

Go Make Disciples

Pope Leo: Catholics must build a more humble church, seeking truth together

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The supreme rule in the Catholic Church is love, which compels all

the faithful to serve, not to judge, exclude or dominate others, Pope Leo XIV said.

"No one should impose his or her own ideas; we must all listen to one another. No one is excluded;

we are all called to participate," he said in his homily during a Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica in late October.

"No one possesses the whole truth; we must all humbly seek it

and seek it together," he said.

The Mass marked the closing of the Oct. 24-26 Jubilee of Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies.

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HISPANIC PRIESTHOOD VOCATIONS

'Be open, be brave and let God lead you'



Fr. Rodrigo Serna blessed a family after his priesthood ordination on Aug. 12, 2023. Photo Chris Porter/Sooner Catholic.

By Bella Gutierrez
The Sooner Catholic

Father Miguel Ayuzo-Ruiz stands as a witness to the growth of the Hispanic Catholic community in recent years. Sunday after Sunday at Father Ayuzo-Ruiz's parish, Historic Sacred Heart Catholic Church, every

space is filled with families, large and small, often featuring babies in their arms or people in wheelchairs.

"We have a solid Hispanic community in our faith," said Father Ayuzo-Ruiz, parochial vicar at Sacred Heart.

"Vocation is the divine call that always compels us to go forth, to give ourselves, to go beyond," Pope Francis, March 2021.

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Put Out Into the Deep

Luke 5:4

A sign and instrument of unity

On Sunday, you may have noticed that the priest at your parish was not wearing green, the liturgical color prescribed for Ordinary Time. He was wearing white for the Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran.

Many people may wonder, “Who is Saint John Lateran?” In fact, there is no such saint. This basilica in Rome is dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist and Saint John the Baptist, and it is called “the Lateran,” after the ancient Roman family who once lived in that area of Rome.

This church is certainly among the most important Catholic churches in all the world.

Just as The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is the mother church of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, so the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, which is the cathedral of the Diocese of Rome, is the mother church of the entire Catholic world. In fact, for about 1,000 years of the Church’s history, the popes lived adjacent to this most ancient of Rome’s basilicas, in the Lateran Palace.

Our celebration of this Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica is a celebration of the unity of the Catholic Church. It is a sign of our communion with the bishop of Rome.

One of the ancient titles of the pope is the Pontifex Maximus, the great bridge-builder. It is the pope who, through his witness and the authority given to him as the successor of Saint Peter, becomes the instrument of unity for the Church.

This is why we celebrate this great feast day, even when it falls on a Sunday, celebrating and affirming the unity we have in Christ.

It goes without saying that we are living in a time of great divisions around the globe. Wars, conflicts and opposing ideologies plague many parts of our world. Certainly, within our own country, politics and culture have become so polarized that dialogue with

those who disagree with us often seems impossible.

Even the Church, which is composed of sinful people, is not immune to these harmful divisions and polarization. These divisions over matters great and small lead to strife and suspicion that serve as a counter-witness to the Gospel.

However, as Saint John Paul II reminds us, we are never without hope!

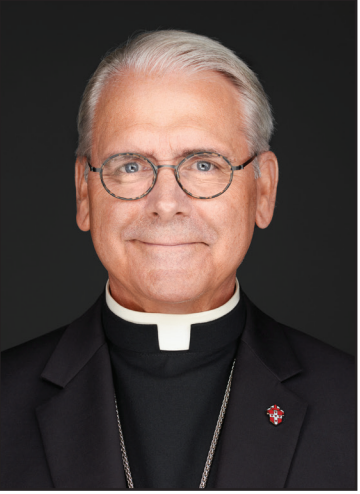
The Feast of the Dedication of Saint John Lateran that we celebrate on Nov. 9 is a reminder that despite the sins of those who make up the Church and

have led the Church these past 2,000 years, God has continued to draw men and women to himself and to one another in the communion that is the Church.

It is the Body of Christ. It is this unity that Pope Leo XIV has emphasized so strongly in the first few months of

his pontificate. Even in his motto, In Illo Uno Unum, which means “in the one Christ, we are one,” we see a desire to be drawn together by Christ to more closely conform ourselves and our Church to the image of God, who is a relationship of love, a unity of three persons in the one God. This is the reality of the Church we are called to be, and as the Lord continues to make us.

May our efforts to promote unity and our love for one another be a constant witness to this world filled with so much division. May we continue to pray for our world, our Church and our Holy Father, Pope Leo. May the Lord strengthen him in his service to the Church and to the world, and may we all walk together toward the heavenly kingdom.



Archbishop Paul S. Coakley



Pope Leo XIV and Britain’s King Charles at the Vatican on Oct. 23. Photo OSV.

Archbishop Coakley’s Calendar

The following events are part of Archbishop Coakley’s official calendar.

- Nov. 9-13** – U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops general meeting, Baltimore
- Nov. 14** – Catholic Foundation Scotch & Cigars event, 6 p.m., Archbishop’s residence
- Nov. 15** – Welcome and prayer at Together in Holiness Conference, 10 a.m., The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Oklahoma City
- Nov. 15** – ACCW Woman of Achievement Mass and luncheon, 11 a.m., St. James the Greater Church, OKC
- Nov. 18** – Presbyteral Council meeting, 9:30 a.m., Catholic Pastoral Center
- Nov. 18** – Archdiocesan Finance Council meeting, 2 p.m., CPC
- Nov. 19** – School Mass, 8:30 a.m., Sacred Heart Catholic School, El Reno
- Nov. 20** – School Mass, 8:30 a.m., St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School, Edmond
- Nov. 20** – Archbishop’s Cabinet meeting, 10 a.m., CPC
- Nov. 20** – Faithful Citizenship Institute fall virtual board meeting, noon
- Nov. 20** – Vocation Board meeting, 2 p.m., CPC
- Nov. 20** – Summit, 7 p.m., The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
- Nov. 23** – Native American Mass, 3 p.m., Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine

Find more news on the website

By Sooner Catholic Staff

Additional coverage of Church and archdiocesan news and events, only on soonercatholic.org.

✓ **To send photos**, event information or story ideas, e-mail communications@archokc.org.

✓ **For people who** are unemployed, underemployed or furloughed. May they find dignified work, secure a living wage and be sustained in these difficult times. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

✓ **Save the Date:** Revival, a weekend retreat for mothers grieving from the loss of a child from pregnancy and infant loss, will be April 24-26, 2026, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp, 890488 S. 3290 Rd. in Wellston.

✓ **Find items such** as rosaries, prayer cards, books and Guatemalan crafts at the Rother Store online at rotherstore.com.



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Archdiocese of Oklahoma City

Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City

God our Father,
you made each of us
to use our gifts in the
Body of Christ.
We ask that you inspire
young people whom
you call to priesthood
and consecrated life to
courageously follow your will.
Send workers into your great
harvest so that the Gospel is
preached, the poor are served
with love, the suffering are
comforted, and your
people are strengthened
by the sacraments.
We ask this through Christ
our Lord.
Amen.

Native American Mass set for Rother Shrine

By Sally Linhart
The Sooner Catholic

In honor of National Native American Heritage Month, a special Mass will be celebrated at 3 p.m. on Nov. 23 at the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine in Oklahoma City.

Archbishop Coakley will lead the third annual celebration, together with celebrants Right Reverend Lawrence Stasyszen, O.S.B., abbot of St. Gregory’s Abbey and Right Reverend

Philip Anderson, abbot of Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey. Father David Bailey, assistant director of Native American Affairs for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, will also serve as concelebrant.

Deacon Roy Callison, coordinator of the American Indian Catholic Outreach for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, is a tribal member of

the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. His wife Susan is a tribal member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Deacon Callison explained that while the Mass is intended to honor Native American culture, it will be celebrated in the traditional manner according to the liturgical calendar.

“It is still the same Mass, but we are incorporating aspects of Native American culture,” he said.

Prior to the start of Mass, the Callisons will recite the “Prayer in Four Directions,” a traditional spiritual practice rooted in Indigenous culture.

Michael Dalby will recite the first reading in his native Indigenous language Kiowa, while Harry Oosahwee will recite the second reading in Cherokee. The student choir from Riverside Indian School in Anadarko will sing during the Mass.

Deacon Callison also described the practice of “ce-

daring,” where cedar, rather than incense, is burned during Mass using a shell and an eagle fan, as traditionally used in Native American culture.

“Cedaring has always been the traditional way to symbolically purify people using items from nature,” he said.

According to the United States Census Bureau, Oklahoma has the largest percentage of individuals who identify only as American Indian. Oklahoma, a word derived from the Choctaw language, literally means “Red People” – Okla being the word for people, and Humma or Homma being the word for red.

For more information on the Native American Mass, contact Deacon Roy Callison in the office of the American Indian Catholic Outreach at (918) 822-3255 or rcallisonarchokc.org

Sally Linhart is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.



Arlene Schonchin performed the Lord’s prayer in American Indian Sign Language during the 2023 Native American Mass at the Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine in Oklahoma City. Photo Chris Porter/Sooner Catholic.



Great Spirit, Come to us with the power of the North. Make us courageous to walk the sacred path with Saint Kateri Tekakwitha. Give us strength and endurance to do all that we are called to do during our life, especially in times of trials and adversity.

Spirit of Light, Come to us out of the East, the place of new beginnings and promise. With the power of the Rising Sun announcing a new day, you give us hope. Let there be joy in our words just as you gave the spiritual gift of new life to Saint Kateri through the waters of baptism.

Great Spirit, Send us the warmth and soothing winds of your healing medicines from the South. You are the gentle rain that brings forth the seed of life. Enable us to hear prophetic voices around us as Saint Kateri Tekakwitha shared God’s love, compassion and healing power among her people.

