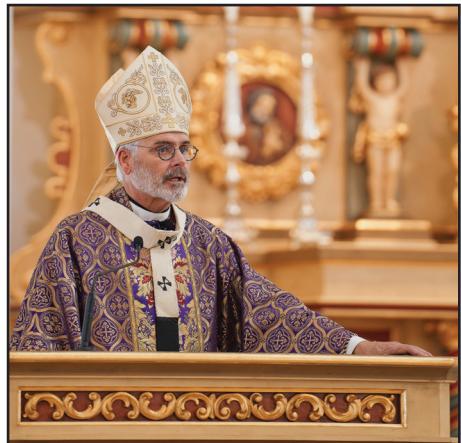


Go Make Disciples

Archbishop Coakley calls for Holy Hour as a moment of renewal for hearts, nation



Archbishop Paul Coakley

WASHINGTON – “Your faith matters. Your prayers matter. Your acts of love and works of justice matter,” said Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. “The current climate of fear and polarization, which thrives when human dignity is disregarded, does not meet the standard set by Christ in the Gospel,” he continued, and as a step toward healing, invited bishops and priests across the United States to offer a Holy Hour for Peace.

Archbishop Coakley’s full reflection and invitation follow:

Many people today feel powerless in the face of violence, injustice, and social unrest. To those who feel this way, I wish to say clearly: your faithfulness

matters. Your prayers matter. Your acts of love and works of justice matter.

I am deeply grateful for the countless ways Catholics and all people of good will continue to serve one another and work for peace and justice. Whether feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, caring for the sick, accompanying the lonely, visiting the imprisoned, or striving daily to love their neighbors, no work of mercy or act of justice is ever wasted in the eyes of God. While proper laws must be respected, works of mercy, peacefully assembling, and caring for those in your community are signs of hope, and they

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Rice Bowls provide simple Lenten practice with local, global impact

By Eliana Tedrow
The Sooner Catholic

People see them every Lent: small cardboard boxes sitting in parish entryways, waiting to be taken home, filled one coin at a time, and brought back at the end of the season.

Known as “Rice Bowls,” these collections are part of a global outreach effort through Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the international humanitarian agency of the U.S. Catholic Church.

For more than 50 years, this simple yet impactful Lenten tradition has invited Catholics of all ages to practice almsgiving in a tangible way, reminding people that even the smallest acts of generosity can unite everyone with their brothers and sisters across the world.

Last year, the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City saw 17 parishes participate in Rice Bowls collections. Of the funds collected, a portion is redistributed through

local pantries and parish out-reaches.

Sister Diane Koorie, RSM, longtime CRS volunteer and local chapter member, said the Rice Bowls are one of the main fund-raising efforts of Catholic Relief Services. She encourages families to use the bilingual poster included with each bowl.

“How wonderful for families, maybe once or twice during Lent, to try one of those recipes, connect it with the Rice Bowl they’re filling, and make that connection with their brothers and sisters in other parts of the world,” she said.

Sister Diane encourages parishioners to understand they are making a difference in the life of another person, even if they don’t initially feel it.

“Sometimes it feels like drops in a bucket. But if we keep at it, one dime at a time, it adds up,” she said. “Charity begins at home, but it can’t stay there.”

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Women’s Conference to focus on Scripture as ‘Letters from Home’

By John Helsley
The Sooner Catholic

For Stephanie Stovall, the 2026 Catholic Women’s Conference is professional. And personal.

Stovall, who serves as the conference chair, traces the growth in her faith journey to one of the three keynote speakers: Scott Hahn, renowned author, theologian and Catholic apologist, as well as the founder of the Saint Paul Center for Biblical Theology.

“Scott Hahn was the first one to form me in my Catholic faith,” Stovall said. “So this is a really big moment for me personally, being able to bring in such a great Catholic teacher to share all of his wisdom on Scripture.”

Hahn’s expertise on scripture speaks directly to this year’s

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LENT



Put Out Into the Deep
Luke 5:4

Lent: A Journey into our Father's Love

This article was previously published in the Feb. 26, 2023, Sooner Catholic.

We have begun our Lenten journey toward Easter. Since it's a spiritual journey – a journey of faith – the destination is not a physical one. We won't notice a change in geography or location when we arrive, but the journey is no less real. If we persevere in the journey, we will move from an old way of relating to God to a renewed one.

This journey of Lent often is depicted as a journey into the desert, reminiscent of the 40 years Moses and the Israelites spent in the desert when they had been delivered from their slavery in Egypt.

This desert imagery also is evident in the Gospel of the first Sunday of Lent, which recounts how Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit. There, he was tested by the Evil One for 40 days. He gave evidence of his divine, sinless nature by remaining steadfast and dependent on the love of his heavenly Father.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, "By the solemn 40 days of Lent, the Church unites itself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert" (CCC 540).

The journey of Lent is a time of prayer and almsgiving, but also a time of penance – a word that sometimes can carry negative or harsh connotations.

Penance simply means a continual and intentional conversion of life moving away from reliance upon oneself and toward a deepening dependence on God.

The desert has long been associated with penance since early Christians fled the cities, with its worldly values, and sought in the desert a place to live the Gospel radically. In the desert, we are painfully aware of our vulnerability and dependence on God.

