

Photo OSV News

This Christmas, focus on being good ‘soil’

By Leonard J. DeLorenzo
OSV News

The question at Christmas is not about whether God will act for us. The babe born of Mary is the answer: God has given everything. The question is really about us. Will we receive Christ?

This is a most magnificent reversal, and a most perilous one. He in whom all things are created – in whom we live and move and have our being – is given into our hands. The host has become the guest, and we, who depend on God for all things, are called upon to become his host.



Photo OSV News

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Put Out Into the Deep

Luke 5:4

Let us align our ways to God’s ways

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we may find ourselves somewhat conflicted at this time of year. We are in the final days of Advent and stand at the threshold of the Christmas season, which begins with the Solemnity of the Lord’s Nativity.

This time of year, we’re often immersed in festive cultural and commercial trappings that adorn our homes, stores and public spaces. The challenge lies in remembering the origin and purpose of the many cultural expressions associated with Christmastime. While the two may be connected, the feast is far greater than most of the ways we have come to celebrate it.

The danger is to mistake the reality of the Christian mystery, which is the birth of Jesus the Son of God and our Savior, for the enchanting trappings of light displays, eggnog and stocking stuffers. We must avoid the temptation to tame the mystery of Christmas and settle for something less earthshaking than the incredible truth that God has come to live with us and shares our very human nature.

The incarnation of God in the person of a little baby teaches us important lessons about how God chooses to come to us and remain with us. The birth of the Son of God in human flesh illustrates God’s own preference for humility and littleness.

The humility of God present in the feast of Christmas should truly shock us! The God who is omnipotent, infinite and eternal chooses to enter our history as a vulnerable baby. He was born into a family that was poor – long before any modern comforts – and at a time in history when his people lived under the oppression of a foreign occupation.

He was not born in a center of power, but in a remote and insignificant village. He was not born in Rome or even Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem. The God who breathed life into Adam’s lungs after forming him from the dust of the earth freely chose to be a vulnerable child who depended on others to meet his most basic needs. God still chooses to come to us in humble ways.

The incarnation is the greatest event since God created everything out of nothing, yet God chooses to come in the littlest way imaginable. There is an axiom from the Ignatian tradition of Catholic spirituality that states,

“Not to be confined by the greatest, and yet to be contained within the tiniest, that is divine.”

God is greater than the universe, yet is swaddled in a tiny cloth. God is the creator of heaven and earth, yet is present on the altar under the appearance of simple bread and wine. God is the Eternal Word, the Logos, which orders and forms the cosmos, yet gives himself to us in the written word of Sacred Scripture.

God holds everything in the palm of his hand yet whatever is done for the least of these is done for him. God still chooses to come to us in ways of littleness.

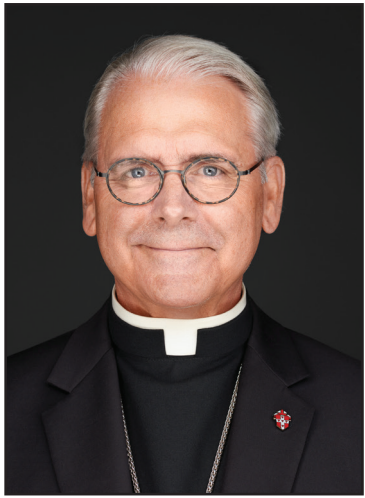
God does not choose what would seem to be the most efficient, most effective or most convenient path to accomplish his designs. The archangel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary that God had chosen her for such a special mission astonishes the young teenager. She is a virgin, and Joseph, who she intended to marry, had not yet taken her into his home.

The birth of Jesus comes at a time when this young couple must make a difficult journey to the town of Joseph’s forefathers, which makes an already precarious event like labor and delivery all the more risky.

The Roman census leaves Mary and Joseph without a place to lodge in the crowded town of Bethlehem, so Jesus is born in a stable and placed in a manger. All of this reminds me of the saying, “If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans.” God still chooses to come in seemingly inconvenient and certainly unexpected ways.

The Solemnity of the Lord’s Nativity invites us to reflect on how God chooses to enter our lives today. Our reflection can expand our hearts and prepare us to receive God in the manner he chooses.

God’s ways are not our ways. This is a holy mystery that cannot be tamed. God desires to abide in us and for us to abide in him. We bend low each year to marvel at his humility and littleness as we venerate his image placed in the manger. If we let this change us, we will live with him for all eternity.



Archbishop Paul S. Coakley

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 world leaders**. May they be guided by wisdom and make decisions that promote peace, justice and mercy. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.
 - ✔ **The Saints & Scholars** dinner benefiting the St. Thomas Aquinas Endowment is at 6 p.m. Jan. 29 at the Oklahoma City Golf & Country Club, 7000 N.W. Grand Blvd. in Nichols Hills. Register at cfook.org/saints2026.
 - ✔ **The Mount St. Mary** Catholic High School Magic at The Mount Gala is Feb. 7. For more information, visit mountstmary.org.
 - ✔ **Catholic Charities** of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City will host its annual Green Tie Gala at 6 p.m. Feb. 21 at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, 1700 NE 63 St. in Oklahoma City. The gala supports the Sanctuary Women’s Development Centers. Visit catholiccharitiesokc.org.



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Lord,
as we come together this Christmas, we ask for your blessing upon our family. Unite our hearts in love, understanding and peace. Please help us to forgive past hurts and embrace each other with open hearts. Let the joy of this season fill our home, and may we continue to grow in love and support for one another throughout the coming year.
Amen.

Anniversary celebration keeps going at St. Gregory’s Abbey

By Theresa Bragg

As a continuation of the Sesquicentennial celebration, the 150th anniversary of the Mission of the Catholic Church in Oklahoma, the monks of Saint Gregory’s Abbey looked for additional ways to reach out and involve parishioners in our state.

“During this Sesquicentennial Anniversary, we wanted to do a project that involved every parish in Oklahoma,” said Father Adrian Vorderlandwehr, O.S.B. “Many Catholics are not aware of Saint Gregory’s Abbey and our mission. We wanted to reach out to the parishes and their parishioners, find out their prayer requests and pray for them, one parish at a time.

“We’re doing what monks do best ... pray.”

Every week, Father Adrian goes to the post office with an armload of packages. Each package includes prayer booklets, some in English and some in Spanish. Each booklet contains the Sesquicentennial prayer, the early history of the Benedictines in Oklahoma and the founding of the church in Oklahoma. On the back of the prayer booklets, the parishioners are encouraged to share their prayer requests either through e-mail or through the abbey website at monksok.org.

Parish bulletin editors receive an e-mail from Father Adrian about the project, letting the parish know what upcoming day the monks of Saint Gregory’s Abbey will be praying for the parish and their parishioners. The Abbey has received a constant stream of prayer intentions.

The Sesquicentennial celebration will contin-



Fr. Adrian Vorderlandwehr, O.S.B. put together packages of prayer booklets for parishes. Photo Theresa Bragg.

ue over the next 18 months.

“We monks and friends of the monastery recently have had wonderful opportunities to look back on the marvelous things God has done in the life of our monastic community

and in the life of the Church in Oklahoma over the last 150 years,” said Abbot Lawrence Stasyszen, O.S.B. “With celebrations on Oct. 12

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Archbishop Coakley’s Calendar in Review

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

- Dec. 7** – Advent Lessons and Carols at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Oklahoma City
- Dec. 8** – Mass for Feast of the Immaculate Conception at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, OKC
- Dec. 9** – St. Ann Retirement Center Board of Directors meeting at the Catholic Pastoral Center; Mass at St. Francis de Sales Chapel, CPC; USCCB Executive Committee virtual meeting
- Dec. 10** – School Mass at St. Mary Catholic School, Ponca City; Napa Institute virtual Board meeting
- Dec. 11** – Priests Personnel Board meeting, CPC
- Dec. 12** – CPC staff Advent Day of Reflection; Advent reception at archbishop’s residence
- Dec. 13** – Cabalgata at Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine; Advent reception at archbishop’s residence
- Dec. 16** – Mass at St. Francis de Sales Chapel, CPC; Archdiocesan Finance Council meeting, CPC
- Dec. 18** – Archbishop’s Cabinet meeting, CPC; Mass at St. Francis de Sales Chapel, CPC; Vocation Board meeting, CPC
- Dec. 21** – Centennial Mass and celebration at St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church, Harrah



Everyone knows someone who no longer goes to church. What if it only took one heartfelt invitation to bring them back? WOULD YOU BE THE ONE TO ASK?

St. Paul Street Evangelization has developed the Invite One Back Training workshop to equip the faithful with the tools needed to lovingly and confidently reconnect Catholics who have fallen away from the Church. This workshop teaches you how to foster one-on-one encounters that open hearts to Jesus Christ and his Church.

Whether you are new to evangelization or seasoned in ministry, this training will inspire and empower you to make a real difference in your parish and community.

Don’t miss this chance to be renewed in mission and better equipped to share the love of Christ with those who are waiting for an invitation back home.

Register today to save your spot!



Saturday, Jan. 24
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

\$40 per person
Includes workshop materials, morning hospitality, and lunch.

SCAN QR CODE to register or visit
WEBSITE archokc.org/GMDevents
CONTACT Larann Wilson for more information at lwilson@archokc.org



OKLAHOMA
MARCH FOR LIFE
FEB. 4, 2026

7:30 a.m. Sanctity of Life Mass, Corpus Christi Catholic Church
9 a.m. March around the capitol
9:30 a.m. Enter the capitol for Rose Day
11:30 a.m. Speeches on the floor of the House
1 p.m. Benediction by Archbishop Coakley

OKLAHOMA STATE CAPITOL, 2300 N. LINCOLN BLVD., OKLAHOMA CITY
CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC CHURCH, 1616 N. KELLEY AVE., OKLAHOMA CITY





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Fr. Scott Boeckman receives Human Rights Award

By Bella Gutiérrez
The Sooner Catholic

As a Catholic priest serving the southside of Oklahoma City, Father Scott Boeckman promotes the human desire that “all may be one,” in communion with one another.

Father Boeckman not only promotes that vision, but he also impacts it.

“Jesus told his disciples his deepest desire in his heart: ‘the y may be one, even as we are on e.’ But if not only Jesus’ desire, is all our desire,” said Father Boeckman.

The Oklahoma Universal Human Rights Alliance, in collaboration with the United Nations Association of Oklahoma City, recently recognized 20 people for their efforts in maintaining and upholding human rights established in 1948.

Among them: Father Boeckman.

Parochial vicar at Little Flower Catholic Church in Oklahoma City, Father Boeckman received a Human Rights Award in a ceremony held Dec. 6 at the Oklahoma State House of Representatives.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares the “freedom of thought, conscience and religion; ... and manifest it either alone or in community with others and in public or private places.” Father Boeckman received his award as an outstanding spiritual leader and selfless servant to the Hispanic community.

