya mayoría es hispana, tenía una deuda de alrededor de \$65,000, los bancos estaban muy deteriorados y las unidades de aire acondicionado no funcionaban.

"El año pasado en Nochebuena y el día de Navidad pasamos frío durante las Misas porque la caldera se congeló. Cuando llegué el verano pasado a la parroquia el aire acondicionado de la iglesia no funcionaba. Así que, incluso cuando nuestro Obispo Monseñor Olson vino en julio para la Confirmación, hizo mucho calor en la iglesia", recordó.

El Padre Nguyen quiso actuar con rapidez para enfrentar y resolver los retos



El Padre Thu Nguyen, párroco de St. Paul the Apostle de River Oaks el 1 de agosto. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

de su parroquia, por eso solicitó una subvención de la Diócesis. Al poco tiempo, puso en marcha los proyectos para arreglar los bancos y el aire acondicionado. Gracias a la donación extremadamente generosa de un feligrés de su antigua parroquia, St. Jude de Mansfield, se pudo cubrir gran parte de los costos aproximados de los proyectos, que sumaban alrededor de \$170,000. El Padre Nguyen y su parroquia están todavía trabajando para pagar la deuda restante, además del déficit que se había acumulado a través de los años antes de su llegada a la parroquia.

“Celebramos el año pasado un festival parroquial y se llevó a cabo una venta pequeña de comida y otros artículos”, comentó el Padre Nguyen. Él espera que estos eventos de recaudación de fondos en ciernes continúen ayudando a reducir la deuda, ya que las restricciones de la subvención de la Campaña Diocesana Anual no permiten que sus fondos cubran

gastos fuera de los enumerados en la solicitud inicial.

No obstante, el Padre Thu y los feligreses de la parroquia se sienten muy agradecidos.

“Gracias a Dios, la Diócesis decidió ayudarnos con los gastos operativos de la parroquia y la despensa de alimentos, al menos este año”, añadió el Padre Thu. “La despensa de alimentos móvil se ofrece un sábado al mes. Tenemos también una despensa de alimentos fija que se abre todos los martes y la gente puede recoger alimentos”.

La despensa de alimentos es un ministerio muy importante de la parroquia y “la subvención de la Campaña Anual nos ayudará a seguirla por un año más o menos”, recalcó el sacerdote.

El Padre Nguyen dijo: “Deseo decir a los muchos y generosos donantes de la Diócesis que hicieron posible esta subvención que estamos sumamente

agradecidos de que nuestras parroquias hermanas ayuden a la Parroquia de St. Paul the Apostle”.

St. Paul the Apostle fue una de las treinta y seis parroquias que recibieron la subvención de la Campaña de Apelación Anual. Cabe señalar que nueve de las escuelas católicas de la Diócesis recibieron también fondos de la Campaña Diocesana Anual.

#### **APOYO A LOS ESTUDIANTES**

El Colegio de All Saints Catholic School de Fort Worth, que tiene unos 115 estudiantes, recibió este año \$22,000 de la Campaña Diocesana Anual. La Dra. Arica Prado, la directora de la escuela, aseveró que la subvención “financiará el costo total de nuestra coordinadora de apoyo al aprendizaje”.

Lillian Oexmann, coordinadora de apoyo al aprendizaje del Colegio All

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El estudiante Michael Prado de All Saints Catholic School aparece junto a su coordinadora de apoyo al aprendizaje, Lillian Oexmann, (derecha), y su madre, la Dra. Arica Prado, directora de la escuela, el 11 de agosto. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

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Saints, describe su trabajo como “uno de muchos roles y tareas múltiples”. Uno de ellos es servir de enlace para Literacy United, que es una entidad sin fines de lucro que ofrece servicios de apoyo educativo a las escuelas. Su misión principal es asistir los estudiantes económicamente desfavorecidos que tienen dificultad con el aprendizaje de las materias básicas de inglés y matemáticas.

El Colegio de All Saints cuenta actualmente con cinco tutores de Literacy United.

“Lillian forma parte del personal de Literacy United. Así que cuando no está trabajando directamente con nosotros, trabaja con ellos como supervisora de los tutores que tenemos aquí en la escuela”, explicó la Dra. Prado. “Los tutores que están aquí a menudo forman grupos de intervención para trabajar con los

estudiantes fuera de la sala de clases”.