Lent is a time for us to journey into the desert where we will experience the same acute awareness of our own vulnerability and dependence upon the Jesus' love.

We make this journey with Jesus, accom-

panied by members of the Church, following in the footsteps of the many centuries of Christians who have gone before us.

In our desire for holiness, we sometimes approach Lent as a time of self-reliance and not of growing dependence. We can treat Lent as a spiritual powerlifting contest where we try to show God, ourselves and others just how capable we are. Like Jesus, we will be tempted in the desert, and this attitude can be a temptation that will be an obstacle to our spiritual growth.

So, how should we approach Lent?

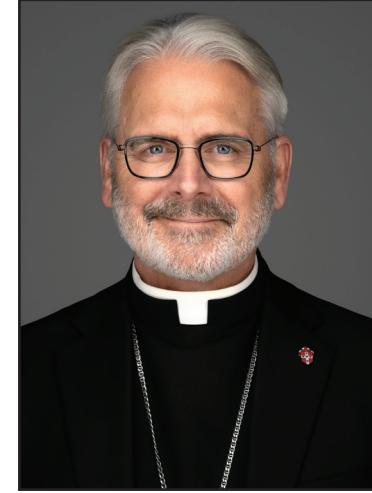
Start with the traditional threefold biblical disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. If you are seeking some direction as you begin your Lenten journey, ask yourself: what is my greatest obstacle to receiving and depending upon God's love? Is it a particular sin? Then, fast from that!

Lent is a journey that moves us beyond obstacles that keep us ensnared in habits, relationships or things that are not God. We can begin our Lenten journey by asking God – in faith – to remove this obstacle. We also can ask God to show us what other practices of prayer, penance and almsgiving will lead us beyond our self-reliance and into deeper dependence on his love.

With these directions in mind, remember to pack lightly. Sometimes less is more. We don't need to overload ourselves to prove a point. With God's fatherly care and direction, we can identify, pay attention to and seek to move beyond whatever hinders our progress.

The goal of Lent should not be a greater confidence in ourselves, but a greater confidence in God.

During these holy days of Lent, it is my prayer that Jesus gives each of you the grace to move beyond the obstacles that keep you from fully enjoying his love. I will pray for you, and please pray for me.



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 everyone in need**. May they find guidance and assistance from the many services available through the generous support of the Annual Catholic Appeal. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

► **The Lay Missionaries of Charity** (LMC) is the Third Order of the Missionaries of Charity Contemplative within the Roman Catholic Church. It was founded by Fr. Sebastian Vazhakala, MC, priest and St. Teresa of Kolkata in Rome in 1984. It is intimately and spiritually affiliated to the Missionaries of Charity throughout the world. The LMC's primary mission is a life marked by prayer for the sanctification and salvation of the members of their own families and the poorest of the poor. Contact Toni Harrelson LMC Link, (405) 694-1292 or tonimah@sbcglobal.net for information on the meeting schedule and location.



Prayer for married couples

Almighty and eternal God, you blessed the union of married couples so that they might reflect the union of Christ with his Church: look with kindness on them.

Renew their marriage covenant, increase your love in them, and strengthen their bond of peace so that, with their children, they always may rejoice in the gift of your blessing.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Archbishop Coakley's Calendar in Review

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

- Jan. 29 – School Mass and classroom visits, St. Philip Neri Catholic School, Midwest City
- Jan. 29 – Vocation Board meeting, Catholic Pastoral Center, Oklahoma City
- Jan. 29 – Saints & Scholars Dinner for Catholic Schools, Oklahoma City Golf & Country Club
- Feb. 1 – Confirmation, St. Matthew Catholic Church, Elk City
- Feb. 1 – Confirmation, Christ the King Catholic Church, OKC
- Feb. 3 – Mass, St. Francis de Sales Chapel, CPC
- Feb. 3 – ACA Mass and reception, St. Matthew Catholic Church, Elk City
- Feb. 4 – Mass/March for Life/Rose Day, Corpus Christi Catholic Church, Oklahoma State Capitol
- Feb. 5-6 – Episcopal Installation of Archbishop Ronald Hicks, Archdiocese of New York

Archbishop Coakley urges calm, restraint, respect for human life

Echoing the message Pope Leo XIV delivered at the Sunday Angelus (Jan. 25), Archbishop Coakley reminded the faithful: "Peace is built on respect for people."

WASHINGTON – Echoing the message Pope Leo XIV delivered at the Sunday Angelus today, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, reminded the faithful: "Peace is built on respect for people."

"Today, Pope Leo XIV reminds us that the Gospel must be proclaimed and lived in every

setting, serving as a leaven of fraternity and peace among all individuals, cultures, religions and peoples."

"It is with this in mind that I prayerfully urge calm, restraint and respect for human life in Minneapolis, and all those places where peace is threatened. Public authorities especially have a responsibility to safeguard the

well-being of people in service to the common good.

"As a nation we must come together in dialogue, turning away from dehumanizing rhetoric and acts which threaten human life. In this spirit, in unity with Pope Leo, it is important to proclaim, 'Peace is built on respect for people!'"