It was four years ago, at Saint James Catholic Church in Oklahoma City, when Father Boeckman had this motivation, an idea that he shared with the people which immediately resonated in their hearts.

From that idea emerged Emaüs, a program to help people to get to know Jesus and the Church better. Emaüs began in two steps: a three-day retreat, most recently held at Saint Gregory’s Abbey in Shawnee, and then small group meetings throughout the year.

For people who may feel alone, disconnected and unsure of how to keep Jesus in their hearts, it is precisely at this point that Emaüs becomes a path in their lives, offering them comfort in the Lord.

Father Boeckman explained



Fr. Boeckman with a group of Emaüs members at the Oklahoma State Capitol.
Photo Bella Gutiérrez/Sooner Catholic.

that Emaüs allows people to connect, to transform their lives.

“They just kept coming together, talking about Jesus, and they’re able to share their heights and their lows of their life,” he said.

For Hilda De Leon Xavier, director of Holy Angels Education Center and promoter of his nomination, Fr. Boeckman is characterized by his humility, his ability to listen and the passion with which he speaks to everyone about his mission.

Through his work with the Emaüs program, De Leon said, “I have witnessed how he transforms lives.

“I follow his work on social media and constantly see how he accompanies people, visits the sick, offers words of hope and spiritual guidance, and dedicates himself completely to the Catholic community. His way of communicating and connecting with everyone is truly special.

Said Father Boeckman: “I’m so grateful to be a part of a ministry that helps bring healing to those people and so that’s the Emaüs.”

For Janet Lejia, who suffered from depression due to personal and family problems, Father Boeckman, showed her a light. He offered her counseling because he was certain that she qualified for an annulment of her marriage.

“I’m sure you’re going to receive Jesus into your heart,” Lejia said. Father Boeckman encouraged her. “It was a very difficult and

painful process, but very satisfying because I got rid of all the sins that was troubling me.

“I prayed to Blessed Stanley Rother to put someone in my path to help me, and as I was leaving the shrine, Father Boeckman approached me.”

Neyra Estrada, diagnosed with cancer in 2023, told a similar story of how her life began to change, beginning when she received the Anointing of the Sick and when Father Boeckman asked her, “Do you want me to accompany you through this whole process?”

Estrada, a mother of three, experienced this biggest test of faith and with his support, her love for God grew stronger.

After a silent retreat, upon returning home, she said, “I already began to notice some changes. It was an extraordinary experience, and now, believing in the God’s grace and after surgery, the doctors can no longer find any trace of the disease in my body.”

Father Boeckman said he credits his connection with the Hispanic community for the strength he finds in God.

“I know that God placed that in my heart because there’s nothing that I enjoy more than doing that, I don’t want to go anywhere else,” he said. “Pope Francis said about priests: ‘... shepherds with ‘the smell of the sheep’ ... people capable of living, of laughing and crying with your people, in a word, of communicating with them.’

“I’m having the time of my life and I love it.”

Bella Gutiérrez is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

A life well lived – giving and receiving

Edmiston’s 100-year celebration was cause for *two* celebrations

By John Helsley
The Sooner Catholic

Even at age 100, Ed Edmiston looms as a real Romeo.

To be clear, he’s one of the “RO-MEOs” – Really Old Men Eating Out – a group of friends who gather regularly to eat and tell stories and comment on the issues of the day, surely offering solutions.

Edmiston is a lot of other things, too. Father, grandfather and great grandfather. Devout Catholic. World War II vet. Sports fan, leaning strongly to his alma mater, Oklahoma State. Workout warrior, insistent on putting in three miles on his stationary bike daily. And the kind of man who’s piled up friends and adorers along the way.

“It’s been a great life,” Edmiston said. “I’ve loved it.”

And he’s still loving it, with no real signs of slowing down or losing appeal.

For his 100th birthday on Oct. 3, a throng of friends and family gathered to join not one milestone celebration, but two: the first at a new restaurant the family has opened – Carletti’s, where County Line and Gabriella’s used to treat diners – and the second at the Founders Tower.

Both were festive events featuring much love and many commendations, including one from Pope Leo.

“The good Lord decided to keep me on,” said Edmiston, who was a longtime parishioner at Epiphany of the Lord Catholic Church, before moving to Christ The King to attend with family.

And this could go on a while, joked Gina Foxhoven, one of his grandchildren and the mastermind behind the celebration.

“My papa jokes that he’s sticking around until I’m married,” she said, “to which I always reply that he might be alive another 50 years at this rate – which I love!”

Edmiston’s story is a life well lived.

In the Army Air Corp, he was a gunner on B-17 bombers, served with the Emergency Rescue Squadron and flew missions into Okinawa, Iwo Jima other locales. He helped evacuate the wounded, transported prisoners and delivered servicemen home following the war.

Back in Oklahoma, he attended OSU – then Oklahoma A&M – where he met his future wife, Dolores Ravaioli. Together they



Ed Edmiston, who turned 100 in October, said he is blessed by his large family and so many treasured friendships.

had six children, who grew the family with 14 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

While he lost Dolores in 2012, he carries her memory sweetly.

“We were married for more than 50 years,” he said. “I was blessed to have her. We had six children and they’re all very, very good people. We had a very exciting life, traveling and growing a family.”

It’s that kind of adoration that prompted Dolores to offer Foxhoven some solid advice.

“When my nonna passed away in 2012, she made me promise her several things. One of which was to ‘find a husband that treats you as good as Papa treats me,’” she recalls. “Since her passing, I’ve developed an amazing relationship with my papa and committed myself to ensure he doesn’t ever feel lonely, forgotten or ‘too old’ to try new things.

“This time together has shown me how much my nonna’s promise truly weighed. Papa is a devout, wise, joyful, kind gentleman. The bar is high and the shoes are big. I guess that’s why I still haven’t been able to fulfill that promise! But I’m grateful to have such a wonderful role model in my corner.”

Ed considered the priesthood for a bit, but met Dolores, got married and embarked on a successful career in the oil business. His most impactful mark, however, may have come in his volunteer work, with Saint Vincent de Paul, the Oklahoma Heart Hospital and elsewhere.

And he’s a good listener, too.

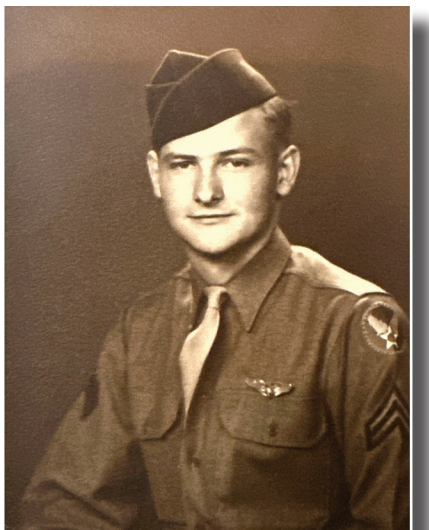
“When I’m in need of advice, sound encouragement, or prayer – I know who to call,” Foxhoven said. “My papa’s faith is not just important to him, it is who he is. Since he struggles with hearing and sometimes can’t sleep at night – he says he simply sits in prayer. He prays for his family, his friends, and everything important to him. He is grateful and a devout son of God.”

And, he said, a blessed son of God.

“You know, with these 100 years the Lord has given me, I’ve been blessed many times. You think, ‘My gosh, why am I still around.’ I feel like I’ve done everything, as far as living, working different jobs.

“But mostly, I’ve been blessed with a family that really has taken care of me.”

John Helsley is editor of the Sooner Catholic.



Ed Edmiston is proud of his service to a country he loves. Photos provided

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Holy Angels announces spring programs

Holy Angels Education Center, a ministry of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, has announced its 2026 spring programs, designed to educate, equip and empower students while supporting immigrant integration through education.

The center offers a variety of courses including English as a Second Language (ESL) from introductory to advanced levels on Tuesday and Thursday evenings; U.S. Citizenship preparation on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, with guidance for naturalization; HiSET/GED test preparation on Monday and Wednesday evenings, with focused tracks in writing/reading/social studies and science/math; small business fundamentals on Monday evenings (eight-week course); familias saludables on Wednesday



evenings (eight-week course on family wellness); and financial and digital workshops, including Bienestar financiero, tax preparation, Microsoft Office and more.

Additional programs coming soon include financial pathways, small business: grow and

manage your business, and digital/computer courses in fundamentals and MS Office, with tax preparation workshops also planned for January 2026. For more information or to register, visit holyangelseducation.org or call (405) 709-2771.

St. Eugene shares Thanksgiving blessings

By Lourdes Jea

An ALDI grocery advertisement, showing how a family of 10 could enjoy a full Thanksgiving meal – turkey, sides and dessert – for just \$40, caught the attention of Father Jim Goins and Sharon Blakely.

And it spurred them into action, an action of love, resulting in the raising of nearly \$11,000 in ALDI gift cards to provide meals for families in need.

Father Goins, pastor at Saint Eugene Catholic Church in Oklahoma City, and Blakely, the parish manager, launched a campaign inviting parishioners to purchase ALDI gift cards and

drop them into collection baskets or bring them to the parish office. Each card was paired with a grocery list, giving recipients the dignity of shopping for their own families and preparing a meal to give thanks to God, the giver of all things.

The response was overwhelming. In just two weekends, more than 200 cards were collected and distributed through parish outreach, Catholic Charities and Saint Vincent de Paul.

The campaign’s reach extended further, blessing families served by Catholic Charities’ Caritas Casitas, a new housing initiative for low-income families, and those supported by Saint Vincent de Paul ministries.