Spirit of Life, We face you in the direction of the West. Help us to be bearers of your Word. May we be voices of life and hope to all peoples, nations, races and beliefs, as exemplified in the life of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.

Amen.

NATIVE AMERICAN MASS

Nov. 23 | 3 p.m.
Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine
700 S.E. 89 St., Oklahoma City

Join Archbishop Paul S. Coakley as he celebrates a Native American Mass sponsored by the American Indian Catholic Outreach.



**Most Reverend
Paul S. Coakley**
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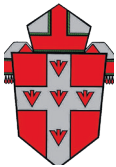
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Archdiocese of
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Everyone is cordially invited to Advent Lessons and Carols at 5 p.m. Dec. 7 at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave. in Oklahoma City. A reception will follow. Childcare will be provided free of charge. RSVP at cathedralokc.org/carols. A live broadcast will also be available on KUCC Classical Radio.

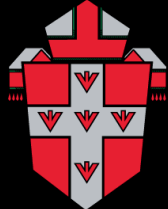
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DEC. 7, 2025
5 p.m.



RSVP at: cathedralokc.org/carols





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- OKCCYA Softball League
- Archbishop's Young Adult Cookout

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Catherine and Austin Mardon met Pope Francis in 2019. Photo provided.

Catherine Mardon: social justice warrior clothed in Catholic faith

By Joanna Borelli
The Sooner Catholic

Catherine Mardon, as they say, knows people. Some famous. Some far from any spotlight. And many in between. And she mixes with them all quite well.

Mostly these days, she's drawn especially to the most marginalized.

Committing her life to social activism and serving as an advocate for the disenfranchised, including the homeless and those with AIDS, disabilities and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Mardon isn't one to preach, yet stands united with those suffering or in need of help.

Mardon, an Oklahoma native whose early formation took shape in the state, now calls Alberta, Canada, home. A writer and former lawyer, Mardon's diverse academic background includes degrees in agriculture, arts, theological studies and law.

"I grew up going to Saint James the Greater Catholic Church in Oklahoma City, a place that really formed me as a child," said Mardon. "We were very poor growing up in Oklahoma and my parents instilled in me very early a sense of volunteerism."

"Our church burned down in the early 1970s when I was in the third grade, a very surreal event, in which I had to help with my family to fundraise to rebuild it. We hosted lots of bingo

nights, which was actually illegal at the time in Oklahoma due to gambling restrictions, so we had to put up blackout curtains in the school cafeteria and the doors would get locked in the event we got raided.

"This was a major coming-together that had a lot to do with my early formation as a child and the need to give back and help rebuild a community."

Owning a fascinating background, marked by colorful situations and dotted with historic figures, Mardon has a story to tell due in part to her experiences.

One such experience: an encounter with an Oklahoma priest in Guatemala. Yes, Blessed Stanley Rother.

"I have had the opportunity to meet some really incredible people," said Mardon. "I met Blessed Stanley Rother in 1976 on a mission trip I went on with Carmelite nuns. My first vision of him was on the roof of his rectory in Guatemala."

"We traveled with the Sisters of Mercy out of Wichita, Kansas (the nuns who taught at Saint James the Greater Catholic School), and the Carmelite nuns joined us. I thought to myself 'Who is this guy on the roof?' He took his hat off and wiped his forehead and the sun shone through his hair and it was bright red with the sun beaming down on it. And I thought, 'That's not a Hispanic or Mayan person.'

"I'm very tall – nearly 6-feet tall at the time – and I'm typically a head taller than most

Hispanic or Mayan people. Blessed Stanley towered over all of them as well."

Mardon said she witnessed Blessed Stanley as a servant committed to helping others by utilizing his personal gifts through creativity and problem-solving.

"Blessed Stanley represented everything growing up in Oklahoma was all about – hard work," said Mardon. "Being raised so poor, we either made do or we did without. We learned to fix things because we couldn't buy things. Blessed Stanley would fix the roofs and tinker everywhere I saw him. From what I witnessed, he applied that hard-working attitude while serving the people."

"He was always puttering and fixing things in Guatemala, and he helped the people increase their crops due to his vast knowledge-base."

With a mother who was raised Baptist and converted to Catholicism for marriage, Mardon said her mother didn't want her to become a nun, instead pushing her to become a doctor or a lawyer.

"I had an early fascination with nuns, and the way they lived," Mardon said. "My mother approved of Catholicism, of course, but since my grandmother was upset she married a Catholic, my mother very much was against me becoming a nun. However, my grandmother finally relented that I did indeed 'get a very

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amazing education from those nuns.”

Mardon had the opportunity in 1979 to witness Saint John Paul II (Pope John Paul II at the time) celebrate Mass in Mexico City. She also received a 20-minute audience with Pope Francis, while presenting her book “Curveballs,” her true story of faith amid adversity, in November 2019.

“I was asked to go on a trip to see Pope John Paul II lead an enormous Mass in Mexico City,” Mardon said. “I told my mom I was going to a math competition as a coverup. Looking back, can you imagine if something had happened and my mother was notified I was actually in Mexico City?”

Her life took a profound turn in 1991 when she was the subject of a severe attack for her activism, an event that led her from law to fervent advocacy for the disabled. The attack, which took place while she provided testimony against the leader of a white supremacist group, left her with physical injuries, a traumatic brain injury and PTSD.

Recognized for her resilience and contributions with awards like the Diamond Jubilee Medal and the Sovereign’s Medal for Volunteers, Mardon has also been a pivotal figure in the Catholic Women’s League and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary.

She and her husband, Austin Mardon, Ph.D., are both respected academics, well-versed in the variety of mental illnesses and strong activists for social justice.

Austin Mardon first pursued a degree in geography, joining a

NASA-sponsored Antarctic expedition which began his journey as an Antarctic explorer, founding the Antarctic Institute of Canada (AIC), which initially marked the onset of his mental and physical health challenges.

Diagnosed with schizophrenia at 30, this sparked his advocacy for mental health awareness, inspiring him to obtain master’s degrees in science and education, and a Ph.D. in geography.

Recently elected as a Foreign Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) – one of India’s most revered scientific institutions – Austin, however, claims a bigger accomplishment: his marriage.

“We were married in 2003,” Austin said. “Most schizophrenic people do not marry. Even after receiving all of these awards the biggest award I have ever received is marrying Catherine.”

In 2017, Catherine and her husband were inducted into the Order of Saint Sylvester for their work with disability and mental illness advocacy, as well as management of several activism campaigns. The Pontifical Equestrian Order of Saint Sylvester Pope and Martyr is one of five papal knighthoods officially overseen by the Holy See as orders of merit for clergy and Catholic laity.

Previously facing personal challenges after not being able to have children on their own and not able to privately adopt, the Mardons chose foster care as their calling.

“The kids we help are thrown out by society,” Catherine said. “Their families only want something to do with them when they receive disability checks. We are taught that



Catherine and Austin Mardon. Photo provided.

every human life intrinsically has the same value. We are looking at children whose parents abused them when they were in the womb (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome). It has become our passion to help these children and young adults.

“These kids have been thrown away, by their friends, family and society. When kids age out of foster care, many of them become homeless because they must move out of the group home at age 18. My husband and I believe that someone has to take care of these children. Many of them are athe-

ists. We don’t take care of them because they are not Catholic, we take care of them because we are Catholic.

“Most people think, ‘Oh, this must be so awful’ (fostering children and young adults), but it’s really not. All of our foster kids are very tough people.

“It’s about relationships and being open to human beings and helping them; we are open to life and must always help others.”

Joanna Borelli is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

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The Knights of Columbus at St. Joseph Catholic Church and Our Lady of Lebanon (Marian Rite) in Norman host an annual toy drive. Photos provided.

Holiday help Parishes already at work to help families in need

By Everett Brazil, III
The Sooner Catholic

A Christmas tree glistens with lights and ornaments, bringing an aura of love and hope during the Advent season and celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ.

Presents poke out from under the tree, and whether from Santa Claus or parents, the kids sneak out of bed early on Christmas morning, hoping to get a glimpse of what awaits, long before their parents arise for the day.

A tray that once held cookies only shows crumbs. A once-full glass of milk now only reveals residue, a sign for the children that Santa had indeed stopped at their house overnight.

Such a joyful scene ... for some. Yet for families struggling to provide such presents, the Knights

of Columbus at Saint Joseph Catholic Church and Our Lady of Lebanon (Marian Rite) in Norman engage in their annual toy drive aimed at helping all young children celebrate the holidays with gifts.

“This came up at one of the meetings,” said Knight Bill Martich with the Saint Joseph Knights of Columbus Council 12819, “and it was determined that we should have a toy drive, especially for the J.D. McCarty Center in Norman.”

That was nine years ago, prompting a call to their priest for help with the project. Information went into the church bulletin. And the project took off.

“It was very well received,” Martich said.

And it remains so.

Support pours in from the parishes for a community in need.

The J.D. McCarty Center for children with disabilities was one beneficiary, along with the Catholic Charities Women’s Shelter in Norman and parishioners in need of assistance.

The items collected, more than 3,000 to date, include clothing, games, toys, sports balls, remote-controlled cars and trucks and Bluetooth and digital devices.

Some make donations of items some are monetary, allowing families to buy items for their children.

In Ponca City at Saint Mary Catholic Church, the times between Thanksgiving and Advent to Christmas is a time for caring about the community. The parish doesn’t have a food pantry available to the public, but does provide community support to those who are greatly in need.

The support extends to help

with gas to travel to a job interview, rent assistance or funds to help pay for utilities. Saint Mary works with New Emergency Resources Agency (NERA), which offers a food pantry and a grocery store for those in need, especially the homeless.

At Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Newkirk, Desiree Wathor is the parish office manager and the voice of the church for those who need immediate help. Saint Mary’s holiday program is done through the Blessed Stanley Rother organization.

“They provide groceries, which includes a ham and all the fixings for Thanksgiving,” Wathor said.

At Christmas, the parish provides a Trees of Love event at the back of the church, offering families food and children’s gifts.

Everett Brazil, III is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.



Doctors of the church: How they are chosen

By Father John Flader
The Catholic Weekly, OSV News

With Pope Leo XIV proclaiming Saint John Henry Newman as a doctor of the church on Nov. 1, let's consider what criterion is used to make this decision, whether a layperson could be named a doctor and what sort of writings church doctors must have produced to be given this title.

First of all, the word "doctor" in this sense does not refer to the person who treats your flu. Nor to someone who fixes the ailments of the Catholic Church. The word comes from the Latin verb "docere," meaning "to teach," and so a "doctor" in Latin is a teacher.

This meaning is preserved in the academic world, where the highest degree awarded is a doctorate.

In order for someone to receive the title "doctor of the church," there are three requirements.

The first is that the person must be eminent in doctrine, and naturally their writings must be faithful to church teaching.

If, like Newman, they had been a non-Catholic for a time and had written something that was not orthodox, those writings would be ignored in favor of their writings as a Catholic.

Similarly, ecclesiastical writers who embraced certain heresies of their day, like Origen and Tertullian, cannot be doctors of the church, even though their other writings are frequently quoted.

While a doctor's writings must be eminent, of importance for the church, it is not required that they be numerous.

For example, while Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas left copious writings, others like Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux wrote comparatively little.

The second requirement is that the doctors themselves must have a high degree of holiness and be canonized saints.

Thus, an eminent theologian such as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger – Pope Benedict XVI – could not be named a doctor of the church, unless he were first canonized.

And third, it must be the pope himself who names someone a doctor of the church. The first pope to do so was Pope Boniface VIII, who in 1298 proclaimed as doctors the four great Western Fathers of the Church, Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Gregory the Great.

Corresponding to these were four great Eastern Fathers of the same period, Saints John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Athanasius.

Although they had been considered as doctors early on, it was Pope Pius V who officially recognized them as such in 1568. Pope Pius V also declared his fellow Dominican Saint Thomas Aquinas a doctor, and Pope Sixtus V added Saint Bonaventure in 1588.

The number of doctors remained at 10 until the 18th century, when the number gradually increased up to our own time.

At present, with the addition of Saint John Henry Newman, there are 38 doctors of the church. Four of these are women: Saints Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, Thérèse of Lisieux and Hildegard of Bingen.

As regards whether a layperson can be named a doctor of the church, Saint Catherine of Siena was a laywoman, a member of what would later become the Third Order of Saint Dominic.

The most recent saints to be declared doctors were Saint Thérèse of Lisieux by Saint John Paul II in 1997, Saints John of Avila and Hildegard of Bingen by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, Saints Gregory of Narek and Irenaeus of Lyon by Pope Francis in 2022, and Saint John Henry Newman by Pope Leo XIV in 2025, on the feast of All Saints.

In recent times, a number of recommendations have been made for



St. John Henry Newman. Photo OSV.

additional doctors of the church.

An obvious one is Saint John Paul II. In October 2019, the Polish bishops' conference formally petitioned Pope Francis to consider making him a doctor of the church in recognition of his contributions to theology, philosophy and Catholic literature, as well as the numerous formal documents of his papacy.

Another one is Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, a Discalced Carmelite, who was born Edith Stein (1891-1942).

She had studied philosophy under the phenomenologist Edmund

Husserl and wrote several books on philosophy, striving to combine phenomenology with the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas. She was murdered in the gas chamber at the concentration camp Auschwitz II-Birkenau on Aug. 9, 1942. She came from a German Jewish family and converted to Catholicism in 1922.

In April 2024 during a private audience, the superior general of the Discalced Carmelites, Father Miguel Márquez Calle, made a formal request to Pope Francis to declare her a doctor of the church.

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It's a scene taking place in many locations across the archdiocese.

"Almost everything here is in Spanish," said Father Rodrigo Serna after arriving last summer to Saint Peter the Apostle Catholic Church in Guymon. "All our Masses are very full. In this sense, the impact is that all the sacraments are performed in Spanish, even though the children of migrants speak English perfectly well and prefer to have the service in Spanish."

Although Father Ayuzo-Ruiz has 49 years of priestly life and Father Serna only two, they share important aspects. First, they work with vibrant Hispanic communities. And second, they received God's call from a very early age. They also share a concern about the need for more Hispanic priests.

The number of Hispanic seminarians does not yet reflect the growing Hispanic Catholic community in Oklahoma.

Currently, the archdiocese has 25 seminarians in formation. Only two are from local Hispanic communities, with another seminarian from Mexico.

"The growth of the Hispanic community is one of the most important realities shaping the future of the Church in Oklahoma," said Father James Wickersham, vocations director for the archdiocese. "As this community flourishes, the need for priests and religious who can minister in Spanish and understand Hispanic culture grows as well."

"This is both a challenge and a blessing; it's an opportunity to raise new leaders from within the community who can serve their own people with joy and authenticity."

Father Wickersham said many Hispanic young men experience competing pressures, supporting their families, navigating education or adapting to a new culture. These factors can make it difficult for them to imagine themselves as priests.

"Our task is to walk with them patiently, helping them see that their culture, language and faith are tremendous gifts to the Church," Father Wickersham said.

The archdiocese offers retreats, discernment gatherings and personal accompaniment in both English and Spanish. The vocations office is working closely with the Office of Hispanic Ministry and with pastors of Hispanic parishes to build relationships and invite men to consider priesthood.



Fr. Miguel Ayuzo-Ruiz prayed for people before an apparition play and an Our Lady of Guadalupe festival on Dec. 10, 2023, at the Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine. Photo Chris Porter/Sooner Catholic.

"One of the bright spots in young adult formation in our archdiocese is the local EPJ group – Encuentros de Promoción Juvenil – doing wonderful work in helping young adult Hispanics come to know and serve the Lord Jesus in their lives," Father Wickersham said.

Erika Martinez, coordinator of Hispanic Ministry, said one of the newest initiatives is from the Altum Institute, which focuses on theological formation and in partnership with Anáhuac Universidad in Mexico.

"We now have 25 students enrolled in a five-year program leading to a bachelor's degree in theology," Martinez said.

The most powerful support comes from a loving family that encourages faith and prayer.

"Parents can speak positively about the priesthood, invite their sons to listen for God's call, and assure them of their support," Father Wickersham said.

Said Father Serna, "If a young man feels inclined to the priesthood, that's a good sign. Although there may be different life options in the world, God works in a very funny way and will do everything so that this vocation persists."

The biggest obstacle that some young people may encounter today, said Father Serna, is fear – the fear of failure.

"But we shouldn't pay attention to it because fear never comes from God," he said.

Father Ayuzo-Ruiz offers another piece of advice to young men.

"If you feel the seed of a vocation to the priesthood sprouting within you," he said, "entrust yourself in prayer to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you in the process of discernment, so that your vocation may grow and mature."

Father Wickersham said, God doesn't call people because they're perfect, he calls them because he loves them and wants to work through them.

"When men from our parishes respond to God's call, they bring a unique authenticity to their ministry," he said. "They understand the language, customs and hopes of the people they serve, and they can preach the Gospel with both warmth and clarity. These home-grown vocations strengthen the Church and help her remain truly rooted in the life of our local communities."

"Your Hispanic heritage is not an obstacle but a gift that the Church needs today. Be open, be brave and let God lead you."

Bella Gutierrez is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.



The Latin Mass community at St. Damien of Molokai Catholic Church in Edmond prayed for the repose of the soul of Archbishop Beltran. The archbishop supported the community. More than 20 years later, the community continues to grow, and it is so thankful for everything the archbishop did. Dona ei requiem, et lux perpetua luceat ei! Photos provided.



Parishioners attend Mass at Historic Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Oklahoma City. Photo Bella Gutierrez/Sooner Catholic.

Answering the Call



Supporting seminarians in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City

By Jennifer Yardley
Director of Annual Giving

“I recall first feeling a call to the priesthood at the age of 6,” said seminarian Dominick Denney. “I was serving the Holy Mass at the base chapel, and I remember watching our pastor at the time pray the words of institution over the host, and there came into my mind the thought, ‘I could do that!’”

Stories like Denney’s echo across the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, where 25 men are currently preparing for the priesthood – the highest number in years. Each of these seminarians has heard God’s call and responded with faith, courage, and trust. Their “yes” is a gift not only to God but to the entire Church in western and central Oklahoma.

The road to priesthood is long, often seven to nine years of academic study, spiritual formation and pastoral training. Tuition, housing and specialized programs add up to thousands of dollars every year. While the journey is demanding, seminarians describe it as a deeply rewarding time of growth and joy that prepares them for a lifetime of service.

Denney shared that his summer assignments in parishes have been particularly fulfilling: “During the year, we spend so much time reading, studying and preparing our hearts to serve that in the summers, we actually get to put into practice the things we worked on during the academic year. I want to be the kind of priest who is very involved in the lives of his people.”

For Henry Nguyen, the joy comes in sharing Christ wherever he is sent.

“The most rewarding part of seminary is sharing the Good News, whether it is high school students or people in nursing homes,” Nguyen

said. “I love to remind people of the joy, love and mercy that the Lord has for his children. I can’t wait until I can be an Alter Christus – ‘Another Christ’ – as a priest, and be a bridge between God and his people.”

Seminarian Robert Blaschke reflected on how his years of study have transformed his relationship with the Lord.