2025 delivered legislative gains on key Church issues

By Brett Farley

Now that 2026 is well underway, we are taking stock of key accomplishments for the Church in Oklahoma over the past year. Of the thousands of bills introduced each year in the state legislature, only a small fraction receive the governor's signature. In 2025, three of those bills originated with the Catholic Conference of Oklahoma.

A third key win added momentum to our efforts to expand school choice in Oklahoma. **House Bill 1096** inserted the Classic Learning Test (CLT) alongside the ACT and SAT as an accepted option for college entrance testing. CLT has grown rapidly in recent years, particularly in states like Florida, as private-school and homeschooling families prefer its emphasis on classical reading and civics. Colleges and universities nationwide are increasingly offering scholarships to CLT test-takers, with the University of Tulsa being one local example. As the ACT and SAT have faced growing criticism for lowering standards, CLT has held the line on rigor and quality.

Finally, our effort to reinstitute a moratorium on Oklahoma's death penalty cleared an important hurdle with the passage of **Senate Bill 601** from Senate committee.

Another critical victory came with **Senate Bill 658**, which created an additional religious-liberty protection for foster and adoptive parents. In recent years, several

states have discriminated against parents with traditional religious convictions by barring them from participation in state foster-care programs. In Oklahoma, thousands of foster children remain in need of a "forever family," and pairing them with a home is already an arduous process. This new law preempts state officials from imposing discriminatory religious conditions on prospective foster and adoptive parents.

We passed **Senate Bill 1027**, which added several critical regulations to the petition-circulation process for state questions, including a requirement that signatures be gathered across multiple counties outside the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metros. Additionally, the bill imposes stricter regulations on the hiring of paid circulators to prevent out-of-state firms from descending on Oklahoma for political and financial gain. These provisions primarily are aimed at heavily funded pro-abortion organizations that have successfully overturned longstanding abortion regulations via ballot initiatives in other states and have had Oklahoma in their crosshairs for years.

The new law is currently awaiting a decision from the Oklahoma Supreme Court after being challenged by some of these groups.

Earlier in 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court vacated the murder conviction of Richard Glossip, citing false testimony and prosecutorial misconduct. Glossip's death-row

conviction is now the 12th to be overturned or vacated in Oklahoma since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. With just over 120 executions carried out in that time, the state faces an error rate approaching 10 percent. As Archbishop Coakley has argued, this is grossly inconsistent with the Church's ethic of life. We will continue our efforts on SB 601 in the upcoming session.

The 2026 legislative session begins Feb. 2, and with this year's election cycle already in full swing, it promises to be particularly consequential. Among our legislative priorities:

Senate Bill 1398, which proposes a robust state income-tax credit for donations to pregnancy resource centers and other pro-family ministries and organizations. We have long argued that ending abortion and supporting women in crisis are two sides of the same coin. It is time to align public policy with that conviction by creating greater incentives for increased funding of life-affirming support.

Additionally, we are working closely with Senate and House leaders to strengthen state statutes in ways that would effectively block the manufacture and distribution of abortion pills across state lines. The so-called "one-pill" solution is rapidly becoming an epidemic, as young women are enticed to purchase misoprostol – often from overseas sources – which, when ingested, induces a miscarriage. The abortive nature

of this trend is egregious, but so too are the lasting physical and psychological harms to mothers. Increasingly, the abortion industry exploits its vulnerabilities for financial gain.

Senate Bill 1307 proposes to strike several prohibitions on state funding for religious organizations. In the wake of the Saint Isidore case at the U.S. Supreme Court, Gov. Kevin Stitt's office identified multiple provisions in state statute that are plainly discriminatory, barring religious organizations from partnering with the state. We aim to remove these barriers.

Finally, statewide elections are approaching this November, with primaries scheduled for June. With Gov. Stitt's second term coming to an end, the governor's mansion, attorney general, state superintendent and other key offices will be open. We expect this cycle to be the most expensive in state history, and the outcomes of these races will shape Oklahoma's direction for years to come.

That is why it is essential to pay close attention and take the time to research candidates carefully. The Church calls us to be "faithful citizens," prayerfully holding public officials and candidates accountable to principles of moral governance. Resources for *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* are available at USCCB.org.

Brett Farley is the executive director for the Catholic Conference of Oklahoma.



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Volume 48, Number 2

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The Sooner Catholic
(USPS 066-910) is published
biweekly except for once in
January and July by the
Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

The newspaper is not responsible
for unsolicited material.
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Subscription rate: \$35 per year
for all who are not members of the
Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

Periodical postage paid at
Oklahoma City, OK 73125.

POSTMASTER: Send address
changes to the Sooner Catholic,
P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City,
OK 73123.



The Sooner Catholic
is supported through the
Annual Catholic Appeal and Sooner
Catholic Communications Appeal.

Good year for school tax credit program

By Owen Canfield

Hundreds of students in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City will receive tuition assistance next school year thanks to the generosity of donors to the Catholic Schools Opportunity Fund in 2025.

In addition, 28 qualified businesses gave to the Catholic Schools Opportunity Fund in 2025. The program is especially beneficial for business owners because the maximum tax credit available is \$100,000 annually. If the business operates as a pass-through, the tax credit on the gift can pass through to the owner's personal tax liability.