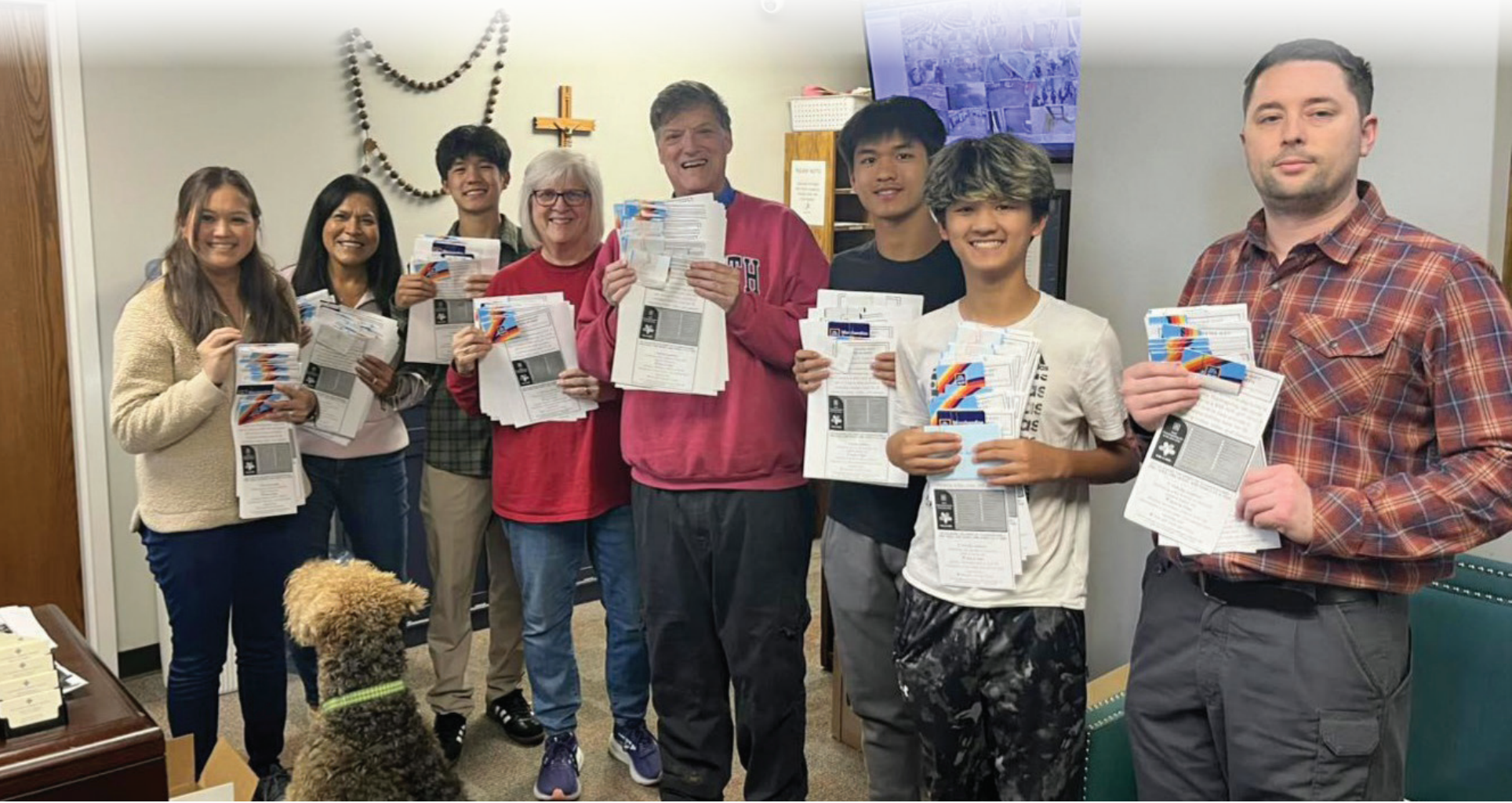
“This campaign showed how simple acts, like a gift card and grocery list, can restore dignity and hope,” Blakely said. “It’s something we can continue as a tradition, reminding us that gratitude and generosity are at the heart of parish life.”

“I was deeply moved when families asked if there was a catch or if they had to jump through hoops. It brought me to tears, because the truth is simple – there’s no catch to Christ’s love. It is freely given, no questions asked.”

Volunteer parish receptionist Gina Dougherty said, “Welcoming families and seeing their joy reminded me why I serve. One man came late yesterday and thought he was too late, but when

he received a card he wanted to give me a hug to thank everyone. That was so sweet. Everyone was so nice yesterday, and it was a blessing to be part of something that truly reflects Christ’s love.”

Father Goins said, “Catholic parishes live out faith in action every day. At Saint Eugene, our ministry to the poor is active and generous, from winter coat drives to this Thanksgiving’s gift card campaign. We gave cards to everyone who asked, offering trust and compassion. That’s faith put into action. The Church is often criticized and ridiculed in this day and age, but the poor know that we will help them. That’s why they so often turn to us first. We should be grateful for that trust.”



This Thanksgiving, St. Eugene Catholic Church parishioners turned generosity into joy. They raised nearly \$11,000 in ALDI gift cards and distributed more than 200 cards to families in need. Photo provided.

Exodus 90 offers men a prayerful opportunity to grow

By Christopher Aderhold
The Sooner Catholic

A 90-day spiritual exercise focused on fraternity, asceticism and prayer, Exodus 90 challenges men to leave behind the distractions and temptations of the modern world. By removing those impediments that can enslave, men instead fill their lives with prayer and sacrifice, allowing them the freedom to become who God made them to be.

In recent years, men around the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City have taken on the challenge of Exodus 90, finding many benefits.

Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament, tells of the Israelites’ journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, from slavery to freedom. Their adventure was a bit longer than 90 days – for 40 years they wandered in the wilderness, relying on God and each other for survival. Once they finally arrived in the Promised Land, they were a changed people.

A key aspect of Exodus 90 is that participants do not go on the journey alone, as fraternity stands as one of the main pillars of Exodus 90. Groups are formed every year at parishes and among colleagues and friends, providing much needed, built-in support.

Deacon Paul Lewis, of Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Mustang, first took part in Exodus 90 in 2019.

“One of the most important parts of Exodus 90 is to find a good group of guys to walk with,” he recently shared.

The expectation is that groups meet each week to discuss the highs and the lows of the journey, to pray together and even to ex-

ercise together. By walking together through Exodus 90, strong friendships in Christ are formed. In 2019, Deacon Paul’s Exodus 90 group faithfully met each week. Nearly seven years later, his group continues to meet weekly, deepening their brotherhood through prayer and camaraderie.



“There’s a real brotherhood that forms by going through something difficult with others,” Deacon Paul said.

Another pillar of the program is asceticism, or disciplines. People who have heard of Exodus 90, have certainly heard of at least one of the disciplines: cold show-

ers. By seemingly small daily sacrifices, men grow in the power to say “no” to the bigger vices of the world that hold them back.

“The cold showers weren’t fun, that’s for sure,” Deacon Paul said. “But after a week or two, you get used to them. I found other disciplines to be more difficult, but by turning that suffering over to God, I found great growth.”

Miguel Mireles, the executive director of the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine, did Exodus 90 a few years ago with colleagues from the Catholic Pastoral Center. He, too, found the various disciplines challenging, but by avoiding those things that can waste time, he was free to dig deeper into prayer.

“Each day you’re expected to pray a holy hour,” Mireles said, “and this allows lots of time to explore different devotions. I came away from my Exodus 90 experience with a deepened devotion to the Rosary and to Mary.”

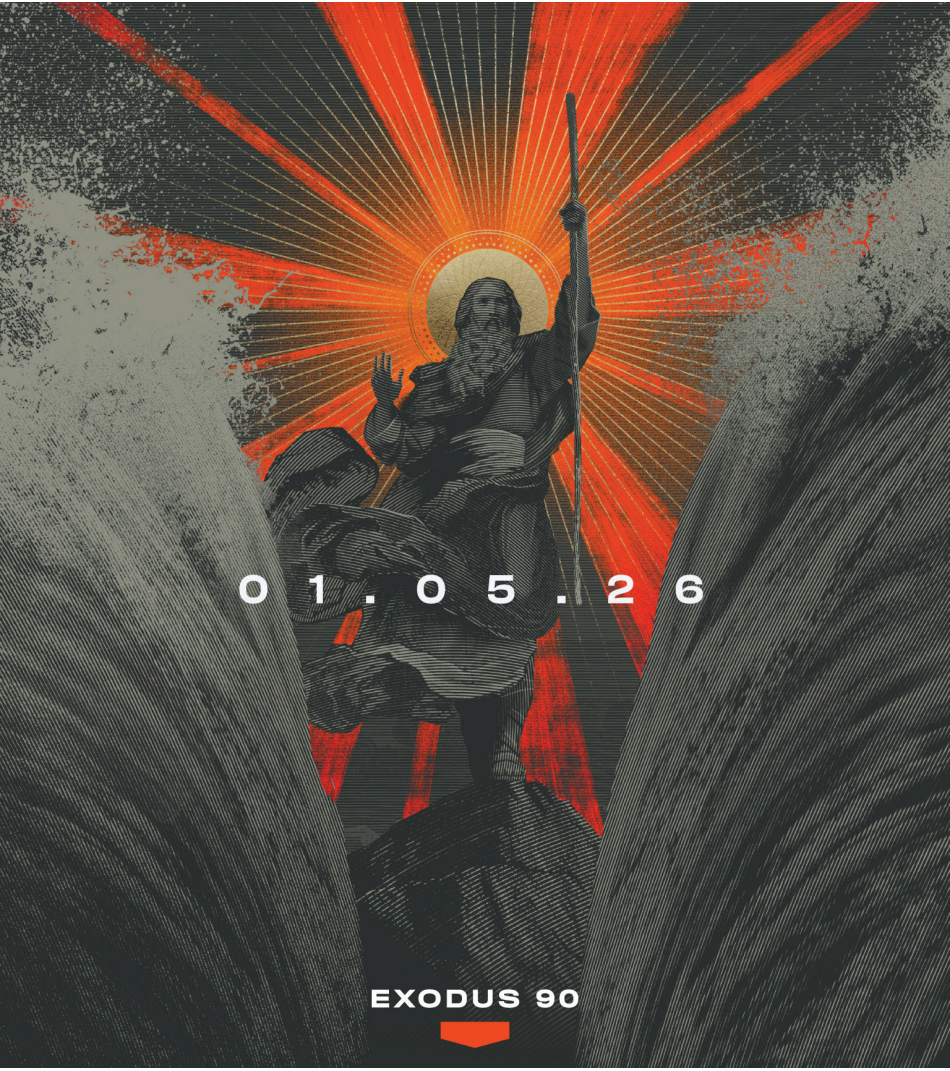
By taking part in Exodus 90, men can go on a journey to find themselves and to forge a deeper connection with Christ. As for the number 90, that many days is the timeline believed to break old habits and form new ones.

Exodus 90 begins anew on Jan. 5. While the 90-day journey ends on Easter Sunday, the 91st day can really be just the beginning of the rest of someone’s life, as they journey towards eternity.

As Saint Catherine of Sienna said, “Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire.”

To learn more about Exodus 90, visit exodus90.com, or download the Exodus 90 app.

Christopher Aderhold is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.



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“Make Straight the Way”

hosted by Dcn. Larry Sousa

Conversations with people who are making a difference in Oklahoma.

- Jan. 6 and 7:** Fr. Brian Buettner, pastor, St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Norman.
- Jan. 13 and 14:** Carley Rae Van Zant, radio producer and personality, member of the Church of the Epiphany of the Lord, Oklahoma City.
- Jan. 20 and 21:** Br. Gye Cosumagno, director and president, Vatican Observatory.
- Jan. 27 and 28:** Kelly Allen, member, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Edmond.

“Make Straight the Way” broadcasts on Oklahoma Catholic Radio Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. and Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m. Listen online at okcr.org.