Otro de los roles de Oexmann es “ayudar a desarrollar e implementar los planes de apoyo que se necesitan cuando un estudiante ha sido diagnosticado con dislexia o el trastorno por déficit de atención e hiperactividad (TDAH), o si tiene algún tipo de condición médica por la que necesita adaptaciones especializadas, como, por ejemplo, usar el elevador”, Oexmann añadió.

Después de la pandemia y la educación remota, la Dra. Prado y su personal vieron la necesidad de administrar pruebas de diagnóstico para los estudiantes de su escuela. La asociación de la escuela All Saints con Literacy United hace posible que los estudiantes de habla inglesa y española reciban un diagnóstico inicial de discapacidad de aprendizaje al cabo de una semana, en lugar de tener que esperar entre seis y nueve meses como

ocurre en los distritos escolares públicos cercanos, añadió la Dra. Prado.

“Gracias a que hemos podido tener a Lillian trabajando en la escuela, y lograr que los niños sean evaluados y diagnosticados más rápido, hemos podido atender el aumento dramático de estudiantes con necesidades de aprendizaje a raíz de la pandemia de COVID”, dijo la Dra. Prado. “Tenemos alrededor de veinte estudiantes que reciben los servicios de intervención para la lectura y las matemáticas, y nueve estudiantes que tienen un diagnóstico formal de dislexia”.

Oexmann trabaja también con estudiantes que necesitan terapia del habla y apoyo conductual. La Dra. Prado dijo que en la escuela se trabaja con “alrededor de 30 a 35 estudiantes que tienen algún tipo de plan de apoyo al aprendizaje”.

“La subvención de la Diócesis



María López, voluntaria de la Parroquia St. Paul the Apostle, ayuda a distribuir comestibles durante la despensa de alimentos el 1 de agosto. (NTC/Juan Guajardo)

ayuda a pagar el sueldo para el puesto de Oexmann, que es una terapeuta capacitada en dislexia. Esto permite que podamos proporcionar los servicios para complementar y apoyar a los estudiantes aquí en nuestra propia escuela. Parte de los fondos de la subvención recibida ayudará a financiar los materiales que la terapeuta necesita... que serán alrededor de \$350 para adquirir los recursos y materiales que se utilizarán para los servicios de intervención”, agregó la Dra. Prado.

Oexmann ha visto al cabo de un año el progreso de los estudiantes de All Saints, que se ha ido logrando con el programa de enseñanza clásica juntamente con las pruebas de campo. Ha notado que los estudiantes dejan poco a poco de “depender demasiado de las adaptaciones al aprendizaje y se vuelven más seguros de sí mismos. Van aprendiendo a cómo valerse por sí mismos y darse cuenta si una adaptación ya no les funciona bien”.

La Dra. Prado, cuyo hijo fue diagnosticado con dislexia cuando estaba en tercer grado justo antes de que llegara el COVID, ha visto por sí misma cuan importantes son las nuevas iniciativas que se han implementado en la escuela gracias al trabajo de Oexmann.

Al comenzar el programa Literacy United en All Saints, su hijo pudo asistir y aprovecharse de la ayuda intensiva durante el verano. La Dra. Prado explicó que “En los últimos dos años, su hijo ha podido recibir terapia del habla en la misma escuela bajo el plan que dirige Lillian. Además, ha podido recibir terapia individual para la dislexia después de la escuela. Creo que esto es muy beneficioso para los estudiantes de nuestras escuelas católicas porque normalmente podemos hacer sólo la intervención en grupo para la lectura y las matemáticas durante el día de clases. Por lo general, las escuelas no



tenemos los fondos que se necesitan para proporcionar las terapias de dislexia sin costo alguno para los padres”.

La Dra. Prado añadió: “Gracias a la intervención individualizada, puedo decir con certeza que mi hijo tiene más confianza al leer y noto también un aumento en su vocabulario. Al cabo de dos años de terapias y trabajo él salió recientemente de nuestro programa de terapia, pues tiene ya buen dominio del habla. ¡Se ha convertido en un lector seguro de sí mismo!”

La escuela ofreció este verano otro programa de enriquecimiento gratuito como el que su hijo asistió. Unos treinta estudiantes recibieron práctica intensiva de lectura y matemáticas durante el mes de junio. El programa comienza

nuevamente el 15 de agosto y continuará durante todo el año escolar.