Individuals and businesses gave \$1.84 million to CSOF in 2025. Their two-year pledges to the program will entitle these donors to a 75% Oklahoma state income tax credit on their gifts.

Donors included 380 individuals or couples. The maximum tax credit available for couples is \$2,000 per year; for single filers, it is \$1,000 per year. Of those 380 donors, 42 made Qualified Charitable Distribu-



tions from their Individual Retirement Accounts. This option is becoming more popular for donors who own traditional IRAs and must make a required minimum distribution each year.



Owen Canfield
Director of the
Catholic Schools
Opportunity Fund

receive a Catholic school education.

Simply put, the Catholic Schools Opportunity Fund is a winner for students, their families and donors.

It isn't too early to begin a two-year pledge. You can pledge now, then make the first-year donation any time before the end of 2026. Gifts can be made by check, credit card or bank draft, and can be paid in monthly installments if requested. Gifts of appreciated stock are welcome, also.

To make a pledge or learn more, contact me at (405) 709-2700 or ocanfield@csofok.org, or visit the website at csofok.org.

Owen Canfield is director of the Catholic Schools Opportunity Fund.

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Ignacio Ruiz in his classroom at Mount St. Mary Catholic High School in Oklahoma City. Photo Bella Gutiérrez/Sooner Catholic.

Ignacio Ruiz, teaching by example: Building multi-cultural bridges

By Bella Gutiérrez
The Sooner Catholic

Born in Pinar del Rio, Cuba, Ignacio Ruiz Páez and his family suffered the persecution of a totalitarian communist/socialist regime. The reason behind such oppression: his faith, as a Catholic leader and teacher in Catholic institutions.

Concerned for their safety, Ruiz and all the family left Cuba and landed in Kingston, Jamaica. A few days later, a green card opened the door to fly to America. First, Florida, then Texas and Puerto Rico, where they became citizens.

Ruiz graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a bachelor of science degree in communications, radio-TV-film. Later, he returned to earn his teaching certificate in Spanish and English. He also pursued postgraduate studies in Madrid, Spain.

In San Antonio he worked for a Catholic television channel and then took the first steps as a teacher with teenagers from a local Catholic school, whom he taught to use cameras and operate the equipment.

After 30 years of teaching in Texas, he moved to Oklahoma to be with his mother, María Páez de Ruiz, after his father had passed.

One day, his mother surprised him, presenting an ad in the Sooner Catholic announcing that



Ignacio Ruiz teaches at the Bl. Stanley Rother Hispanic Cultural Institute at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Norman. Photo provided.

Mount Saint Mary Catholic High School was looking for a Spanish teacher and a technology teacher.

"I was surprised because, as I told her, I came to be with you," he said.

Her response: "You have much more to offer."

"And here I am," he said.

Indeed, Ruiz was hired at Mount Saint Mary. And he's busy, teaching Spanish, computer applications, TV/webcast journalism and media.

In its beginnings, he realized the Spanish heritage students were being placed in a regular Spanish class.

"This led me to start a class for

"He supports the mission of the school and develops strong relationships with his students, which inspires them to seek excellence in their academic work and their spiritual lives," Cain said.

Luke Ranck, a senior student, said learning another language, such as Spanish, will allow him to communicate better with others in his professional path, or with peers from other countries in the future to come.

The classes with Ruiz, Ranck said, are creative and interesting.

"Last semester, for example, we had to make a video of ourselves explaining AI, pros and cons, and the effect of social media on the teenagers like us," Ranck said, "and just how it's affecting our day-to-day lives. We did it only in Spanish and it was a really great experience."

For Danika Burgdoff learning about the Camino de Santiago in Europe opened her eyes to one of the most famous pilgrimages in Europe, with Spain as a central point.

"Learning about the Camino I realized that it's not just Spain or Spanish as a language," Burgdoff said, "it's understanding better the culture behind it."

Once in Oklahoma, Ruiz became active in the Blessed Stanley Rother Hispanic Cultural Institute at Saint Joseph Catholic Church in Norman, founded by his

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conference theme: "Letters from Home," taken from Saint Augustine's famous description of the Holy Scriptures as "our letters from home."

"The scriptures are God's love letters to his people, calling us back home to himself," said Father Alex Kroll, pastor of Saint Mary Catholic Church in Ponca City and conference chaplain.

"Jesus says, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.' Finding rest and peace in his sacred Scriptures is something that every Christian is called to, but something that we need especially in our busy lives today."

"When we pray, we speak to the Lord. As we read Scripture, he speaks to us, powerfully and really."

The 18th annual conference is set for Feb. 21 at the Oklahoma City Convention Center. Tickets are available at okcatholicwomen.com at a cost of \$79 for general admission and \$59 for students. Registration closes Feb. 7.

Father Kroll considers the speaker lineup a powerhouse, with Monsignor James Shea and Mary Healy, STD, joining Hahn for the event, which will also

feature time for adoration, confession and Mass.

Shea, president of the University of Mary and a priest in the Diocese of Bismarck, is deeply committed to the education and formation of young people. He has spoken at various conferences, including SEEK in 2024.