“Seminary has given me the time, the desire and the ability to not just know the Lord, but to love him,” Blaschke said. “Every day he is waiting, calling me and everyone else to love him. All we have to do is to remember to fall in love, to choose to fall in love; seminary has provided that reminder and encouraged that choice.”

Behind every seminarian’s story is a community of support. Their journey is sustained by the prayers, encouragement and generosity of countless Catholics across the archdiocese.

“My time in seminary has been far from easy,” Denney said, “but this adventure would not be possible without you and your generous support. I have had opportunities to see parts of the world that I never would have seen if it weren’t for your generosity and prayers, and so for giving me this adventure, I say thank you.”

Nguyen added that the encouragement of others sustains him through the challenges of formation.

“Your love, faith and hope in Holy Mother Church give me strength to continue to chase the Lord’s heart,” he said. “This zeal for the Lord inspires me to continue to grow.”

For Blaschke, financial and spiritual support represent a deeper partnership in God’s work.

“God does not need your money, but he does want it. He wants it because he wants you to be a part of his work of saving souls,” he said. “Every baptism, confession and Mass we offer in the future will be made possible in part by you.

Please consider becoming an instrument of this amazing work of salvation by making a financial gift to further seminarian education. And if you cannot give, please at least take a moment to pray for us.”

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is in a time of renewal for vocations. With 25 men currently in formation, the future looks hopeful, but their commitment is possible only with ongoing generosity.

“Seeing how many seminarians we have this year, it is obvious that the Lord is answering your prayers,” said Denney. “With the number of men to be ordained in the coming years, I humbly ask you to prayerfully consider your continuing generosity so that we can live our vocations of love and service to you and our almighty God.”

Priestly formation is about more than study. It is about preparing men who can walk with God’s people in moments of joy and sorrow, in faith and in doubt. These seminarians are training to be spiritual fathers who will one day celebrate Mass, hear confessions, baptize children and anoint the sick.

Their “yes” is not only to God but to every person they will serve in parishes across Oklahoma.

By supporting the Seminarian Education Appeal, Catholics across the archdiocese have the opportunity to walk alongside these men in their formation. The prayers and gifts allow them to focus on what is most important: growing closer to the Lord and preparing to lead souls to heaven. God has called. They have answered. Together, people can ensure they are ready to serve the Church for generations to come.



Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Daily Prayer Calendar

Please use this calendar to pray for the seminarians of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

1st Day of the Month



Emilio Rojas
Pastoral Year
St. John Vianney
College Seminary
St. Charles Borromeo

2nd Day



Andrew Harris
Propaedeutic Year
Holy Trinity Seminary
St. Francis of Assisi

3rd Day



Bryan Wietelman
Propaedeutic Year
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
St. Joseph Old Cathedral

4th Day



Colton Estes
Propaedeutic Year
St. John Vianney
College Seminary
St. Matthew

5th Day



Jacob Gardner
Propaedeutic Year
Holy Trinity Seminary
St. Thomas More

6th Day



James Boyle
Propaedeutic Year
St. John Vianney
College Seminary
St. John the Baptist

7th Day



Jaxon Ersteniuk
Propaedeutic Year
Holy Trinity Seminary
St. Philip Neri

8th Day



John Paul Pierce
Propaedeutic Year
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
St. John the Baptist



Marshall Broadt
Propaedeutic Year
St. John Vianney
College Seminary
St. Philip Neri



Isaias Carbajal
Propaedeutic Year
St. John Vianney
College Seminary
St. Peter



Nicholas Pingel
Military Service
Mount St. Mary's
Seminary
St. Eugene



Brice Jones
Discipleship 1
St. John Vianney
College Seminary
St. Andrew



John Rockers
Discipleship 1
St. John Vianney
College Seminary
St. Mark the Evangelist



Juan Galindo
Discipleship 2
Mount St. Mary's
Seminary
St. Joseph Old Cathedral



Jacob McClure
Discipleship 2
St. John Vianney
College Seminary
St. Monica



Andrew Nguyen
Discipleship 2
St. John Vianney
College Seminary
The Cathedral of Our Lady
of Perpetual Help



Kazimir Bleslada
Discipleship 2
Mount St. Mary's
Seminary
St. Monica



Paul Otieno
Configuration 2
Pope St. John XXIII
National Seminary
St. Joseph



Russell Grafrath
Configuration 2
Pope St. John XXIII
National Seminary
St. John the Baptist



Nathaniel Boyd
Configuration 2
Pontifical
North American College
St. John the Baptist



Dominick Denney
Configuration 3
St. John Vianney
Theological Seminary
St. Francis Xavier



Henry Nguyen
Configuration 3
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
St. Francis of Assisi



Rendon Chambers
Configuration 3
St. John Vianney
Theological Seminary
St. Francis of Assisi



Robert Blaschke
Configuration 3
Mount St. Mary's Seminary
Blessed Sacrament



Martin Parizek
Configuration 4
Mount St. Mary's
Seminary
St. John Nepomuk



Jose Rico
Configuration 4
Mount St. Mary's
Seminary
The Cathedral of Our
Lady of Perpetual Help



Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley
Archbishop of
Oklahoma City



Father James Wickersham
Vocations Director



Father John Paul Lewis
Director of Seminarians



Father Jerome Krug
Vocations Events
Coordinator



DONATE

Scan the QR code to make your gift in support of our future priests.



BECOME A PEN PAL

Share faith, hope and encouragement—visit ArchOKC.org/PenPal to become a Seminarian Pen Pal.



PRAY

Please pray for our priests and all those discerning a call to the priesthood.

Irish Insights

BMCHS teacher ‘handling’ stress through art

For Bishop McGuinness English teacher Rebecca Savuto, pottery began as a way to relieve stress, but after time in her studio, it became a long-term passion.

“It’s the only thing I’ve experienced that can take me out of my stresses,” Savuto said. “I don’t think about anything other than

the clay in front of me.”

After attending her first class with a friend, she found a new appreciation for handling clay.

“This is really the first time that I can see myself as actually being an artist,” Savuto said. “But I think most people are, and they just maybe haven’t found an outlet

to highlight their creative side.”

With this new passion, Savuto has even gained recognition, resulting in being selected for a showcase at the Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center.

“It’s for their Studio School Exhibition, which opened (in late October), and I think it runs until the end of January,” Savuto said. “It was the first time that they’ve ever had any type of art showcased like that.”

Little Mermaid

Nov. 13, the Irish drama crew will hold the opening night of “The Little Mermaid,” at 7 p.m. Senior Addison McCoy, who plays Atina and a seagull, said the cast feels well prepared since they’ve been practicing since the beginning of the school year.

“It’s so much fun, so it’s easy to forget about all the hard parts,” McCoy said.

With a multifaceted cast, the drama department chose the musical to reveal its wide class spread.

“It allows us to showcase a variety of different talents that we have in the program,” McCoy said.

This year, McCoy has confidence in the junior class.

“They always are very strong, and it’s very nice to see them grow from freshmen to where they are



Katherine Menz

Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School

now,” she said, “and as a senior, I have full faith in them that they will carry this program their senior year.”

Taking on hunger

As the Irish community moved into November and the fall season, the annual Canned Food Drive gained traction.

This year, Student Council chose Pirates of the Can-ibbean as the theme. Students began donating Nov. 1 and will continue until Nov. 21, in an effort to remain the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma’s largest school contributor.

This year’s goal is to collect 120,000 pounds of food.

Eve Moen, chair of fundraising, was crucial in organizing this year’s drive. She began planning in July and has been an organizer throughout the year so far.

“We’re just trying to up our intake every year,” Moen said.



Pottery created by Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School English teacher Rebecca Savuto. *Photo provided.*



The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City hosted a Holy Fire middle school retreat on Oct. 18 at Rose State College in Midwest City. *Photos Moises Cisneros.*



Moments at the Mount

Seniors ‘construct’ blessings upon Phase II project

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Most mornings, the rising sun

live a blessed life.”

The senior class was asked to pick out bible verses and took time during theology classes to write their verses on the wall. These quotes ranged from Genesis to 2



Jessica Abshagen signed the Hospitality Center. *Photo Lucy Rosenhamer/Sooner Catholic.*

illuminates Glass Family Field, home of the football Rockets. Now, the sun will light the east wall of the new Hospitality Center.

This is one of three buildings that is part of Mount Saint Mary’s Higher Ground program, now in Phase II. The Hospitality Center will be home to the new concession stand and restrooms. Part of Phase II will also be a new field house with a weight room and a sports annex with a batting cage.

When the original concession building was torn down in 2024, they found trash in the walls of the building. This inspired the school to make sure that if the new building is ever torn down, people will find God’s word and not trash, thanks to a special addition to the project.

Avery Frizel, the on-site construction manager with AC Owen Construction, came up with the idea to have students sign the wall. Senior theology teacher Brian Boeckman took it one step further by having the senior class write bible verses on the walls to bless the building.

“It aligns with who we are at MSM,” said Chris Stiles, director of advancement at the school.

“Buildings are buildings, but what God really cares about is our hearts. When scripture is the foundation of your life, you will

Peter and everything in between. Although the quotes won’t be able to be seen once the building is complete, the seniors have left their mark and God’s blessing on it for generations to come.

Celebrating the Sisters of Mercy

This year, Mount Saint Mary

Student Council brought back a tradition known as Mercy Week.

“Mercy Week is a week for Mount Saint Mary to take the time to fundraise for the Sisters of Mercy,” said Mia Kalsu, executive chair of StuCo. “It allows us as a community to give back to them for all they have done for us.”

Throughout the week, students had the opportunity to participate in different events, including a Powder Puff volleyball tournament and a pickleball tournament, with all the proceeds directed to the Sisters of Mercy.

The first Mercy Week in 2022 was created because as a Mount community, the student council, realized that the student body didn’t do much to thank the sisters for all they have done for the school.