A los fieles donantes de la Diócesis que desinteresada y generosamente contribuyeron a la Campaña Diocesana Anual, la Dra. Prado, en nombre del Colegio de All Saints, quiere decirles que: “Estamos muy agradecidos y llenos de gratitud por el apoyo que nos dan para poder seguir ayudando a nuestros estudiantes, especialmente los estudiantes con necesidades especiales dentro de nuestras escuelas católicas... No podríamos hacer lo que hacemos e impartir la educación católica, y la formación en las virtudes y la moral católicas a nuestros estudiantes, si no tuviéramos el apoyo de tan generosos donantes”. 🇺🇸

## Confianza en Dios

NTC/Juan Guajardo

**SU NOMBRE:** Padre José Ignacio Olvera Álvarez, CORC, el párroco de Holy Name of Jesus de Fort Worth

**FECHA DE ORDENACIÓN:** 13 de julio, 2007 en la Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe en la Ciudad de México, CDMX

**SANTO PATRÓN:** San Ignacio de Loyola

**VERSOS BÍBLICOS FAVORITOS:** *Salmos 116, 12-19 y 1 Pedro 5, 8-11*

**INFLUENCIA DE SU HERMANO:** El Padre Álvarez y sus cinco hermanos entraron al seminario en un momento dado de sus vidas.

No obstante, de los seis hermanos, sólo Padre Álvarez y su hermano mayor

permanecen como sacerdotes.

“Entré al Seminario de los Operarios del Reino de Cristo en Salvatierra, Guanajuato, cuando tenía 17 años. Conocía a los Operarios desde hacía cuatro años porque mi hermano entró al seminario en el 1988 a la edad de 15 años.

“Fuimos siempre muy unidos. Yo iba a visitarlo con mucha frecuencia y pasaba algunos fines de semanas en el seminario, pero no comencé a pensar en entrar a los Operarios hasta que mi hermano me insistió. Mi hermano entró al seminario, estudió la etapa preparatoria de formación y propedéutico; luego, lo mandaron a España para estudiar. Antes de irse, hablamos muy seriamente y me animó a que lo considerara, pues quizás Dios me llamaba. Fue en ese momento que le dije, ‘bueno, déjame ver’”.

**ENTRADA AL SEMINARIO:** Luego de esa conversación con su hermano mayor, el Padre Álvarez se recuerda que, “entré inicialmente al seminario solamente para estudiar la preparatoria y después, dije, ya les dejaré saber lo que decida. Estudié un año de preparatoria, un semestre de propedéutico, pero después me salí... No obstante, no me sentía a gusto afuera; o sea, la vida se sentía muy monótona y sin sentido para mí, y regresé al Seminario”.

**SU CAMINO A FORT WORTH:** Al regresar al seminario, el Padre Álvarez se dedicó a terminar sus estudios y, al igual que su hermano, lo mandaron a España para estudiar teología por cuatro años.

Cuando regresó a México, fue ordenado como diácono en el 2005 y dos años más tarde, en el 2007, fue ordenado al sacerdocio. Tras su ordenación, lo enviaron a una comunidad indígena en

la Sierra de Oaxaca de México por un año. Fue entonces enviado a servir en Puerto Rico por once años. Llegó a la Diócesis de Fort Worth en el 2022 para ser Vicario por seis meses de la Parroquia de Immaculate Heart of Mary.

De ahí fue asignado como el nuevo párroco de la Parroquia de Holy Name of Jesus de Fort Worth, donde lleva ocho meses.

### **EXPERIENCIA MÁS DESAFIANTE:**

Después de su ordenación al sacerdocio, la Orden de los Operarios envió al Padre Álvarez a la Sierra de Oaxaca.

“La parroquia incluía varias comunidades aztecas y chatinas. Fue para mí una situación nueva; una experiencia diferente y novedosa. El idioma era distinto. Ellos hablaban mixtec y chatín, y un español que no era bueno.

“Sin duda, me enfrenté a grandes desafíos, ya que era una mentalidad totalmente distinta y la situación geográfica era también difícil. La religiosidad, podríamos decirlo, está muy mezclada con la superstición. Resultó ser un reto muy grande trabajar con ellos, pero me sirvió de mucho para ver otras realidades que nosotros necesitamos iluminar usando y proclamando el Evangelio”.

### **LO MÁS GRATIFICANTE DE SER**

**SACERDOTE:** Los momentos más agradables para el Padre Álvarez son cuando los feligreses se dan cuenta de que tienen la oportunidad de conocer a Cristo.