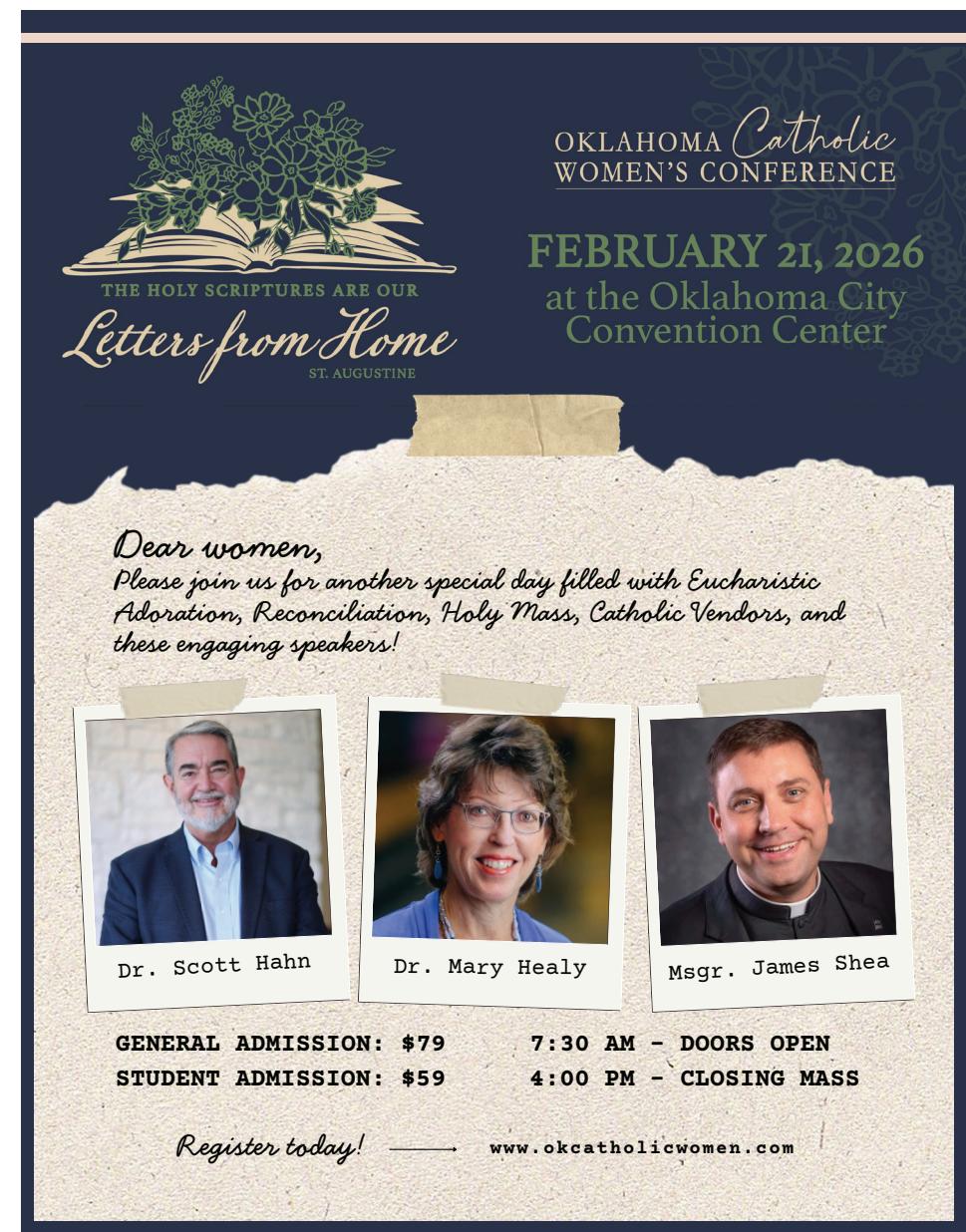
"Monsignor Shea is going to be focusing on the transformation at Jacob's Well, which is one of the most powerful stories in the Gospel," Stovall said. "I love that he chose this because it highlights authentic relationship between a woman and Jesus."

"I think there's a lot of women who will be able to relate to the brokenness of the woman at the well, but also the hope in this really intimate encounter with Jesus."

Healy is a professor of Scripture at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit and a bestselling author and international speaker.

"She is an incredible theologian," Stovall said. "And she is just perfect for women, because she gets the feminine heart, seen in the way she speaks to the heart of women and encouraging them to go into the Scriptures as part of your daily life."

John Helsley is editor of the Sooner Catholic.



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and priests across the United States to offer a Holy Hour for Peace in the days ahead. Let us pray for reconciliation where there is division, for justice where there are violations of fundamental rights, and for consolation for all who feel overwhelmed by fear or loss.

I encourage Catholics everywhere to participate, whether in parishes, chapels, or before the Lord present in the quiet of their hearts for healing in our nation and communities.

May this Holy Hour be a moment of renewal for our hearts and for our nation. Entrusting our fears and hopes to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, let us ask the Lord to make us instruments of his peace and witnesses to the inherent dignity of every person.