“We brought it back this year because the student council decided that we needed a way to remember them in our daily lives,” Kalsu said. “It’s amazing to see the student body come together in support of these amazing women.”

Romeo and Juliet, interactive

“O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?”

This famous line has been recounted throughout the generations, in houses and classrooms alike. For freshmen honors English students, Betty Ray takes reading Shakespeare to the next level.

Instead of just having her students sit and read “Romeo and Juliet,” Ray makes it interactive. Each student gets a role, and for a few class periods they wear costumes and act out scenes from the classic play.

“This experience has been fun to both perform and watch my classmates perform from the script,” said freshman English student



Lucy Rosenhamer

Mount Saint Mary Catholic High School

Lydia Cage.

“As an actress, this experience of acting out the play has been really fun for me. I think it’s a very interesting concept to change up the class instead of just reading a book and answering questions.”

For Ray, she believes teaching “Romeo and Juliet” this way is an important experience for the students.

“Never one to shy away from strong emotions,” she said, “Shakespeare is a master storyteller that keeps students on the edge of their seats with sword fighting, an intense romance, and parental conflict.

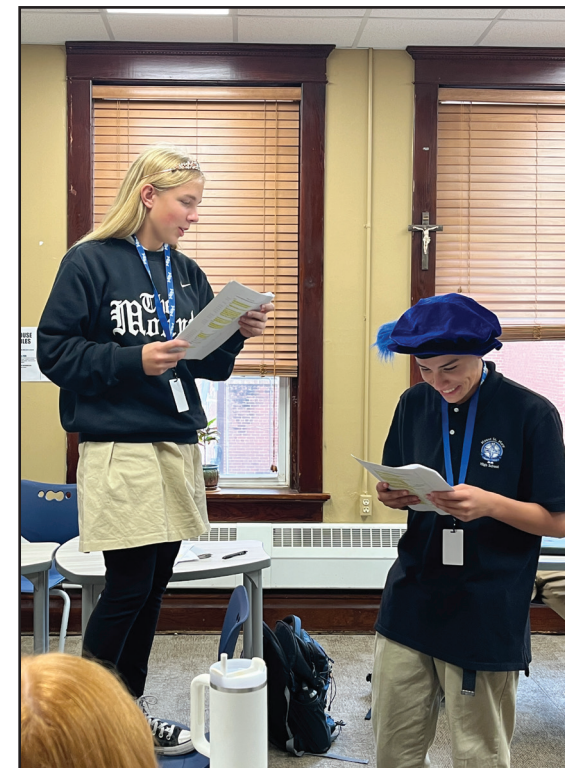
“Students are surprised to learn that not much has changed with human nature in 400 years. Questions like ‘Is it okay to keep a relationship secret from friends and family?’ or, ‘Is there a difference between a crush and true love?’ are still relevant questions today.”

For the students, experiencing Shakespeare in this way allows them to be in the story and explore talents they may not know they have.

“When the students perform the play, they can immerse themselves in the drama, seeing the action come to life in front of their eyes,” Ray said. “Some of the students grab a hat and move toward the stage without any prompting. It is wonderful to see their talents!”



Powder Puff team. *Photo Gracie Martin.*



Rachel and Allen reenacted the famous Romeo and Juliet balcony scene. *Photo Lucy Rosenhamer/Sooner Catholic.*

Jobs Box

Development officer - OKC

Cristo Rey OKC Catholic High School is seeking a development officer to support and advance the school's fundraising and stewardship efforts. Bachelor's degree in nonprofit management, business, communications, marketing or related field preferred. Three to five years of experience in fundraising, development operations or nonprofit administration. Proficiency with donor database software (DonorPerfect a plus) and Microsoft Office Suite. Excellent writing and editing skills, Canva experience a plus, strong organizational skills and the ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously. Event planning experience and comfort coordinating logistics. Apply at cristoreyokc.org.

Administrative assistant - Norman

St. Joseph Catholic Church is seeking an administrative assistant. This position supports the pastor and parish staff, communicates and assists with parishioners and their needs, coordinates the parish calendar, and keeps sacramental records. Must have good computer, personal and organizational skills. This is a full-time position with benefits. Bilingual in English and Spanish preferred. Send resume to Brad Forshee at brad.forshee@stjosephsok.org.

Parish business manager - OKC

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church is seeking a parish business manager to provide administrative support to the pastor and parish staff. This position will be responsible for oversight and supervision of parish staff and operations, including administrative and financial matters. This position also serves as the Safe Environment Coordinator for the parish. A minimum of five years office experience as well as proficiency with Google Drive and Microsoft Office products recommended. Bilingual skills with the ability to communicate effectively in English and Spanish strongly preferred. A background check and Safe Environment training will be required. Send a resume and cover letter to info@stcharlesokc.org.

Receptionist - OKC

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church is seeking a part-time

receptionist (approximately 25 hours per week) to provide support to the pastor, parish staff and parishioners. This position will serve as the primary contact for visitors and incoming phone calls. Other responsibilities will include creating and proofing the weekly bulletin, updating and maintaining social media sites, scheduling meetings and use of parish facilities, meeting rooms and hall rentals, scheduling Mass intentions, preparing and distributing the liturgical minister schedules, as well as other general office duties. Previous office experience as well as proficiency with Google Drive and Microsoft Office products recommended. Bilingual skills with the ability to communicate effectively in English and Spanish strongly preferred. A background check and Safe Environment training will be required. Send a resume and cover letter to info@stcharlesokc.org.

Bilingual DRE assistant - OKC

St. Eugene Catholic Church is seeking a bilingual (English/Spanish), part-time assistant to the director of religious education (DRE) to support faith formation programs. Some duties include maintaining records and registrations; managing office tasks and responding to inquiries; and helping coordinate events and sacramental preparation. Must be computer literate (Microsoft Office, e-mail, databases, etc.); well-organized and detail-focused; experience in a church or educational setting is a plus. Send resume to dre@steugenes.org.

Preschool teacher - OKC

Rosary Catholic School is accepting applications for a preschool teacher. Must have bachelor's degree in early childhood education and an Oklahoma teacher certification. Send a resume and a copy of the teaching certificate to Principal Christy Harris at principal@rosaryschool.com. Download the teacher application packet at archokc.org/careers.

Chemistry teacher - OKC

Mount St. Mary Catholic High School is seeking a dedicated, faith-filled and passionate chemistry teacher for the current academic year. The ideal candidate will be committed to academic

excellence and the spiritual and moral formation of students in the Catholic tradition. This full-time faculty position includes teaching chemistry and physics courses, possibly at the honors or AP level. A bachelor's degree in chemistry, science education, or related field required (master's preferred) as well as valid teaching certification or eligibility for certification. Send resume to Laura Cain, Ed.D. at lcain@mountstmary.org.

Executive director - OKC

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma are seeking an executive director to lead all fundraising strategies and operations that support the mission, programs and initiatives of both the archdiocese and the foundation. Expertise in fundraising, donor relations and strategic planning will be essential in advancing mission endeavors. Bachelor's degree (master's preferred) in nonprofit management, business administration or related field; minimum of five years of experience in fundraising and team leadership; proven success in major gift solicitation and campaign management. To submit cover letter and resume, visit archokc.org/jobs-box.

Human resources generalist - OKC

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is seeking a human resources generalist with specific emphasis on benefit administration, recruiting and staffing. Will be responsible for oversight and administration of the archdiocese employee benefits, as well as the 403b and teacher retirement plans. Assist with ongoing recruitment and onboarding processes, and provide guidance with policy review and employment law compliance to all archdiocese locations. Must have a bachelor's degree (Masters or MBA preferred) in business/management or another relevant field, or possess general management experience in a comparable position, a minimum five years of development experience and be an active, practicing Catholic in good standing. To submit cover letter and resume, visit archokc.org/jobs-box.

Accountant - OKC

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is seeking a full-time accountant to work in the Secretariat for Finance at the Catholic Pastoral Center. The accountant will be responsible for general accounting tasks at the chancery office and assisting parishes that utilize the shared accounting services program. Tasks include data entry, accounts payable, and maintaining the internal control environment. The successful candidate will process general ledger transactions, reconcile bank statements, distribute financial statements and assist with tasks associated with the annual audit. To submit cover letter and resume, visit archokc.org/jobs-box.

Director of Development - OKC

The Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine is seeking a director of development, to be responsible for all aspects of fundraising and donor relations. The director will be charged with building the material resources of the shrine in support of its mission to lead souls to Christ and honor Bl. Stanley Rother. Will organize and manage all fundraising programs and services for the shrine, including direct mail, gift cultivation and solicitation, annual appeals, donor events, database management, planned giving, endowment funding and grant writing. The director will form a collaborative working relationship with pastors, parish leaders, chancery staff and potential donors to identify and cultivate gift prospects for special projects and programs of the shrine as well as create and execute an annual calendar of development initiatives. The successful candidate will organize special events and capital campaigns to raise funds for shrine initiatives and building projects. Must have a bachelor's degree (Masters or MBA preferred) in business/management or another relevant field, or possess general management experience in a comparable position, a minimum five years of development experience and be an active, practicing Catholic in good standing. To submit cover letter and resume, visit archokc.org/jobs-box.

In his famous encyclical "Evan-

Making Sense of Bioethics

Laws providing cover for unethical actions in medicine

In recent decades, lawmakers have been pressured to provide legal cover in the form of "immunity from prosecution" for medical personnel who participate in various unethical practices.

One involves physician-assisted suicide. Politicians and lawmakers in many jurisdictions are drawn into the process of creating legal "carve outs" to insulate health care professionals from lawsuits and liability when they help patients commit suicide.