Young parishioners from the Sacred Heart Catholic Church religious education class in Alva had a living Nativity on Dec. 7. *Photos provided.*



Fr. Alex Kroll blessed the Advent candle on Dec. 2 during daily Mass in the chapel at St. Mary Catholic Church in Ponca City. Odie Rico assisted Fr. Alex. *Photo Cindy Heidlage.*



One thousand rosaries were recently given to Fr. Oby Zunmas by the Duncan/Marlow Knights of Columbus, Council 5168. Fr. Oby will distribute these rosaries to the people of Nigeria in appreciation of his Silver Jubilee celebration. *Photo provided.*



The OKC Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women held their annual Women of Achievement Mass and luncheon on Nov. 15 at St. James the Greater Catholic Church in Oklahoma City. From left to right/top to bottom: Fr. Lawrence Dammian, Dcn. Long Luong, Archbishop Coakley, Fr. Russell Hewes, Leslie Palmer, Novalyn Greff, Kathy Estlingbaum, Soledad Gaspar, Kim Guglielmo, Tracey Michalicka, Shelly Bohn, Chris Devore, Nancy Annett, and Karen Dodd. *Photo provided.*



The Knights of Columbus hosted a Thanksgiving meal for members of Holy Family Catholic Church in Lawton. *Photo provided.*

A way to ease your tax burden

csofok.org 405-709-2700

Does April 15 get you down? Reduce your tax burden next year by giving to the Catholic Schools Opportunity Fund this year.

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

A two-year pledge gets donors a 75% state income tax credit each year. The max credit is \$2,000 for couples and \$1,000 for individuals. Qualified businesses can receive a much larger tax credit.



When service becomes a way of life

By Owen Canfield

Willard Patocka has led a life of service that shows no sign of slowing at age 94. Patocka, a parishioner at Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Enid, helps with the offertory collection at 8 a.m. Mass each Sunday. He is a former state deputy of the Knights of Columbus. He has long been involved with the Center of Family Love in Okarche and still rounds up Christmas presents for its residents each year.

And since 1972, Patocka has been an extraordinary minister of the Holy Eucharist, taking communion to parish shut-ins.

"It's been a good experience – a great experience," Patocka said while making his rounds on a recent Sunday.

Patocka said his pastor surprised him, his late wife Rose and their children when he called him up during a Mass to commission him a lay eucharistic minister. Patocka was just the fourth Saint Francis Xavier parishioner to be given the responsibility.

He has taken communion to scores of people through the years. The most difficult, he said, was a priest in a nursing home. "That was hard because you felt like he should be ministering to you instead of you to him," he said.

Patocka laughed as he recalled the many titles have given him through the years – bishop, priest, preacher, minister, deacon, even pope.

Especially memorable was his exchange with a woman who waved Patocka over during his visit to a parishioner at a memory care facility. He asked how he could help her, and she told him he could do so by opening the exit door for her.

"I told her, 'If I do that, you'll be in trouble and so will I,'" Patocka said. "As I walked away, I could hear her say, 'That's the way all those whiskey preachers are. They won't help you at all.'"

Patocka said he takes great joy in bringing the Blessed Sacrament to others – many of whom he has known for years – and in spending time with them. Thirty-minute visits are routine. It's not unusual for him to spend all of his Sunday making the rounds.

"He loves doing it," said Father Mark Mason, pastor at Saint Francis Xavier. "He lives a life of dedicated service. His wife was the same way."

The joy Patocka feels in bringing communion is shared by those he serves.

"It's so good to see you!" one woman said as Patocka entered her room at a senior care center. Later, as he departed, she said, "Thank you so much!"



Willard Patocka (above) is a lay eucharistic minister for St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Enid. He visits people in nursing homes and memory care facilities. *Photos Owen Canfield.*

continued from page 3

and 13 we marked the sesquicentennial anniversary of our foundation and the beginning of the mission of the Church in Indian Territory. In doing so we remembered many signs of God's providential love guiding the course of our own local history.

"The improbable circumstances that brought two French monks to Indian Territory; the tragedy of the great fire of 1901 that led us to new ministries and to our future permanent home in Shawnee; the separation from our French roots that resulted

in new leadership, significant growth of the community and expansion of our facilities; the unique talents and personalities of the generations of monks in the community; the many colleagues, students, oblates and benefactors who have an important part of our life – all of these are but a few of the signs of the presence of God that has brought us to the current day."

Theresa Bragg is the director of communications at Saint Gregory's Abbey in Shawnee.

SACRED HEART ABBEY

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Celebrating 150 years of the mission of the Catholic Church in Oklahoma.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

As Christmas approaches, three priests from the archdiocese share their favorite memories

Finding blessings in a blizzard

By Fr. Stephen Jones
The Sooner Catholic

Christmas has always been one of my favorite holidays. Some of the fondest memories of my life are of my family during the Christmas season. We would gather in the living room to enjoy a roaring fire in the fireplace, and we would watch our favorite Christmas movies.

I remember hoping for a white Christmas my whole life growing up. On Christmas Eve of 2009, we received much more than we ever bargained for!

That was the year that the infamous “Christmas Blizzard” struck. In a matter of hours, the storm worsened to such a degree that about 14 inches of snow fell around our house. We woke up on Christmas Eve morning expecting to attend Mass that evening. However, it dawned on us that afternoon that we were going to be snowed in.

It was the first and only time in my life that I was unable to attend Mass for Christmas.

I imagine that most 15-year-old boys might rejoice at such a fortuitous turning of events, but I remember feeling empty and upset. It was like when George Bailey was experiencing the nightmare of Pottersville in my favorite Christmas movie, “It’s a Wonderful Life.”

Due to an unfortunate series of events in the movie, George wished that he had not been born. His guardian angel Clarence granted the wish, and George realized in a powerful way that his presence in the world was important and valuable.

Clarence said to him, “You’ve been given a great gift, George – a chance to see what the world would be like without you.”

It was a true grace of God on that Christmas Eve that I realized what the full gift of attending Mass. The whole reason for the Christmas season had been taken away, and all of the traditions that our family had were superficial and lacking without it.

But I look back on that blizzard as a great gift. Sometimes, it takes a gift being taken away for you to realize how powerful it actually is.

I gained a deep reverence for the Mass out of that Christmas, and I will always be thankful to God for that!



Fr. Stephen Jones and his family. Photo provided.

Gifts are great, but memories last forever

By Fr. Cristobal De Loera
The Sooner Catholic

It was Christmas morning, in 1995 in my hometown – San Isidro, in Calvillo Aguascalientes, Mexico – and the anticipation had been building since the crack of dawn.

I crept into the living room with my family, the trees twinkling lights casting a magical glow on the pile of gifts beneath it. The air was thick with excitement and the scent of freshly homemade tortillas and hot chocolate wafted from the kitchen.

As we settled in, the countdown began and with a joyful shout, we dove into the presents. I reached for a box with my name on it, the paper rustling as I tore it open.

Inside, nestled in tissue, was a beautiful jacket, just like the one that I had asked for in my letter to El Niño Dios – The Child God.

I felt a rush of delight, because it was exactly what I had asked for! My siblings went wild around me. Laughter erupted over a Barbie doll for my little sister. And my brother geeked out over a new shirt. Mom and dad exchanged a warm smile, happy to see us all grinning from ear to ear.

As the wrapping paper flew and gifts were marveled at, the room turned into a happy chaos.

We ooh-ed over a beautiful golden bracelet for Mom. Dad got a clever gadget for his workshop. Each gift sparked a story or a joke, drawing us closer.

But the best part wasn’t just the gifts. It was the “us.” Huddled

together, sharing the joys of Christmas and pausing to appreciate the little things.

After the frenzy, we enjoyed a delicious breakfast with the homemade flour tortillas and hot cocoa, playing games and singing carols off-key.

In that messy, joyful flurry, I felt a deep sense of gratitude. Christmas isn’t just about presents, it’s about the laughter, the love and the memories we weave together.

As the night wound down and the tree’s lights dimmed softly, I leaned over to my family and whispered, “Best Christmas ever.”



Fr. Cristobal De Loera



Photo provided.

¡Viva la Iglesia Católica!

By Fr. William Banowsky
The Sooner Catholic

Looking back at all my Christmas memories, picking out one to highlight among my favorites is almost Herculean. How does one narrow it down when there are so many to choose from?

Do I pick my first Christmas as a priest? Do I pick the year we went to Hawaii? How does one narrow it down, especially when all those Christmases were special, all leaving a warm, hot chocolate feeling in my heart.

But if I must choose, it would be Christmas 2015.

Growing up as a child of two cultures (United States and Spain), I always appreciated the opportunity to spend Christmas in Spain. In addition to getting to be around my abuela, tios, tias and primos (grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousins). Madrid in late November and December is just special, especially around the Plaza Mayor and the Puerta del Sol.

Christmas and Advent decorations everywhere. The Christmas market taking over the Plaza Mayor, selling artisan hand crafted nativity pieces to not just make the manger, but also to build an entire representation of Bethlehem! Not to mention churros con chocolate and a warm bocadillo de calamares (calamari sandwich), which not just warms the body but also the soul.

Christmas time in Madrid, for me, has always been a special and blessed moment. But if I am honest, part of the reason Christmas

2015 was so special was because it was one of my Abuela’s last Christmases, and I was able to be there and spend it with her.

A typical Spanish Christmas is heavily centered on Christmas Eve, Noche Buena, and in my family, this was no exception. That year I traveled to Madrid with two of my seminary classmates, one from Tulsa and one from Little Rock. As both were fluent in Spanish, language was not an issue.

However, towards the end of her life my Abuela began experiencing a lot of hearing loss and had no idea that they had been speaking to her in Spanish. It is also important to note that Christmas Eve in Spain is an extroverted Night Owl’s paradise, usually consisting with Mass at either 8 or 9 o’clock at night, followed by dinner immediately after with festivities going to as late as three or four in the morning.

That year was no different, gathering for Mass with many of the extended family, then heading to my Tio Juan’s house for dinner, merriment and impromptu Christmas skits by my younger cousins and cousin’s kids.

At midnight, we placed a figure of the infant Jesus in the manger and began singing Villancicos (Spanish Christmas Carols). Usually everyone leads a song, whether by choice or by peer pressure, and my family was really trying to get the three seminarians to sing something.

So we gathered in the kitchen to game plan. “Do we sign Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer? Frosty the Snowman? Jingle Bells? Silent Night? Away in a Man-

ger?” And pretty much every song I suggested was met with a firm “no.”

Finally, exasperated, I said, “Let’s just sing the Salve Regina!” Surprisingly, the other seminarians agreed. We made our way to the living room, with more than 40 people crowded around at 1 a.m. Christmas morning to see what the American seminarians were going to do.

As confidently as we could, we chanted the Salve Regina in Latin. Immediately after the song ended, my Abuela immediately shot up out of her seat and shouted, “¡Viva la Iglesia Católica!” – Long Live the Catholic Church!