Let us pray together, confident that God hears the cry of his people and remains close to all who seek him.

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Norman's St. Joseph council of Knights of Columbus celebrates 25th anniversary

By Bella Gutiérrez
The Sooner Catholic

Supporting Catholic immigrants who suffered from discrimination based on their religion was the starting point for the creation of the Knights of Columbus, a group originally established by Blessed Michael McGivney in 1882.

Today, with 143 years of history and more than two million members worldwide, the councils established in parishes continue the faith-based mission, through the principles of unity, charity and fraternity.

Last November, the Knights of Columbus council 12819 at Saint Joseph Catholic Church in Norman, celebrated its 25th anniversary, following the steps and main principles that lead this organization.

Recounting his past, Frederick Pope Jr., joined the Knights of Columbus when he was a parishioner at Saint Louis Catholic Church in Alexandria, Virginia. When he and his wife moved to Norman in 1997, he transferred his membership into the only council available in Norman, which was at Saint Thomas More Catholic Church.

Several of its members also came from

other parishes, like Saint Joseph Catholic Church and Saint Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church. With the years, the Catholic population was large enough to support a council at each parish and then, the Knights of Columbus Council No. 12819 at Saint

"We make a promise to stay faithful to the Church and conduct our lives as Catholic gentlemen. This promise carries forward to our family life, public life and working life. This promise develops pride to be a Catholic and a Knight," said Joaquin Patlan,



Joseph was created in November 2000 with 34 members.

Father Joseph Irwin, pastor of Saint Joseph, said he appreciates having this council in the parish.

"They have served the parish faithfully for these many years,"

he said. "May they continue to find ways to serve and glorify God for many more years to come."

Over the years, the service of many men in the parish has supported charitable programs for the benefit of the poor, pregnant mothers, children with special needs, and less fortunate people.

The programs at Saint Joseph focus on service, support and visibility. This includes church improvement projects, assisting with parish events, supporting Mass attendance initiatives, and helping where the parish has specific needs.

What do 25 years of commitment and faith mean to the organization? For Grand Knight Mark Kurschinski, a quarter century represents perseverance, sacrifice and answered prayers.

"It means generations of Knights who chose service over convenience, faith over comfort, and brotherhood over standing alone," he said. "This milestone is not just about the past, it's a reminder of our responsibility to carry the mission forward."

"It honors those who laid the foundation and challenges us to ensure the next 25 years are even stronger, rooted in the same faith and dedication that brought us here."

Bella Gutiérrez is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.



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parents in 2007 along with some University of Oklahoma professors, including Luis Cortest, and Deacon Angelo Lombardo and his wife Annie, who saw a need for clergy to learn Spanish. And now, as a community service, it is not just for people in ministry, but for anyone interested in learning about it.

"I enjoy finding new themes and lessons to teach and explore so that others can see the beauty of my culture and recognize that it is not one but over 20 distinct cultures that fall under the Hispanic culture umbrella," said Ruiz, the current coordinator.

"When I share the Hispanic culture, I share the past, the roots of being Hispanic, and how we adapted the Spanish culture to suit the environment. We do have an American culture and way of life that keeps us together, but within that culture, we can share our past and culture."

"It enriches our American culture. I believe that to understand others, we must understand ourselves."

Libby Gillett has been attending the Institute for 13 years. She said she sees Ruiz encouraging others that it is possible to learn another language.

"Every Tuesday he presents an interesting topic delving into the culture, gastronomy, music, dance, art, history, and much more relating to the Hispanic world," Gillett said.

Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico and Spain are the Spanish speaking countries that Gillett has visited.

"I have made many friends from these countries and none of this would have been possible without the influence of the Institute and the continuing efforts of Ignacio," she said.

For Ruiz, it's all part of his mission.

"I endeavor to be an example, not just an instructor, to my students, but in faith," he said. "I show them how, at times, it can be rewarding and difficult."

"But the important part is to persevere, to not lose trust in God, to not lose the faith, to not lose that spirit to perseverance on the road to heaven."

Bella Gutiérrez is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.



Ignacio Ruiz. Photo Bella Gutiérrez/Sooner Catholic.

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Rice Bowls supports CRS programs serving more than 100 countries. Of the almsgiving collected, 75% supports global efforts focused on alleviating hunger and poverty through education, resources and training, while 25% is reinvested in local communities.

Father William Banowsky, pastor at Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Mustang, revived the Rice Bowls program at his parish by using Family Faith Formation classes to encourage student participation and educate parents.

"It's truly transformative," Father Banowsky said. "It doesn't just aid with access to resources, but also provides education and training to truly lead not to just survival but self-sufficiency. It's also a reminder that our neighbor isn't just those in our community, but all of us, globally, who are made in the image and likeness of God."

Martha Torres, director of religious education for Holy Spirit, said parish leadership support was key to her parish's Rice Bowls success.

"This is a nickel and dime kind of thing," Torres said. "If you want one bowl for the family or one bowl for each kid, it's a community effort that doesn't require you to sacrifice a whole lot because all of it comes together to be a much bigger number."

Jo Soske, local CRS chapter

member and longtime volunteer, said she continued to support CRS because of their desires to develop the whole person, to bring dignity and long-term change. She said, Rice Bowls shift mindsets from me-first to others.