For example, Colorado in its 2016 "End of Life Options Act" puts the exception this way: "No person shall be subjected to civil or criminal liability or professional disciplinary action solely for participating in good faith in the death with dignity process or for any other action taken in good faith compliance with this article" (§25-48-119).

Writing a prescription for a toxic dose of a drug to help a person commit suicide, of course, involves a fundamental contradiction for a medical professional whose mission and work are directed to healing and saving lives.

By supporting the suicide of his patient, the medical professional upends the delicate relationship of trust at the heart of the physician-patient relationship and abuses his position of authority. To exempt him on principle from such medical malpractice, and to provide professional and legal cover for patient abandonment, is a morally indefensible course of action.

In his famous encyclical "Evan-

gelium Vitae" (On the Gift of Life), Saint John Paul II recognizes this legislative trend as a particularly devastating form of cultural decline:

"The fact that legislation in many countries, perhaps even departing from basic principles of their Constitutions, has determined not to punish these practices against life, and even to make them altogether legal, is both a disturbing symptom and a significant cause of grave moral decline. Choices once unanimously considered criminal and rejected by the common moral sense are gradually becoming socially acceptable. Even certain sectors of the medical profession, which by its calling is directed to the defense and care of human life, are increasingly willing to carry out these acts against the person. In this way the very nature of the medical profession is distorted and contradicted, and the dignity of those who practice it is degraded."

Another form of legal protection for unethical practices involves laws that encourage "anonymous abortion pill prescriptions."

California Gov. Gavin Newsom recently signed a measure allowing doctors anonymously to prescribe abortion pills. This means that the prescribing doctor remains anonymous – even to the patient receiving the abortion pill – and the physician's identity is accessible only via a subpoena within California. Pharmacists who dispense the abortion drug are also legally allowed to omit their names, as well as the names of the patient

and prescriber, from the label on the medication bottle.

Such policies constitute another example of patient abandonment. Health care professionals have a responsibility to provide careful medical supervision and oversight to patients seeking dangerous pharmaceuticals. This requires significant interaction with the patient in the form of medical testing, interviews, and in-person exams.

That attentive oversight vanishes as lawmakers and politicians start promoting misguided laws to bolster anonymous prescriptions, undermining sound medical practice and depersonalizing both the medical professional and the vulnerable patient.

Politicians, the media, and many in the medical profession have decided that abortion deserves an entirely different and much lower standard than the rest of medicine. We would never sanction such an undisciplined approach with other potent pharmaceuticals like opioids or cancer medications.

Rather than treating women and doctors as anonymous entities, pregnant women deserve the supportive medical care and focused attention of their health care team. Ideally, such personal care should help them feel strengthened and empowered to bring their pregnancies to term rather than defaulting to a fear-driven and desperate attempt to end their baby's life.

A third example involves in-vitro fertilization. The State of Alabama in 2024 passed legislation that protects IVF providers and patients from civil and criminal



Father Tad Pacholczyk
National Catholic Bioethics Center

liability for death and damage to human beings who are still embryos. It gives a pass to the infertility industry by granting near total indemnity with regard to a host of potential medical malpractices.

We have to wonder why such carve-outs are tolerated at all, given that the legal establishment has long defended the rights of those who bear the brunt of serious malpractice by medical personnel. When it comes to the most vulnerable classes of human beings at the beginning and end of life, we should be especially vigilant not to relax accountability.

As a society, we cannot overlook or grant a pass to those who systematically campaign for the legalization of corrosive medical practices like physician-assisted suicide, abortion and the production, freezing and destruction of embryonic human beings.

Seeking to provide legal cover for medical personnel in the form of "immunity from prosecution" inflicts a serious wound on medicine, society and culture, especially when those efforts are spearheaded, as Saint John Paul II has noted, by political leaders, lawmakers and public policy experts "who ought to be society's promoters and defenders."

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Gifts to the program defray tuition costs for children attending Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

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ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

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Luke 5:4

Un signo y un instrumento de unidad

Es probable que el domingo hayan notado que el sacerdote de su parroquia no estaba usando el color verde en sus vestimentas, que es el color litúrgico previsto para el Tiempo Ordinario. En esta ocasión vistió de blanco para celebrar la festividad de la Dedicación de la Basílica de san Juan de Letrán.

Muchas personas se preguntarán: “¿Quién es san Juan de Letrán?” De hecho, no existe tal santo. Esta basílica en Roma está dedicada a san Juan el Evangelista y a san Juan el Bautista, y se llama de “Letrán”, por una antigua familia romana que vivió en esa zona de Roma.

Esta iglesia es sin duda una de las iglesias Católicas más importantes del mundo. Así como la Catedral de Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro es la iglesia madre de la arquidiócesis de la ciudad de Oklahoma, la Basílica de san Juan de Letrán, que es la catedral de la Diócesis de Roma, es la iglesia madre de todo el mundo Católico. Por cierto, durante casi mil años de la historia de la Iglesia, los papas vivieron al lado de esta basílica, que es la más antigua de Roma, en el Palacio de Letrán.

Nuestra celebración de esta festividad de la Dedicación de la Basílica de Letrán es una celebración de la unidad de la Iglesia Católica. Es un signo de nuestra comunión con el obispo de Roma.

Uno de los títulos más antiguos del papa es el de Pontífex Maximus, el gran constructor de puentes. Es el Papa quien, a través de su testimonio y la autoridad que se le ha conferido como sucesor de san Pedro, se convierte en instrumento de unidad para la Iglesia.

Es por ello que celebramos esta gran fiesta,

incluso cuando cae en domingo, celebrando y afirmando la unidad que tenemos en Cristo.

No hace falta decir que vivimos en una época de grandes divisiones en nuestro mundo. Las guerras, los conflictos y las ideologías opuestas aquejan a muchas partes de nuestro mundo. Sin duda, en nuestro propio país, la política y la cultura se han polarizado tanto que el diálogo con quienes no están de acuerdo con nosotros suele parecer imposible.

Incluso la Iglesia, compuesta por personas



El papa León XIV y el rey Carlos de Inglaterra en el Vaticano el 23 de octubre. Foto OSV.

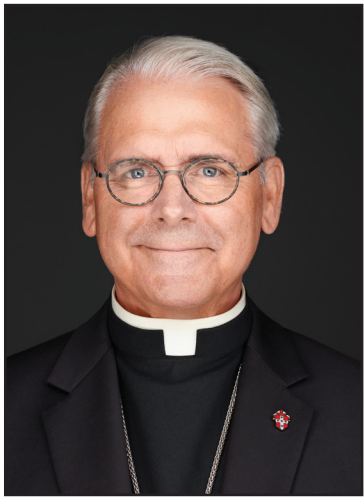
pecadoras, no es inmune a estas divisiones y polarizaciones nocivas. Estas divisiones sobre asuntos grandes y pequeños conducen a conflictos y desconfianzas que constituyen un testimonio contrario al Evangelio.

Sin embargo, como nos lo recuerda san

Juan Pablo II, ¡nunca estamos sin esperanza! La festividad de la Dedicación de san Juan de Letrán, que celebramos el 9 de noviembre, nos recuerda que, a pesar de los pecados de quienes componen la Iglesia y la han dirigido durante los últimos 2000 años, Dios ha seguido atrayendo a hombres y mujeres hacia Él y entre sí en la comunión que es la Iglesia.

Es el Cuerpo de Cristo. Esta es la unidad que el papa León XIV ha enfatizado con tanta firmeza en los primeros meses de su pontificado. Incluso en su lema, In Illo Uno Unum, que significa “en Aquel que es Uno (Cristo), nosotros somos uno”, vemos el deseo de ser atraídos por Cristo para configurarnos más estrechamente, tanto a nosotros como a nuestra Iglesia, a la imagen de Dios, que es una relación de amor, una unidad de tres Personas en un solo Dios. Esta es la realidad de la Iglesia a la que estamos llamados a ser, y conforme el Señor nos vaya haciendo.

Que nuestros esfuerzos por promover la unidad y nuestro amor mutuo sean un testimonio constante para este mundo tan lleno de divisiones. Sigamos rezando por nuestro mundo, nuestra Iglesia y por nuestro Santo Padre, el papa León, para que el Señor lo fortalezca en su servicio a la Iglesia y al mundo, y que todos caminemos juntos hacia el Reino celestial.



Arzobispo Pablo S. Coakley



Sesión Informativa sobre el Ministerio en Prisiones

El pasado 30 de agosto, el Diácono Jim Smith, Coordinador del Ministerio Penitenciario y Erika Martinez, Coordinadora del Ministerio Hispano, llevaron a cabo una sesión informativa para personas interesadas en ser voluntarios en las prisiones dentro de la Arquidiócesis. Un total de 19 personas asistieron, muchas de ellas bilingües o hispanohablantes. Se ha observado un aumento en el número de presos católicos que hablan español y que desean recibir formación Católica en su idioma. Sin embargo, actualmente no hay suficientes voluntarios que hablen español para atender esta necesidad. Por ello, el Ministerio Hispano y el Ministerio Penitencial están colaborando para reclutar voluntarios de ambas comunidades. Cualquier persona interesada en obtener más información sobre el voluntariado en el Ministerio Penitenciario puede ponerse en contacto con Erika Martinez en emartinez@archokc.org. Fotos proporcionadas.



VOCACIONES SACERDOTALES HISPANAS

‘Sean abiertos, sean valientes y dejen que Dios los guíe’

Por **Bella Gutierrez**
The Sooner Catholic

El padre Miguel Ayuzo-Ruiz es testigo fiel del crecimiento de la comunidad católica hispana en los últimos años. Domingo tras domingo, en la parroquia del padre Ayuzo-Ruiz, la Iglesia del Sagrado Corazón, cada espacio está lleno de familias, grandes y pequeñas, a menudo con bebés en brazos o personas en sillas de ruedas.