All week she had thought that she and my two friends did not share a language, but here we sang together in Latin she thought, “Finally a language that brings us all together.”

The shouting of “¡Viva la Iglesia Católica!” is a reminder of how the universal Church unites us, especially as we celebrate our holy days. Across the entire world, we are bound together by our faith and Church, and while we may celebrate our traditions with similarities or differences depending on country of origin, we are united by our love and need for Christ.

That is why that Christmas is so special, not just because it was one of the last moments I shared with my Abuela, but that reminder she gives me that regardless of where we are, we are connected on Christmas by an ardent desire to welcome the Messiah into the world.

So, in her honor I continue to shout ¡Viva la Iglesia Católica!

Christmas tree at the Catholic Pastoral Center in Oklahoma City.



Irish Insights

Irish reflect on the meaningful Christmas gifts



Cassandra Banister



Taja Egert



Ike Harry



Brandon Mai



Emma Burch



Katherine Menz
Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School

With Christmas approaching and preparations underway, Advent has been a season of reflection and gratitude for many in the McGuinness community. Because of this, we asked the Irish to recall and reflect on the gifts in their lives that were most meaningful.

Cassandra Banister, junior

For Bannister, this gift was an American Girl Doll she received for Christmas from her grandmother as a little girl. “Whenever I was a kid, it just gave an opportunity for me and my sister to hang out all the time and play and use our imagination, and every time I see them, I think of her,” Bannister said. The gift not only allowed Bannister and her sister to connect, but their family as a whole. Following her grandmother’s death, Bannister’s father gifted her a doll to carry on the tradition. “He just got it for me and you can tell that it really brought him joy,” Bannister said. “Gifting it reminded him of his mom and he got to feel that connection with me.” Now Bannister shares the dolls with her nieces and nephews when they come to visit.

“It’s just awesome seeing them playing with them,” Bannister said

Taja Egert, Spanish teacher

For Egert, gifting is not so much about what she might receive, but more about what the gift represents. Egert found this to be especially true when she received a handmade card from her cousin with a photo of the two dancing salsa for the first time, and a letter reflecting on the experience. “Something personalized like that meant the world to me,” Egert said. The card reminded her that sometimes the simplest things can be the best. “I think we all need to remember that gift giving doesn’t have to be this grand gesture or expensive gesture,” Egert said. Egert stressed that in many instances, the time people spend with those they love is more valuable than any physical possession. “Sometimes we forget the little things that make us happy or that gave us joy in our life, and this card helped me remember that,” Egert said.

Ike Harry, junior

Harry’s grandfather died, he received a pressed coin necklace. Harry hadn’t expected to receive anything at the time of his death, making the coin one of his most meaningful possessions. “Our family, our side barely got anything, so it was surprising that we got one thing from his will,” Harry said. Of the two sides, Harry said his grandfather was an important person in his life. “He was one of my favorites,” Harry said.

Brandon Mai, senior

The people in Mai’s life have been the greatest gifts. “They bring me so much joy and they inspire me to be a better person,” Mai said. In particular, Mai said he was grateful for his grandmother, who recently died. “I was very grateful to have my time with her because of the love and support that I got from her, and every time I saw her, she would have a big smile on her face and it would just make us happy,” Mai said. “In the past she’s always been very patient, very kind to us, very caring.”

In addition to his grandmother, Mai is grateful for his two best friends: Tony Huynh and Gia-Luc Nguyen. Both are seniors at Bishop McGuinness. “They’re always teasing me, but at the end of the day, they’re my best friends,” Mai said. “I always care for them. They always care for me.”

Emma Burch, senior

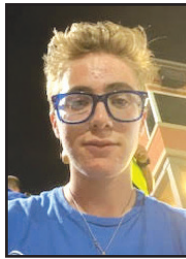
On Burch’s 16th birthday, she received a letter written in 2008. Its message, from her grandmother, detailed how Burch looked as a baby. “It allows me to reflect fondly upon my memories with my grandmother, and it later let me be more thankful for having living grandparents in my lifetime,” Burch said. The letter allowed Burch to feel closer with her grandmother who had died 10 years before. “It was meaningful to me because I don’t have a lot of memories with my grandmother, and I don’t really know as much about my dad’s side of my family as I do with my mom’s, so it kind of let me be more connected even in loss,” Burch said.

Moments at the Mount

Memories make great gifts



Lydia Cage



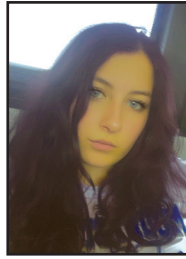
Gabe Homeyer



Kevin Winterrowd



Harrison Durbin



Aubree Miller

Lucy Rosenhamer

Mount Saint Mary Catholic High School

Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year. It’s a time to spend with family, watch classic Christmas movies, and know of the inevitability that a perfect wrapping job will be torn to shreds in five seconds. But it’s also the time of year for families to prepare their hearts and minds for the greatest gift of all: Christ’s coming into the world. Still, there are other great gifts, too, as reflected by members of the Mount to this question:

What is the greatest gift you have ever received and why?

Lydia Cage, freshman

Cage, involved in theater and manager of the JV and JV2 volleyball teams, said the greatest gift she ever received was a locket with a picture of both her dogs – Jasmine and Sirius – on the inside, with their respective paw prints on the outside. “It was really sentimental because it was shortly after we lost

one of them,” Cage said. “It gave me something to hold on to.” Gabe Homeyer, sophomore “The greatest gift I ever received was baptism,” Homeyer said. Every morning before school, Homeyer can be found in the Our Lady of Mercy Chapel. He was in the One Act “Mockingbird” play and on the boys tennis team. He is also the oldest of four, soon to be five, siblings. “When I was baptized by Deacon Tom at Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church in College Station, Texas, on Feb. 7, 2010, my life was changed,” Homeyer said. “In that moment, as just a 2-month-old infant, my very soul was changed. I became claimed by Christ, by God, adopted into his family. Because of my baptism I have also been able to receive the sacraments and grow close to God, especially through Jesus present in the most holy Eucharist.

“This was all because I was bap-

tized! It was undoubtedly the most amazing gift I have ever received!” Homeyer offered a special thank you to his parents for baptizing him and to God for the awesome gift of baptism.

Kevin Winterrowd, social studies teacher

Winterrowd has worked at Mount for the last five years. His greatest gift: his three children. “It wasn’t just having the kids that was the blessing. It was the blessing of good, healthy children,” Winterrowd said.

Harrison Durbin, senior

A second-generation Rocket, Durbin is on the yearbook staff and next semester will be working backstage for the musical. Durbin said that the greatest gift he has ever received – outside of friends and family – is his passion for photography. “I realized that it was more than just ‘taking pictures,’ and there’s

so many small niche things you can get into or focus on. I have well over 10 cameras in my collection, some work, most don’t. “Photography also allows me to capture moments, which is my favorite part of it. I have so many pictures of doing stuff with my friends, or family events, or just times I want to go out and take pictures. It’s something I really, really enjoy.”

Aubree Miller, senior

“The greatest gift I ever received was a vanity my dad built for me,” Miller said. “He painted my initials onto it with flowers. He had also made a matching chair to go with it.” Miller worked backstage for the One Act this semester and will again for the musical next semester. “It was the best gift,” she said, “because he had put so much work and time into the gift and it showed his love for me.”

Royals Report

Cristo Rey OKC celebrates faith, achievement, opportunity



Cristo Rey OKC Catholic High School students participated in a Eucharistic Procession on Nov. 21 from St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Del City to the school. Photo provided.

In recent weeks, Cristo Rey OKC Catholic High School has marked a series of meaningful moments in which each are different in tone, but all tied together by the same sense of community, purpose and hope for the future. From a schoolwide Eucharistic procession to a standout QuestBridge match to the celebration of 100% college acceptance for seniors, the season has been filled with reminders of what makes Cristo Rey a unique and mission-driven school. Walking in Faith: A schoolwide Eucharistic procession In late November, the Cristo Rey community gathered for a shared moment of prayer during a Eucharistic procession from Saint Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Del City back to campus. After celebrating Mass together, students, staff and teachers stepped outside and formed a long, organized line behind Father

Jonah Beckham, who carried the Eucharist beneath a canopy as the procession began its nearly one-mile walk.

Held in honor of the Solemnity of Christ the King and connected to the national Eucharistic Revival, the event brought a rare sense of quiet reflection to the school day.

With a police escort helping guide the route



Allison Turrubiarres

Cristo Rey OKC Catholic High School

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along Sunnyslane Road, the Royals community moved steadily through the neighborhood, praying together and keeping pace with the rhythm of the procession. Several students volunteered to lead the rosary, and their voices carried gently through the crowd as others joined in.

There was a calmness to the walk, soft prayers, quiet conversations and the shared focus of the entire school moving with purpose. Many students later expressed how meaningful it felt to participate in an experience that brought the whole community together outside the classroom. Staff members walked with different groups to help guide and support the reverent tone of the morning.

One of the most memorable moments came as the procession approached campus, stretching far down the sidewalk as a visible symbol of Cristo Rey OKC’s mission. Inside the gym, students entered reverently for Benediction before gathering for lunch. The experience served as a reminder that Cristo Rey is not only a place of learning, but a community rooted in shared faith and identity.

Arlem Escobar-Sancen earns scholarship

Cristo Rey OKC celebrated a major academic milestone when senior Arlem Escobar-Sancen learned she had matched with Rice University through the national QuestBridge Match program. Her selection means she earned a full, four-year scholarship to one of the most selective universities in the country. She is the fourth Cristo Rey OKC QuestBridge match. Two alumni are attending Notre



Arlem Escobar-Sancen was filled with joy after matching with Rice University. Photo provided.

Dame, and one is attending the University of Pennsylvania on full-ride scholarships through this program.

A dedicated athlete in volleyball and basketball, Escobar-Sancen is known throughout the school for her bright smile, commitment to her goals and the kindness she shows to those around her. Teachers and classmates describe her as hard-working, uplifting and someone who encourages others while pushing herself forward.

When she received her match results, Escobar-Sancen said the feeling was overwhelming in the best way.

“I just felt so grateful,” she said. “It didn’t feel real at first, but I knew all the effort was worth it.”

Her achievement quickly became a point of inspiration for younger students, many of whom see her success as proof that high goals are possible with determination and support. For the Cristo Rey OKC community, Escobar-Sancen’s accomplishment reflects the school’s mission of opening doors to life-changing opportunities.

A joyful tradition: seniors celebrate 100% college acceptance

The season of celebration continued with the annual College Acceptance Assembly, an event recognizing the senior class for achieving 100% acceptance into college. Students, staff and families filled the gym as the Class of 2026 gathered together at the front of the room.

School President Kelsey Herman, Principal Kinsey Genheimer, and college counselor Nicole Douglas each addressed the seniors, speaking about their resilience, personal growth and the effort behind every application submitted. They highlighted the importance of persistence and the proud tradition of Cristo Rey OKC seniors continuing their education after graduation.