"The truth is there is no me, it's us," Soske said. "Until we can begin to think about that, everybody is going to have some needs they are not getting met, whether they are material or spiritual.

"We can talk to them about faith all day, but put something that is about their faith into their hands

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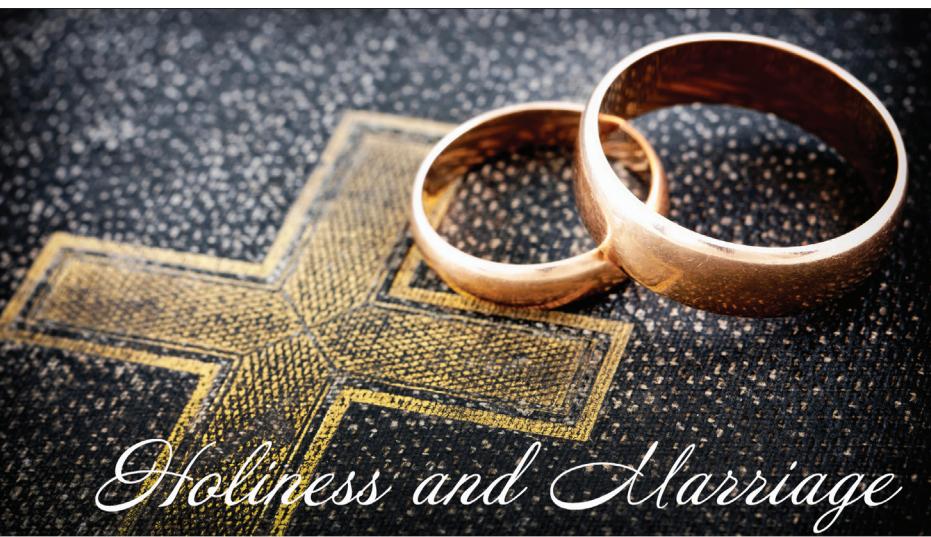
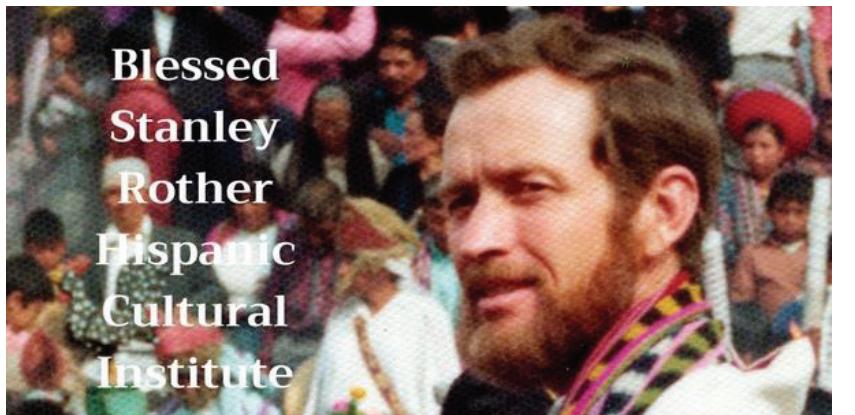
and they internalize it."

Anyone interested in participating in CRS Rice Bowls can contact their pastor or Sister Diane Koorie at dkoorie@sistersofmercy.org and visit crsricebowl.org.

Eliana Tedrow is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

B1. Stanley Rother Hispanic Cultural Institute

The Blessed Stanley Rother Hispanic Cultural Institute of Saint Joseph Catholic Church held an opening night for the spring semester on Feb. 3 in Norman. The Spanish language and cultural studies classes are offered on Tuesdays. For more information, call the parish office at (405) 321-8080 and/or e-mail Ignacio Ruiz, Jr. at rotherhispanicinstitute@gmail.com. Visit the Facebook page at facebook.com/groups/bsrhc1.



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Elizabeth Lev is
• American art historian based in Rome
• Teacher at Duquesne University and the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas
• Vatican Museums consultant and a Vatican analyst for NBC

Crispy Pancakes — Vietnam

Prep Time: 15 min
Cooking Time: 15 min
Servings: 4

Ingredients

Pancakes:
1 cup rice flour
1 cup water
1 cup coconut milk
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 scallion, sliced thin
Oil (for cooking)

Vietnamese Dipping Sauce (Nuoc Cham):

6 tablespoon warm water
2 tablespoon sugar
2 tablespoon lime juice
2 tablespoon fish sauce
1 garlic clove, minced
1 red chili, minced

The Filling:

2 cup fresh bean sprouts
½ pound small shrimp, peeled
6 scallions, sliced
Mint and cilantro for garnish

Preparation

For the Vietnamese Rice Flour Pancakes:
Mix all pancake batter ingredients together in a large bowl until smooth. Let the mixture stand for 30 minutes while you prepare the other ingredients. For the Vietnamese Dipping Sauce (Nuoc Cham), mix all the dipping sauce ingredients. Set aside.