“Tenemos una comunidad hispana sólida en nuestra fe”, dijo el padre Ayuzo-Ruiz, vicario parroquial en Sagrado Corazón.

Esta es una escena que se repite en muchos lugares de la arquidiócesis.

“Casi todo aquí es en español”, dijo el padre Rodrigo Serna después de llegar el verano pasado a la Iglesia de San Pedro Apóstol en Guymon. “Todas nuestras misas son muy concurridas. En este sentido, el impacto es que todos los sacramentos se realizan en español, aunque los hijos de migrantes hablan inglés perfectamente y prefieren tener el servicio en español”.

Aunque el padre Ayuzo-Ruiz tiene 49 años de vida sacerdotal y el padre Serna solo dos, comparten aspectos importantes. Primero, trabajan con comunidades hispanas vibrantes. Y segundo, recibieron el llamado de Dios desde muy jóvenes. También comparten su preocupación sobre la necesidad de más sacerdotes hispanos.

El número de seminaristas hispanos aún no refleja el crecimiento de la comunidad católica hispana en Oklahoma.

Actualmente, la arquidiócesis tiene 25 seminaristas en formación. Solo dos pertenecen a comunidades hispanas locales, y otro seminarista proveniente de México.

“El crecimiento de la comunidad hispana es una de las realidades más importantes que están dando forma al futuro de la Iglesia en Oklahoma”, dijo el padre James



El padre Rodrigo Serna bendijo a una familia tras su ordenación sacerdotal el 12 de agosto de 2023. Foto Chris Porter/ Sooner Catholic.

Wickersham, director de vocaciones de la arquidiócesis. “A medida que esta comunidad florece, crece la necesidad de sacerdotes y religiosos que puedan ministrar en español y entender la cultura hispana”.

“Esto es tanto un desafío como una bendición; es una oportunidad para promover nuevos líderes dentro de la comunidad que puedan servir a su propio pueblo con alegría y autenticidad”, agregó.

El padre Wickersham dijo que muchos jóvenes hispanos experimentan presiones encontradas, apoyando a sus familias, navegando el tema de su educación o adaptándose a una nueva cultura. Estos factores pueden hacer que sea difícil para ellos imaginarse como sacerdotes.

“Nuestra tarea es caminar con ellos pacientemente, ayudándolos a ver que su cultura, idioma y fe

son importantes regalos para la Iglesia”, dijo el padre Wickersham.

La arquidiócesis ofrece retiros, encuentros de discernimiento y acompañamiento personal en inglés y español. La oficina de vocaciones está trabajando estrechamente con la Oficina de Ministerio Hispano y con los pastores de parroquias hispanas para construir relaciones e invitar a más hombres a considerar el sacerdocio.

“Uno de los puntos brillantes en la formación de adultos jóvenes en nuestra arquidiócesis es el grupo local de EPJ - Encuentros de Promoción Juvenil -, haciendo un trabajo maravilloso para ayudar a los jóvenes adultos a conocer y a servir al Señor Jesús en sus vidas”, dijo el padre Wickersham.

Por su parte, Erika Martinez, coordinadora de Ministerio Hispano, dijo que entre las iniciativas más recientes destacan el Instituto Altum, que se enfoca en la formación teológica y la asociación con la Universidad Anáhuac en México.

“Ahora tenemos 25 estudiantes inscritos en un programa de cinco años que conduce a una licenciatura en teología”, dijo Martinez.

El apoyo más poderoso viene de una familia amorosa que fomenta la fe y la oración.

“Los padres pueden hablar positivamente sobre el sacerdocio, invitar a sus hijos a escuchar el llamado de Dios y asegurarles su apoyo”, dijo el padre Wickersham.

Dijo el padre Serna: “Si un joven se siente inclinado al sacerdocio, eso es una buena señal. Aunque puede haber diferentes opciones de vida en el mundo, Dios trabaja de una manera muy divertida y

hará todo para que esta vocación persista”.

El mayor obstáculo que algunos jóvenes pueden encontrar hoy en día dijo el padre Serna, es el miedo: el miedo al fracaso.

“Pero no debemos prestarle atención porque el miedo nunca viene de Dios”, dijo.

El padre Ayuzo-Ruiz ofrece otro consejo a los jóvenes.

Si sientes la semilla de la vocación al sacerdocio brotando dentro de ti, dijo, encomiéndate en oración a Jesús en el Santísimo Sacramento y pide al Espíritu Santo que te ilumine en el proceso de discernimiento, para que tu vocación crezca y madure.

El padre Wickersham dijo que Dios no llama a las personas porque sean perfectas, las llama porque las ama y quiere trabajar a través de ellas.

“Cuando los hombres de nuestras parroquias responden al llamado de Dios, traen una autenticidad única a su ministerio”, dijo. “Entienden el lenguaje, las costumbres y las esperanzas de las personas a las que sirven, y pueden predicar el Evangelio con calidez y claridad. Estas vocaciones arraigadas fortalecen a la Iglesia y la ayudan a permanecer verdaderamente enraizada en la vida de nuestras comunidades locales”.

Finalmente, el padre Wickersham enfatizó: “tu herencia hispana no es un obstáculo, sino un regalo que la Iglesia necesita hoy. Sean abiertos, sean valientes y dejen que Dios los guíe”.

Bella Gutierrez es escritora independiente para the Sooner Catholic.

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Luis Soto

“Porque, ¿quien es mayor, el que está a la mesa o el que sirve?
¿No es el que está a la mesa?
Pues yo estoy en medio de vosotros como el que sirve.”
—Lucas 22, 27

8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
22 de noviembre

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Costo: \$20

Información:
Connie Diaz (405) 728-3561
Andrea Fraire (405) 720-2759

REGISTRARSE
bit.ly/liderazgoecristiano1



Feligreses asisten a misa en la histórica iglesia Católica del Sagrado Corazón en Oklahoma City. Foto Bella Gutiérrez/ Sooner Catholic.

Briefs

Join the team

Applications are open for 2026 summer staff at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp in Wellston. Must be 16 years of age by June 1, 2026, to apply. campguadalupe.org/summerteam.

Calling all Epiphany “Legacy Members”

As Epiphany of the Lord Catholic Church's 50th anniversary year approaches in 2026, the parish is looking for Epiphany "Legacy Members," any person who attended Epiphany when the church was located at the Catholic Pastoral Center. Those dates are June 17, 1976 until the first Mass in Bryce Hall on June 21, 1980. Anyone who was an adult, teenager or child that attended during that time can e-mail epiphany50@epiphanyokc.org.

Abraham: Our Father in Faith

Abraham is recognized as the father of faith because of his obedience and trust in God. Anyone interested in learning more about his life and his role in salvation history, is invited to the seminar series: "Abraham, Our Father in Faith." The three-week series is 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Nov. 13, 20, and Dec. 4 at the Catholic Pastoral Center, 7501 Northwest Expressway, Oklahoma City, in the St. Peter's Basilica meeting room. visit.almuinstitute.org/discipleship/sse.

Scotch and Cigars

The Catholic Foundation of Okla-

homa presents Scotch and Cigars at 6 p.m. Nov. 14 at Archbishop Coakley's residence. Experience an exclusive tasting event supporting the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Endowment. RSVP at cfook.org/scotch25.

A walk with Jesus for grieving parents

“A walk with Jesus for grieving parents” retreat will be Nov. 14-26 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp, 890488 S. 3290 Rd. in Wellston. The retreat will be led by Dcn. Henry de Mena and a team of parents. Visit bit.ly/awalkwithjesusforgrievingparents.

Together in Holiness marriage conference

The Together in Holiness marriage conference is 9:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Nov. 15 at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N Lake Ave. in Oklahoma City. Registration: \$64 per couple and \$5 per child for childcare. The conference is presented by the St. John Paul II Foundation and the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Visit togetherinholiness.org/ oklahomacity@e-mail.gabby@forlifeandfamily.org.

Altar Server Spiritual Retreat

The third annual Altar Server Spiritual Retreat is 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Nov. 15 at Church of St. Benedict, 2200 W. Ithica in Broken Arrow. Register at marysarmy1917.com. This will be the last year that the Altar Server Spiritual Retreat is in Oklahoma. All are encouraged

to attend while it is here.

Thanksgiving dinner

St. Joseph Catholic Church will host its 103rd annual Thanksgiving dinner 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Nov. 16 in the gym, 421 E. Acres, in Norman. Prices: adults \$18 (age 13+), child \$10 (age 7-12), free (age 6 and under). Veterans eat free. Carryout is available. Tickets are available at the door. Dinner is hosted by St. Joseph Women's Club and Knights of Columbus. Contact Rita Ille at (405) 550-0576 or e-mail raille@sbcglobal.net.

Weekend retreat

St. Gregory's Abbey presents a weekend retreat "Following St. Anthony the Great into the Desert" Nov. 21-23 at the Abbey's Abbot Mark Braun Retreat House, 1900 W. MacArthur St. in Shawnee. Fr. Peter Shults, O.S.B. will be the presenter. Cost: \$135 pp, which includes lodging, meals and retreat. Retreatants will each receive a single room (no double rooms available) and will need to provide their own bedding (Twin XL), toiletries and towels. Check-in is 4 p.m. on Nov. 21 and the retreat ends after 10 a.m. Sunday Mass on Nov. 23. Register at monksok.org.

Women's silent retreat

The priests and brothers of Miles Christi are offering a women's silent retreat Nov. 21-23 at the Catholic Pastoral Center, 7501 Northwest Expressway in Oklahoma City. Cost: single room \$250pp, double room \$230pp. For

more information and to register, call (858) 768-0872 or e-mail lorioboyle@mileschristi.org. Visit MilesChristi.org/spiritual-exercises.