No individual students were called forward as the celebration belonged to the entire class. Staff members exchanged proud smiles as they watched seniors reflect on how far they had come since freshman year. Younger students looked on with excitement, imagining their own college journeys in the years ahead.

The assembly closed with loud applause and an annual reminder that Cristo Rey OKC’s commitment to academic opportunity continues to shape futures, one graduating class at a time.

Jobs Box

Music director - Jones

St. Robert Bellarmine Catholic Church is seeking a music director. Contact Fr. Titus at pau.titus@gmail.com.

Head volleyball coach - OKC

Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School is seeking a part-time head volleyball coach for the 2026 Fall Season. Must have bachelor's or higher college degree in a related field; Values in alignment with the school and the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City; Five-plus years of experience as a head high school coach; CDL Class B with air brakes or willingness to obtain. Send cover letter and resume to John Hamilton at jhamilton@bmchs.org.

Hispanic family liaison – OKC

Catholic Cemeteries of Oklahoma City is seeking a part-time Hispanic family liaison to support outreach to Spanish-speaking Catholic families. This role helps families understand Calvary Cemetery's mission and the peace that comes from planning ahead in faith. The liaison provides education and translation for potential families. This ministry-focused position offers up to 29 hours per week and includes parish visits, community events, and family meetings. Applicants must be fluent in Spanish and English and able to communicate with compassion and professionalism. Responsibilities include meeting with families, translating materials, assisting at parish gatherings, and sharing information on burial and cremation options. Reliable transportation is required, and prior outreach or ministry experience is helpful but not required. Training is provided, and the liaison represents Catholic

Cemeteries reverently as part of a ministry of mercy. Send resume or inquiries to bseid@rescemokc.org.

Coordinator - Norman

St. Joseph Catholic Church is seeking a full-time, faith-filled, mission-driven coordinator of youth and young adult evangelization to accompany teens (grades six–12) and young adults in growing as disciples of Jesus Christ. This position focuses on forming small group communities, mentoring youth and young adults, and equipping volunteers to serve as mentors and leaders. Send résumé to Brad.forshee@stjosephsok.org.

Receptionist - Edmond

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church is seeking a part-time receptionist to greet visitors; welcome people visiting the parish office and provide assistance, if needed. Additional duties: answering a multi-line phone system, collaborating with staff members in accomplishing projects, assisting in the maintenance of parish membership database and sacramental records, and providing excellent customer service. Work hours are noon-4:30 p.m. Wednesday; 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Thursday and 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Friday. Attention to detail, time management skills, ability to maintain confidentially, good administrative skills, proficiency in Microsoft Office, organization skills, adaptability, dependability and the ability to work well with others is required. Send resume and cover letter to adennis@stjohn-catholic.org.

History teacher - OKC

Mount St. Mary Catholic High School is seeking a history teacher for the current school year. Must

be passionate about engaging students in the study of history, committed to academic excellence, and dedicated to forming young people in mind, heart and spirit. As a Catholic school rooted in the Gospel and the charism of the Sisters of Mercy, MSM seeks candidates who embrace the faith-based mission and will actively contribute to a joyful, disciplined and strong Catholic school community. A bachelor's degree in history, social studies, or a related field is required along with teaching certification. Send a resume and copy of certification to Laura Cain, Ed.D. at lcain@mountstmary.org.

Accountant - OKC

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is seeking a full-time accountant to 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. 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. Will build material resources in support of the mission to lead souls to Christ and honor Bl. Stanley Rother. Will organize and manage all fundraising programs and services, including direct mail, gift cultivation and solicitation, annual appeals, donor events, data-

base management, planned giving, endowment funding and grant writing. Will form a collaborative working relationship with pastors, parish leaders, chancery staff and potential donors to identify and cultivate gift prospects for special shrine projects and programs as well as create and execute an annual calendar of development initiatives. 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.

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.

To see more job openings, go online to archokc.org/jobs-box.

Making Sense of Bioethics

Embryo adoption: an open question?

When it comes to the plight of the hundreds of thousands of IVF embryos frozen in the U.S. and elsewhere, it is often claimed that the Catholic Church has never definitively addressed the liceity, or moral allowability, of “embryo transfer” (also known as embryo rescue or embryo adoption).

I recently had the chance to participate in a public debate on this topic in Indianapolis. I argued that the Magisterium of the Catholic Church has, in fact, settled this question. If we scrutinize the two major teaching documents of the Church dealing with this issue, the immorality of the practice of embryo transfer becomes clear.

The 2008 document entitled “Dignitas Personae” states: “The proposal that these embryos could be put at the disposal of infertile couples as a treatment for infertility is not ethically acceptable” (19). It identifies a specific situation, namely, attempting to treat a couple's infertility by embryo transfer, as being always immoral.

The document then goes on to point out that these moral objections extend beyond this single case, so that the same set of concerns will apply in other instances where embryo transfer might be proposed or considered:

“It has also been proposed, solely in order to allow human beings to be born who are otherwise condemned to destruction, that there could be a form of ‘prenatal adoption.’ This proposal, praiseworthy with regard to the intention of respecting and defending human life, presents however various

problems not dissimilar to those mentioned above.”

This passage reveals that even when we face the stark prospect of the outright killing of frozen human embryos (“otherwise condemned to destruction”), this does not allow us to bypass or ignore the substantive moral objections inherent in embryo transfer proposals.

The final section of the passage concludes with a forceful and unambiguous assertion: “All things considered, it needs to be recognized that the thousands of abandoned embryos represent a situation of injustice which in fact cannot be resolved.”

Despite the tragedy of the countless embryonic humans “frozen in time” (with thousands more each day being added to the stockpiles), “Dignitas Personae” rejects the practice of embryo adoption.

A second, older Church document released in 1987 and entitled Donum Vitae references the “absurd fate” to which human embryos have been exposed by freezing them, and then notes that there is “no possibility of their being offered safe means of survival which can be licitly pursued” (5). Hence, it would seem even as far back as the late 80s, a negative judgment had already been made by the teaching authority of the Church regarding the question of embryo adoption.

In addition to there being no morally permissible means of a path to survival for these embryos, “Donum Vitae” declares the basic human right of every person “to be

conceived and to be born within marriage and from marriage.” For embryos to be “born from marriage” points also to the moral significance of the circumstances of our gestation.

Interestingly, “Donum Vitae” repetitively employs the phrase, “IVF and ET” (in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer). This conjoined phrase appears a remarkable sixteen times throughout the document as it seeks to explain the ethical concerns surrounding assisted reproductive technologies.

The deliberate inclusion of “ET” points to the fact that it is not merely the “in vitro” or “extracorporeal conception” aspect that renders the procedure immoral, but also that the ET step itself violates sound ethics.

In other words, it seems that a double moral evil can be identified in each instance of in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer:

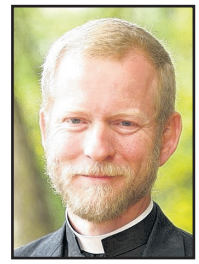
The manufacture of human beings in glassware, outside-the-body (and outside-the-marital-act); and

The importation/implantation of an outside-the-body generated embryo into the uterus.

Number two, of course, would constitute an action largely synonymous with “embryo adoption” or “embryo rescue.”

Taken together, these documents point to the fact that transferring a stranger's embryo into one's wife violates the inner structure of marital fruitfulness.

Based on these texts, we can also begin to grasp how embryo transfer, even motivated with the




Father Tad Pacholczyk
National Catholic
Bioethics Center

best of intentions, nevertheless involves a form of “pirating” the wife's body for designs that are not proper to its intrinsic order within marriage. “Dignitas Personae” also compares embryo adoption to “any form of surrogate motherhood,” which the Church teaches to be morally unacceptable.

Couples who have done IVF and ended up with frozen children face an excruciatingly difficult situation as they try to figure out what to do with their “leftover” embryonic offspring. I offered some possible approaches to this situation in a previous article (see tinyurl.com/4eua5j5p).

So it is clearly problematic to assert that embryo adoption remains an “open question” for Catholics. Close scrutiny of key magisterial texts and reflection upon the explanations provided by those documents indicate that the practice of embryo transfer involves fundamentally unethical actions.

Fr. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts, and serves as senior ethicist at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See ncbcenter.org and fathertad.com.



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A Catholic GRIEF SUPPORT MINISTRY

Book review: A Year of Daily Offerings: giving your life to God one day at a time

By Br. Benet Exton, O.S.B.
The Sooner Catholic

This is a daily Catholic devotional by Father James Kubicki, S.J. He has been involved with spiritual direction and retreat houses and formation programs for the Jesuits and diocesan clergy. He is the author of “Heart of Fire” (2012) and has been on EWTN and Relevant Radio.

The book follows the liturgical seasons and the calendar of saints. The daily entries or offerings start with the date and gives the name of the saint with their dates of life, or liturgical celebration for that day if there is one. Most of the time there is one. When there is no saint then only the date is given.

After this a short reflection is given based on various sources which can be two to five short paragraphs long. Some of these sources are Church documents available from the Vatican

website. This is followed by a prayer that the author provides, followed by a short Scripture quote from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible – Second Catholic Edition (2006). The entry is concluded with a question from the author about how the reader did during the day after reading the entry.

The book does not have bibliographical references or an index. Bibliographical references could have been a help in further reading of the topic that the entry provided. I have been using this book for about a month and I like it because it is Catholic, but also it includes a lot of the saints' feast days. Kubiacki provides a short biography of the saint which is included in the devotional entry.

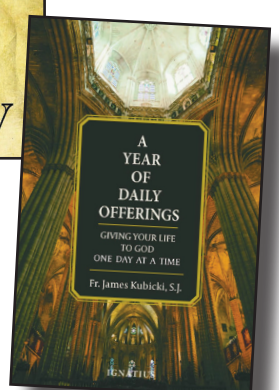
There are no entries for blessed like Blessed Stanley Rother or Blessed Solanus Casey.

Book Review

He does include little-known saints, which of course the list or martyrologies of saints has thousands of saints that most

people have never heard of. The entries flow very well and are worthy of reflection. This book is highly recommended to those looking for a daily Catholic devotion that includes the saints.

Br. Benet Exton, O.S.B., Saint Gregory's Abbey, Shawnee, is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.



■ A Year of Daily Offerings: giving your life to God one day at a time.
Kubiacki, James.
San Francisco: Ignatius Press. 2024
ISBN 978-1-62164-703-4.

Lánzate a lo más Profundo
Luke 5:4

Alineemos nuestros caminos a los caminos de Dios

Como discípulos de Jesucristo, puede que nos encontremos algo conflictuados en esta época del año. Estamos en los últimos días del Adviento y estamos al borde de la temporada navideña, que comienza con la solemnidad de la Natividad del Señor.