“Es ese momento que transforma la vida de los feligreses. Y entonces asumen su compromiso y de manera adecuada reciben los Sacramentos. No se trata solamente de recibir los Sacramentos, sino que hay que vivir esos Sacramentos para que tengan el efecto por el cual Jesús los instituye, que es vivir una vida nueva en Cristo”.

### **PENSAMIENTOS SOBRE LA**

**PARROQUIA:** Al comparar la realidad de las diferentes parroquias que ha conocido, el Padre Álvarez piensa que la Parroquia de Holy Name of Jesus tiene una mentalidad muy distinta.

“En todos los lugares se encuentran retos. Hay que transmitir el Evangelio, hay que vivir con consistencia lo más posible para poder precisamente impactar un poco a la comunidad... Se siente siempre dolor o tristeza por la partida del sacerdote que ya no está y con quien se establecieron vínculos.

Estamos en ese proceso de adaptación, por parte de ellos y por parte mía.

Sin embargo, me parece que vamos bien

porque la gente es muy generosa y tienen una actitud de aceptación”.

**SACRAMENTO SAGRADO:** El Padre Álvarez le da “gran importancia a la unción de los enfermos porque es el momento en que la persona está en una situación crítica y en la que puede ser llamada a la presencia de Dios.

“Por eso, después de la Eucaristía, es el segundo Sacramento al que le doy prioridad precisamente porque la persona está en riesgo de muerte y es mejor que esté reconciliada antes de encontrarse con Jesucristo. El poder transmitir esa gracia me llena de mucha satisfacción”.

### **LA GRANDEZA DE LA EUCARISTÍA:**

El Padre Álvarez cree que la Eucaristía es “el Sacramento por excelencia, en el cual de una manera especial vivo la gracia de Dios por medio de la oración consagratória y elevo las manos.

“Hacer presente a Jesucristo en el altar es una gracia extraordinaria. Aunque lo hacemos a diario, el fin de semana y tantas veces, no deja de ser cada vez impactante de por sí. Además, dar la comunión a los fieles; es decir, ser un instrumento mediante el cual Dios quiere unirse a la humanidad, ¡es una cosa maravillosa!”

**CONSEJO PARA LOS PADRES:** “Es muy importante para los padres que den a sus hijos ejemplo de una fe viva, pues a veces sólo se transmiten conocimientos, y no las experiencias de vida. Eso es lo que va a dejar una huella profunda en los hijos para que los jóvenes aprendan a amar de verdad.

Sabemos que los padres aman a sus hijos, pero a veces ellos no se sienten amados porque las actividades y los compromisos de los padres los distraen del deber principal de estar con los hijos. Hay que enseñarles a amar a partir del propio ejemplo.

Por eso, es tan importante que consideren que no todo en la vida es trabajo, que no todo en la vida es dinero, que no todo en la vida es placer”.

**EL MENSAJE CLAVE:** “Aunque estas cosas son parte de nuestras vidas, no son lo más importante.

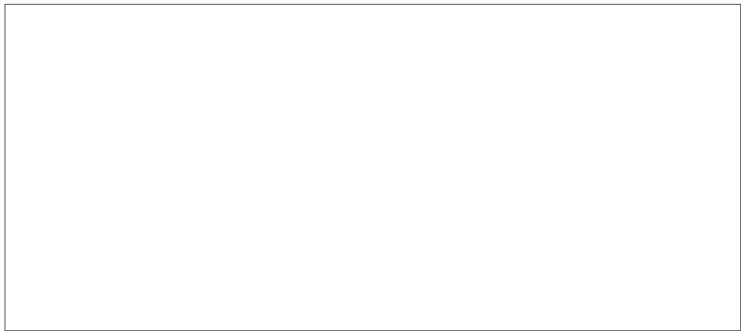
Sino que lo más importante es buscar nuestro bienestar espiritual y fortalecer nuestra relación con Cristo... como decía el Papa San Juan Pablo II, ‘no tengan miedo de abrirle las puertas de su corazón a Jesucristo porque Él es que les va a dar el verdadero sentido a sus vidas, el verdadero sentido a sus existencias’”. 🇺🇸



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For more information, contact Laura Sotelo at [lsotelo@ccdofw.org](mailto:lsotelo@ccdofw.org) or 817.289.2780.



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