Native American Mass

Join Archbishop Coakley as he celebrates a Native American Mass at 3 p.m. Nov. 23 at the Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine, 700 S.E. 89 St. in Oklahoma City. The Mass is sponsored by the American Indian Catholic Outreach office.

Advent Lessons and Carols

Everyone is cordially invited to Advent Lessons and Carols at 5 p.m. Dec. 7 at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave. in Oklahoma City. A reception will follow. Childcare will be provided free of charge. RSVP at cathedralokc.org/carols. A live broadcast will also be available on KUCO Classical Radio.

Be not afraid

The middle school retreat “Be not afraid” with the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia is Dec. 12-14 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp in Wellston. Early bird price \$100. After Nov. 20 \$125. Visit campguadalupe.org/be-not-afraid.

The forge

The forge college retreat with the Servants of Christ Jesus is Feb. 27-March 1 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp in Wellston. Early bird price \$60. After Feb. 7 \$100. Visit campguadalupe.org/forge.



A walk with Jesus for Grieving Parents

Nov. 14-16, 2025

at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp

890488 S 3290 Road, Wellston, OK 74881

This Catholic retreat offers a place to seek healing and comfort for parents who have lost a child at any age and will be led by Deacon Henry de Mena and a team of parents who have walked this journey. Special breakout sessions on mens and womens grief as well as tips on surviving the holidays without loved ones will be included.

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A GRIEVING MOTHER'S RETREAT

For mothers grieving from the loss of a child from pregnancy and infant loss.



For:

Grieving mothers of pregnancy and infant loss who desire more than shallow survival.

When:

April 24 - 26, 2026

Where:

Our Lady of Guadalupe
Catholic Camp
890488 S. 3290th Rd.
Wellston, OK 74881

Save the Date!

A weekend retreat for mothers grieving the loss of a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss.

A *Catholic* GRIEF SUPPORT MINISTRY

Calendar

This calendar only covers the two weeks between issue dates and may not reflect all of the calendar items. To see a full calendar, go to soonercatholic.org.

November

9 The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica.

10 Thirty-Second Week in Ordinary Time.

10 Feast of St. Leo the Great.

11 Feast of St. Martin of Tours.

11 Veterans Day.

11 Catholic in Recovery meeting, 7 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 1901 N.W. 18 St., Oklahoma City.

12 Feast of St. Josaphat.

12 Catholic War Veterans USA Post No. 168 meeting, 5 p.m., Sunnyside Family Reception Center, 3900 S.E. 29, Del City. Mass at 6:15 p.m. Contact Ronald Sandhop, CWV Post 168 Adjutant, (405) 640-0450, resandhop@gmail.com.

13 Feast of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini.

13 Seminar Series - Abraham: Our Father in Faith begins. Visit altuminstitute.org/discipleship/sse.

14 A walk with Jesus for grieving parents retreat weekend, Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp.

14 Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma Scotch and Cigars, 6 p.m., Archbishop Coakley's residence. RSVP at cfook.org/scotch25.

15 Feast of St. Albert the Great.

15 Together in Holiness marriage conference, 9:30 a.m., The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave., Oklahoma City. E-mail gabby@forlifeandfamily.org.

15 Pray the Rosary for Life, 9:30 a.m., Our Lady of Lebanon Catholic Church, 500 Alameda St., Norman. Contact Connie Lang, (405) 249-1041, potato.lang@gmail.com.

15 The Lay Missionaries of Charity meeting. Contact Jonathan Tarman, (405) 278-8199, Toni Harrelson, (405) 341-2199.

15 Altar Server Spiritual Retreat, 10:30 a.m., Church of St. Benedict, 2200 W. Ithica, Broken Arrow. Register at marysarmy1917.com.

15 The Oklahoma City Community of Secular Carmelites meeting, Little Flower Catholic Church, 1125 S. Walker Ave., Oklahoma City. Anyone interested in deepening prayer life with community support, call William Ginn, (405) 737-2024.

16 Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time.

16 Thanksgiving dinner, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., St. Joseph Catholic Church gym, 421 E. Acres, Norman.

17 Feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

17 Monthly Novena to the Infant Jesus of Prague begins.

18 The Dedication of the Basilicas of Sts. Peter and Paul.

18 Feast of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne.

18 Serra Club of Oklahoma City meeting, 11a.m., Catholic Charities, 1232 N. Classen Blvd., Oklahoma City. Visit serraokc.org.

18 Suicide grief support group, 6 p.m.-7 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 1901 N.W. 18, Oklahoma City.

18 Catholic in Recovery meeting, 7 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 1901 N.W.

18 Summit, 7 p.m., The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave., Oklahoma City. An evening of adoration, confessions, praise and worship every third Thursday of the month.

21 The Presentation of the Bl. Virgin Mary.

21 "Following St. Anthony the Great into the Desert" weekend retreat, St. Gregory's Abbey Mark Braun Retreat House, 1900 W. MacArthur St., Shawnee. Register at monksok.org.

21 Miles Christi Women's Silent Retreat weekend, Catholic Pastoral Center, 7501 Northwest Expressway, Oklahoma City. Call (858) 768-0872.

22 Feast of St. Cecilia.

22 Pray the Rosary for Life, 9:30 a.m., Our Lady of Lebanon Catholic Church, 500 Alameda St., Norman. Contact Connie Lang, (405) 249-1041, potato.lang@gmail.com.

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continued from page 1

About 2,000 members of synodal teams and bodies such as presbyteral councils, pastoral councils and finance councils at the diocesan, eparchial, national and regional levels were registered for the Jubilee events.

The Jubilee included workshops and other gatherings to further strengthen the implementation phase of the final document of the 2021-2024 Synod of Bishops on synodality.

“We must dream of and build a more humble church,” Pope Leo said in his homily.

It must be a church that does not stand “triumphant and inflated with pride, but bends down to wash the feet of humanity,” he said.

It must be a church that does not judge, he said, “but becomes a welcoming place for all; a church that does not close in on itself, but remains attentive to God so that it can similarly listen to everyone.”

By “clothing ourselves with the sentiments of Christ, we expand the ecclesial space so that it becomes collegial and welcoming,” he said. This will “enable us to live with confidence and a new spirit amid the tensions that run through the life of the church.”

“We must allow the Spirit to transform” the current tensions in the church “between unity and diversity, tradition and novelty, authority and participation,” he said.

“It is not a question of resolving them by reducing one to the other, but of allowing them to be purified by the Spirit, so that they may be harmonized and oriented toward a common discernment,” he said.

“Being a synodal church means recognizing that truth is not possessed, but sought together, allowing ourselves to be guided by a restless heart in love with love,” he said.

Synodal teams and participatory bodies, he said, should “express what occurs within the church, where relationships do not respond to

the logic of power but to that of love.” Rather than follow a “worldly” logic, the Christian community focuses on “the spiritual life, which reveals to us that we are all children of God, brothers and sisters, called to serve one another,” he said.

“The supreme rule in the church is love. No one is called to dominate; all are called to serve,” he said.

He said Jesus showed how he belongs “to those who are humble” and condemns the self-righteous in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, which was the day’s Gospel reading (Lk 18:9-14).

The Pharisee and the tax collector both enter the temple area to pray, the pope said, but they are divided mostly because of the attitude of the Pharisee, who is “obsessed with his own ego and, in this way, ends up focused on himself without having a relationship with either God or others.”

“This can also happen in the Christian community,” he said. “It happens when the ego prevails over the collective, causing an individualism that prevents authentic and fraternal relationships.”

“It also occurs when the claim to be better than others ... creates division and turns the community into a judgmental and exclusionary place; and when one leverages one’s role to exert power, rather than to serve,” the pope said.

The tax collector, on the other hand, recognized his sinfulness, prayed for God’s mercy and “went home justified,” that is, forgiven and renewed by his encounter with God, according to the reading.

Everyone in the church must show the same humility, he said, recognizing that “we are all in need of God and of one another, which leads us to practice reciprocal love, listen to each other and enjoy walking together.”

This is the nature and praxis of the synodal teams and participatory bodies, he said, call-

ing them “an image of this church that lives in communion.”

“Let us commit ourselves to building a church that is entirely synodal, ministerial and attracted to Christ and therefore committed to serving the world,” he said.

Pope Leo cited the words of the late Italian Bishop Antonio Bello, who prayed for Mary’s intercession to help the church “overcome internal divisions. Intervene when the demon of discord creeps into their midst. Extinguish the fires of factionalism. Reconcile mutual disputes. Defuse their rivalries. Stop them when they decide to go their own way, neglecting convergence on common projects.”

The Catholic Church, he said, “is the visible sign of the union between God and humanity, where God intends to bring us all together into one family of brothers and sisters and make us his people: a people made up of beloved children, all united in the one embrace of his love.”

Later in the day, before praying the Angelus at noon with those gathered in Saint Peter’s Square, Pope Leo continued his reflection on the day’s Gospel reading, saying, “it is not by flaunting our merits that we are saved, nor by hiding our mistakes, but by presenting ourselves honestly, just as we are, before God, ourselves and others, asking for forgiveness and entrusting ourselves to the Lord’s grace.”

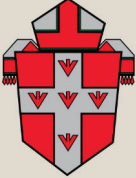
Just as a person who is ill does not try to hide – out of shame or pride – their wounds from a doctor, the Christian also should not try to hide their pain if they are to be healed, he said.

“Let us not be afraid to acknowledge our mistakes, lay them bare, take responsibility for them and entrust them to God’s mercy,” he said. “That way, his kingdom -- which belongs not to the proud but to the humble and is built through prayer and action, by practicing honesty, forgiveness and gratitude – can grow in us and around us.”



National Vocation Awareness Week

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