En esta época del año, a menudo estamos inmersos en adornos culturales y comerciales festivos que adornan nuestras casas, tiendas y espacios públicos. El reto radica en recordar el origen y el propósito de las muchas expresiones culturales asociadas a la época navideña. Aunque ambas cosas estén conectadas, la fiesta es mucho mayor que la mayoría de las formas en que hemos llegado a celebrarla.

El peligro es confundir la realidad del misterio cristiano, que es el nacimiento de Jesús Hijo de Dios y nuestro Salvador, con los encantadores adornos de las luces, el ponche y los regalos. Debemos evitar la tentación de disminuir el misterio de la Navidad y conformarnos con algo menos fuerte que la increíble verdad de que Dios ha venido a vivir con nosotros y compartir nuestra naturaleza humana.

La encarnación de Dios en la persona de un bebé pequeño nos enseña lecciones importantes sobre cómo Dios elige venir a nosotros y permanecer con nosotros. El nacimiento del Hijo de Dios en carne humana ilustra la propia preferencia de Dios por la humildad y la pequeñez.

¡La humildad de Dios presente en la fiesta de Navidad debería sorprendernos de verdad! El Dios que es omnipotente, infinito y eterno elige entrar en nuestra historia como un bebé vulnerable. Nació en una familia pobre – mucho antes de cualquier comodidad moderna – y en

una época histórica en la que su pueblo vivía bajo la opresión de una ocupación extranjera.

No nació en un centro de poder, sino en un pueblo remoto e insignificante. No nació en Roma ni siquiera en Jerusalén, sino en Belén. El Dios que insufló vida en los pulmones de Adán tras formarlo a partir del polvo de la tierra eligió libremente ser un niño vulnerable que dependía de otros para satisfacer sus necesidades más básicas. Dios sigue eligiendo venir a nosotros de maneras humildes.

La encarnación es el mayor acontecimiento desde que Dios creó todo de la nada, pero Dios elige venir, aunque sea de la forma más mínima imaginable. Hay un axioma de la tradición ignaciana de la espiritualidad católica que dice: “No estar confinado a lo más grande, y al mismo tiempo estar contenido en lo más pequeño, eso es divino”.

Dios es más grande que el universo, pero está envuelto en un paño diminuto. Dios es el creador del cielo y la tierra, pero está presente en el altar bajo la apariencia de pan y vino sencillos. Dios es la Palabra Eterna, el Logos, que ordena y forma el cosmos, pero se entrega a nosotros en la palabra escrita de la Sagrada Escritura.

Dios lo tiene todo en la palma de su mano, pero todo lo que se hace por los más pequeños se hace por Él. Dios sigue eligiendo venir a nosotros en formas pequeñas.

Dios no elige lo que parecería ser el camino más eficiente, efectivo o conveniente para lograr sus planes. El anuncio del arcángel Gabriel a María de que Dios la había elegido para una misión tan especial asombra a la joven ad-

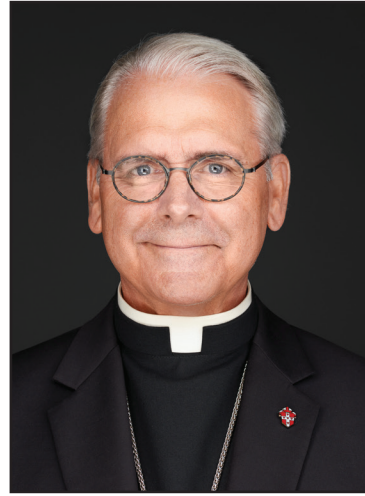
olescente. Ella es virgen, y José, con quien pensaba casarse, aún no la había recibido en su casa.

El nacimiento de Jesús llega en un momento en que esta joven pareja debe afrontar un difícil viaje hasta la ciudad de los antepasados de José, lo que hace que un evento ya de por sí precario como el embarazo y el parto mismo sean aún más arriesgados.

El censo romano deja a María y José sin un lugar donde alojarse en la concurrida ciudad de Belén, así que Jesús nace en un establo y es colocado en un pesebre. Todo esto me recuerda al dicho: “Si quieres hacer reír a Dios, cuéntale tus planes”. Dios sigue eligiendo venir de formas aparentemente incómodas y, desde luego, inesperadas.

La solemnidad de la Natividad del Señor nos invita a reflexionar sobre cómo Dios elige entrar en nuestras vidas hoy. Nuestra reflexión puede ampliar nuestros corazones y prepararnos para recibir a Dios de la manera que Él elija.

Los caminos de Dios no son los nuestros. Este es un misterio sagrado que no puede ser minimizado. Dios desea permanecer en nosotros y que nosotros permanezcamos en Él. Cada año nos inclinamos para maravillarnos de su humildad y pequeñez mientras veneramos su imagen colocada en el pesebre. Si dejamos que esto nos cambie, viviremos con Él por toda la eternidad.



Arzobispo Pablo S. Coakley

Holy Angels anuncia los programas de primavera



El Centro de Educación Holy Angels, un ministerio de la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City, se complace en anunciar sus Programas de Primavera 2026, diseñados para educar, capacitar y empoderar a los estudiantes mientras se apoya la integración de los inmigrantes a través de la educación. El centro ofrece una variedad de cursos, incluyendo Inglés como Segundo Idioma (ESI) desde nivel introductorio hasta avanzado los martes y jueves por la tarde; preparación para la Ciudadanía de EE. UU. los martes y jueves por la tarde, con orientación para la naturalización; preparación para los exámenes HiSET/GED los lunes y miércoles por la tarde, con enfoques específicos en Escritura/Lectura/Estudios Sociales

y Ciencia/Matemáticas; Fundamentos de Pequeñas Empresas los lunes por la tarde (curso de ocho semanas); Familias Saludables los miércoles por la tarde (curso de ocho semanas sobre bienestar familiar); y talleres financieros y digitales, incluyendo Bienestar Financiero, Preparación de Impuestos, MS Office y más. Próximamente se ofrecerán programas adicionales como Caminos Financieros, Pequeñas Empresas: Crezca y Administre su Negocio, y cursos digitales/informáticos en fundamentos y MS Office, además de talleres de preparación de impuestos previstos para enero de 2026. Para más información o para registrarse, visite holyangelseducation.org o llame al (405) 709-2771.

Padre Scott Boeckman recibe Premio de Derechos Humanos

Por Bella Gutiérrez
The Sooner Catholic

Como sacerdote católico sirviendo la zona sur de Oklahoma City, el Padre Scott Boeckman promueve el deseo humano de que “todos sean uno”, en comunión los unos con los otros.

El Padre Boeckman no sólo promueve esta visión, sino que también influye en ella.

“Jesús compartió a sus discípulos el deseo más profundo en su corazón: ‘Ellos pueden ser uno, como nosotros somos uno.’ Pero no solamente es el deseo de Jesús, es el deseo de todos nosotros,” dijo el Padre Boeckman.

La Alianza de los Derechos Humanos de Oklahoma, en colaboración con la Asociación de las Naciones Unidas de Oklahoma City, recientemente reconocieron a 20 personas por su esfuerzo en mantener y defender los derechos humanos, establecidos en 1948.

Entre ellos: el Padre Boeckman.

Vicario Parroquial en la Iglesia Católica Little Flower en Oklahoma City, el Padre Boeckman recibió el Premio de los Derechos Humanos en ceremonia realizada el 6 de diciembre en la Cámara de Representantes del Estado de Oklahoma.

El artículo 18 de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos declara “la libertad de pensamiento, de conciencia y de religión; ... y la libertad para manifestarla individual y colectivamente con otros, en lugares públicos o privados.” Father Boeckman recibió su premio como un destacado líder espiritual y servidor desinteresado en la comunidad hispana.

Fue hace cuatro años, en la Iglesia Católica St. James, cuando el Padre Boeckman tuvo esta motivación, idea que compartió con las personas y que inmediatamente resonó en sus corazones.

De esta idea, surgió Emaüs, un programa para ayudar a las personas a conocer mejor a Jesús y a la Iglesia. Emaüs comenzó en dos etapas: un retiro de tres días, más recientemente realizado en la Abadía de St. Gregory en Shawnee, y luego pequeñas reuniones grupales durante todo un año.

Para las personas que pudieran sentirse solas, desconectadas e inseguras de cómo mantener a Jesús en sus corazones, es precisamente a este punto que Emaüs se convierte en un camino en sus vidas, ofreciéndoles consuelo en el Señor.

El Padre Boeckman explicó que Emaüs permite a las personas conectarse, para transformar sus vidas.

“Ellos simplemente se mantienen unidos, hablando acerca de Jesús, y ellos están abiertos a compartir tanto felicidades como tristezas en sus vidas,” explicó.

Para Hilda De Leon Xavier, directora del Centro Educativo Holy Angels y promotora de su nominación, al Padre Boeckman le caracterizan su humildad, su habilidad para escuchar y la pasión con la cual él habla a todos sobre su misión.

A través de su trabajo en el programa Emaüs, dijo De Leon, “he sido testigo de cómo transformar vidas.”

De Leon sigue su trabajo en las redes sociales y constantemente ve cómo él acompaña a las personas, visita a enfermos, ofrece palabras de esperanza y guía espiritual, y se dedica por completo a la comunidad católica. “Su manera de comunicarse y conectar con las personas es verdaderamente especial,” indicó.

El Padre Boeckman dijo: “Yo estoy muy agradecido de ser parte de este ministerio que ayuda a brindar sanación a las personas y de eso trata Emaüs.”

Para Janet Lejía, quien sufrió de depresión por problemas familiares y personales, el Padre Boeckman le mostró una luz. Le ofreció asesoramiento porque él tenía la certeza de que ella calificaba para la anulación de su matrimonio.

“Estoy seguro de que vas a recibir a Jesús en tu corazón,” dijo Lejía que el Padre Boeckman la inspiró. “Este fue un proceso muy difícil y doloroso, pero también muy satisfactorio porque me liberé de todos los pecados que me estaban atormentando.”

“Recé al Beato Stanley Rother para que pusiera en mi camino a alguien que me ayudara, y cuando estaba saliendo del Santuario, el Padre Boeckman se me acercó.”

Neyra Estrada, diagnosticada con



El padre Boeckman con un grupo de miembros de Emaüs en el Capitolio del estado de Oklahoma. Foto Bella Gutiérrez/Sooner Catholic.

cáncer en 2023, compartió una historia similar de cómo su vida empezó a cambiar, desde el momento en que ella recibió la Unción de los Enfermos y cuando el Padre Boeckman le preguntó, “¿Quieres que yo te acompañe a ti a través de todo este proceso?”

Estrada, madre de tres hijos, experimentó la mayor prueba de fe y con su apoyo, su amor por Dios se hizo más fuerte.

Después de un retiro de silencio, al regresar a casa, ella dijo, “Yo note algunos cambios. Esta fue una extraordinaria experiencia, y ahora, creyente de la Gracia de Dios y después de una cirugía, los médicos no han encontrado rastros de la enfermedad en mi cuerpo.”

El Padre Boeckman acredita su conexión con la comunidad Hispana por la fortaleza que él encuentra en Dios.

“Creo que Dios puso esto en mi corazón porque no hay nada que yo disfrute más que hacer esto, Yo no quiero ir a ningún otro lado,” enfatizó. El Papa Francisco dijo acerca de los Sacerdotes: ‘... pastores con ‘olor de las ovejas’... personas capaces de vivir, de reír y llorar con su pueblo, en una palabra, de comunicarse con ellos.’

“Estoy disfrutando al máximo este tiempo en mi vida y me encanta”.

Bella Gutiérrez es escritora independiente para el Sooner Catholic.

OKLAHOMA MARCHA POR LA VIDA 4 DE FEBRERO DEL 2026

7:30 a.m. Misa por la santidad de la vida, Iglesia Católica Corpus Christi
9 a.m. Marcha alrededor del capitolio
9:30 a.m. Entrada al capitolio para el Día de la Rosa
11:30 a.m. Discursos en la Cámara
1 p.m. Bendición del Arzobispo Coakley

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El 29 de noviembre, en la histórica iglesia católica del Sagrado Corazón, se celebró una misa de envío misionero para las dos nuevas guías de los Talleres de Oración y Vida: Hilda Rojo y Olivia Umanzor. El celebrante de la misa fue el P. Miguel Ayuso. Fotos proporcionadas.



Briefs

First Friday Sacred Heart Mass

Due to the chapel restoration at the Catholic Pastoral Center, the first Friday Sacred Heart Mass for January will be celebrated 5:30-8:30 p.m. Jan. 2 at Epiphany of the Lord Catholic Church, 7336 W. Britton Rd. in Oklahoma City.

Become a seminarian pen pal

To become a Seminarian Pen Pal, visit archokc.org/penpal to find their addresses and write a note.

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.

Casino night

The Knights of Columbus Council No. 6477 New Year's Eve dinner and charity casino is 6:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m. Dec. 31 in the Great Hall at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, 9 and Boulevard in Edmond. Cost \$80, includes dinner, open bar, Blackjack, Texas Hold'em, prizes and champagne toast. Contact (405) 478-5200.

January Seminar Series

The Altum Institute Seminar Series – Virtue and the moral life: the wisdom of the Church is 6:30-8:30 p.m. Jan. 15, 22 and 29 in the St. Peter's Basilica room at the Catholic Pastoral Center, 7501 Northwest Expressway in Oklahoma City. Presenter is Lilly Bermúdez-Wilkins. Cost \$50. Visit

altuminstitute.org/discipleship/sse. Contact (405) 720-2759; afraire@archokc.org.

Retrouvaille

The next Retrouvaille weekend is Jan. 16-18. Whether people are bored, angry, frustrated, not communicating well or in a state of hopelessness, Retrouvaille can help. Contact Troy and Lovette Rausch at TroyLovetteRausch@HelpOurMarriage.org, (405) 885-0667 or visit HelpOurMarriage.org.

Invite One Back

The Altum Institute and St. Paul Street Evangelization will host an Invite One Back Training workshop 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Jan. 24 at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave. in Oklahoma City. Cost \$40 includes workshop materials, morning hospitality and lunch. Visit archokc.org/GMDevents. Contact Larann Wilson at lwilson@archokc.org.

Shrimp boil

St. Philip Neri Catholic School will host its third annual shrimp boil 6-9 p.m. Jan. 31 at the SPN family life center, 1107 Felix Place in Midwest City. Silent auction baskets, raffle games and a selection of beer and wine available. Cash donations graciously accepted. Adults only event.

Trivia night

Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School will host a trivia night at 7 p.m. Jan. 31 at the school, 801 N.W. 50 St. in Oklahoma City.

Doors open at 6 p.m. Ticket options include a \$600 VIP Table (10 seats, dinner, wine, dessert, premium seating), a \$400 Table (10 seats, dinner), or individual tickets at \$80 for two seats and \$40 for one seat. Alcohol will be available for purchase. Tickets at bmchs.org/alumni/trivia-night.

Oklahoma March for Life

The Oklahoma March for Life is Feb. 4 at the Oklahoma State Capitol, 2300 N. Lincoln Blvd. in Oklahoma City. The day begins with the Sanctity of Life Mass at 7:30 a.m. at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, 1616 N. Kelly Ave.; a march around the capitol at 9 a.m.; enter the capitol for Rose Day at 9:30 a.m.; speeches on the House floor at 11:30 a.m.; and benediction by Archbishop Coakley at 1 p.m.

Rose Day

The annual pro-life rally Rose Day is Feb. 4 at the Oklahoma State Capitol. The day includes rose distribution and an indoor rally. The keynote speaker is Mia Armstrong. Visit roseday.life.

Oklahoma Catholic Women's Conference

The Oklahoma Catholic Women's Conference is Feb. 21 at the Oklahoma City Convention Center, 100 Mick Cornett Dr. Speakers include Mgrs. James Shea, Mary Healy and Scott Hahn. Cost \$79; students \$59. Visit okcatholicwomen.com.

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. Price \$60. After Feb. 7 \$100. Visit campguadalupe.org/forg.

March Seminar Series

The Altum Institute Seminar Series – Mary, model of faith and obedience is 6:30-8:30 p.m. March 5, 12 and 19 in the St. Peter's Basilica room at the Catholic Pastoral Center, 7501 Northwest Expressway in Oklahoma City. Presenter is Troy Bodman. Cost \$50. Visit altuminstitute.org/discipleship/sse. Contact (405) 720-2759; afraire@archokc.org.

Oklahoma Catholic Men's Conference

The Oklahoma Catholic Men's Conference, In the Father's Footsteps, is 8:45 a.m. March 14 at the Oklahoma City Convention Center, 100 Mick Cornett Dr. Speakers include Fr. Larry Richards, Curtis Martin, Nathan Crankfield and Joe Heschmeyer. Cost \$79 ends Dec. 31. Cost \$94; at the door \$105; college men \$49; high school students \$39. Visit catholicmen.net.

April Seminar Series

The Altum Institute Seminar Series – Mary's heart revealed through the rosary is 6:30-8:30 p.m. April 9, 16, 23 and 30 in the St. Peter's Basilica room at the Catholic Pastoral Center, 7501 Northwest Expressway in Oklahoma City. Presenter is Amber Johnson. Cost \$50. Visit altuminstitute.org/discipleship/sse.

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 sooneratholic.org.

December		Catholic Church, 1901 N.W. 18 St., Oklahoma City.	1	The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord.	3	The Lay Missionaries of Charity meeting. Contact Jonathan Tarman, (405) 278-8199, Toni Harrelson, (405) 341-2199.
21	Fourth Sunday of Advent.		1	New Year's Day.		
23	Feast of St. John of Kanty.		2	Feast of Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen.	3	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 .
23	Catholic in Recovery meeting, 7 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 1901 N.W. 18 St., Oklahoma City.		2	First Friday of the Month.		
		January	3	The Most Holy Name of Jesus.		
24	Christmas Eve. CPC closed Dec. 24 – Jan. 4	1	Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.			
25	The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas).					
26	Feast of St. Stephen.					
27	Feast of St. John.					
27	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 .					
28	Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.					
29	Fifth day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord.					
29	Feast of St. Thomas Becket.					
30	Sixth day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord.					
30	Catholic in Recovery meeting, 7 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi					



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SEMINAR SERIES
VIRTUE AND THE MORAL LIFE:
THE WISDOM OF THE CHURCH




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Christmas is not only a time of great consolation, but the beginning of the great decision. God is all in. But do we accept him? Everything depends on our answer.

It is not typical to muse on the parable of the sower during Advent or Christmas, but it should be. “A sower went out to sow his seed,” and the seed falls upon all manner of earth: some along a path, some on rock, some among thorns, and some into good soil (Lk 8:5-8). Jesus told this parable to “a large crowd” (Lk 8:4). He then goes on to explain the meaning of his parable, but not to everyone. He opens the meaning to “his disciples (who) asked him what the meaning of this parable might be” (Lk 8:9).

To his disciples, Jesus teaches that the seed is the word of God. The seed that falls on the path is not guarded, so it gets trampled underfoot and eaten by birds: These are the ways in which the seed is not received deeply and thus subject to the snares of the devil. The seed that falls on the rock cannot lay down roots, even if it is initially received with joy: This is how what seems like faith appears for a time but then passes away because it is superficial.

The seed that falls among thorns has to compete with myriad other desires and preferences and interests: This is how the lack of prioritization deprives the word of the nutrients it needs to grow. But the seed that fell on good soil is the word of God that finds a generous reception, that is nurtured “in a generous and good heart” and brings forth “fruit through perseverance” (Lk 8:15).

There are at least two things that we should not miss about Jesus’ parable.

The first is that this is not a question of whether the seed – the word of God – is given. That question is answered in the very setup of the parable: the sower sows his seed; the seed is given to all. The question of the parable is instead about how the seed will be received.

What is in question is not the seed but the soil. The sower has made everything depend on the soil.

The second thing we dare not miss is the



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little detail about to whom, exactly, Jesus offered the further explanation after the parable. Remember, the parable was given to “a large crowd,” comprised of many different people “from one town after another” (Lk 8:4). The explanation, though, is not given to the crowd but to his disciples, who asked him what this parable meant (cf. Lk 8:9).

Who are the disciples, then? They are the ones who seek to understand. They have heard his word, but they struggle to know it. By asking him to teach them, they are seeking to allow the word to sink in deep. They are becoming good soil. They are receiving him. The evidence of their hearing well will show forth in how they act on his word (cf. Lk 8:21; 11:28).

The parable of the sower inclines us to reckon with the dangerous side of Christmas. God has given his Son. The question is, will we receive him?

Receiving him is not about fleeting seasonal gladness or setting him alongside many other things. Receiving him is about giving him pride of place, and allowing him to set down roots and bear fruit in our lives. Receiving him is about being his disciples – the ones who seek

to know him and who struggle to understand him.

This is indeed the dangerous reversal: he is the guest who calls us to become his hosts, and everything depends on our hospitality.

The Lord of all comes to us wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. This is God’s great proposal; his knock upon our door. He would not force his way into our world or into our lives. He has come meekly.

And to our credit, some of our number received him with great care. This is part of our reason for joy at Christmas, and during the Christmas octave, the church schools us in the memory of this joy.

We Christians truly have cause to rejoice: Unto us a savior is born. But this good news is not for us alone. He seeks for us to welcome him to the point that he may take root in our lives and bear fruit through our words and deeds.

He comes to us as our guest in hopes that we will welcome him as our Lord and our God.



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