To prepare the filling:

Preheat a 9 inch, non-stick skillet with a lid over medium heat. Add the bean sprouts and cook until most of the moisture has evaporated. Remove the sprouts from the pan and set aside. Increase the heat to medium high. Add 1 tsp of oil to the skillet. Add the shrimp and cook for 2-3 minutes, until cooked through. Add the scallions and sauté for 1-2 minutes. Remove the mixture from the pan and set aside.

To make the pancakes:

Add ½ tsp of oil to the skillet (if it looks dry) and pour about ½ c of the batter into the hot pan, tilting the pan quickly to create an even layer of batter that coats the pan. Distribute some of the cooked filling and bean sprouts over half of the batter and cover the skillet for 2-3 minutes, until the edges begin to brown. Remove the lid and reduce the heat to medium, cooking until the bottom of the pancake is crispy, 3-5 minutes. Once the bottom of the pancake is golden and crispy, fold the pancake in half over the filling. Transfer to a plate and serve. Continue with the remaining batter and filling, adding a little oil as needed before pouring the batter.



Find more Lenten recipes at crsricebowl.org.

A gift to the Annual Catholic Appeal supports:

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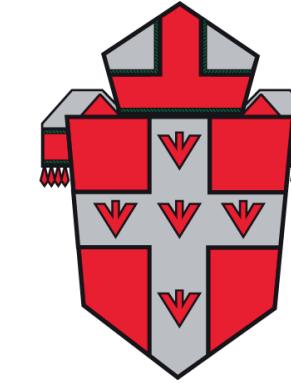
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**“Then you shall
call, and the Lord
will answer, you
shall cry for help,
and he will say:
Here I am.”**



Go Make Disciples

ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

‘Here I Am’

Annual Catholic Appeal at work

By Jennifer Yardley

Each year, Catholics across the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City join to support the ministries that keep the Church present where it is needed most. Your generosity makes a difference in parishes large and small, in classrooms and campus centers, and in lives changed every day.

The 2026 Annual Catholic Appeal is guided by the words from Isaiah: “Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am.”

This passage is a reminder of something simple and powerful – when people turn to the Church seeking help, hope and guidance, we must be ready to respond.

Support of the Annual Catholic Appeal is a way to say “Here I am” to our communities.

Money raised through the Annual Catholic Appeal touches all parts of the archdiocese:

- Support for seminarians, permanent deacons and Catholic schools – preparing our future pastors, faith leaders and teachers who will serve our parish communities for decades to come.
- Hispanic Ministry, American Indian Catholic Outreach, Youth and Young Adult programs, Marriage and Family support, Campus Evangelization and Parish Leadership – ministries that help us live, share and pass on the faith, allowing the Church to respond when someone needs guidance.
- Maintenance and support for parish facilities, Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp and the Catholic Pastoral Center – spaces that welcome thousands each year for retreats, formation and fellowship where ministry is given the uninterrupted opportunity to grow.
- Administrative support and Safe Environment programs – these help keep parishes strong and ensure the faithful can encounter Christ in a safe and protected community.

As you consider giving to the Annual Catholic Appeal, reflect on when you have called out to God and heard him answer. Through your generosity, the Church can be the same response for someone else.

In 2025, more than 8,100 donors answered the call with a gift to the Annual Catholic Appeal, providing a record-breaking year of generosity. Together, once again we step forward in faith, ready to say, “Here I am.”

Jennifer Yardley is director of annual giving for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. To make a gift to the Annual Catholic Appeal, visit archokc.org/aca-sooner-catholic or scan the QR code.

2026 Annual Catholic
Appeal Goal:
\$4,600,000



*Then you shall call, and
the LORD will answer, you
shall cry for help, and he
will say: Here I am!*



archokc.org/aca-sooner-catholic

To make a gift, scan here

Royals Report

Once a Royal, always a Royal

Cristo Rey OKC Catholic High School welcomed alumni back to campus on Jan. 14, and for a few hours, the school felt like a blend of past and present.

Former students walked through familiar hallways, greeting teachers they once learned from and reconnecting with classmates who shared the same experiences. Conversations filled the building as alumni reflected on where they are now and how Cristo Rey OKC helped shape their paths forward.

Graduates visiting campus represented a range of colleges, including the University of Oklahoma, Southern Nazarene University, Notre Dame, Oklahoma City University, the University of Central Oklahoma and Smith College. Although their journeys have taken them in different directions, many shared similar reflections about adjusting to college life and stepping into new levels of independence.

Rather than focusing on achievements or titles, they spoke honestly about the challenges they faced after graduating. They discussed learning how to manage their time, balance coursework and advocate for themselves in unfamiliar environments.

Several shared that the expectations placed on them at Cristo Rey OKC helped them feel more prepared and confident as they transitioned into college, as well as Orlene Chaney's discipline.

Learning from those who came before

For current students, Alumni Day offered more than advice. It offered perspective.



Janeise, January Student Worker of the Month

Student Worker of the Month: Growth in Action

That same preparation and growth can be seen in current students as well. On Jan. 16, sophomore Janeise was named Cristo Rey OKC's January Student Worker of the Month in recognition of her strong performance through the Corporate Work Study Program.

Janeise works at the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, where she is known for her professionalism, positive attitude, and willingness to take responsibility. She approaches her work with maturity and consistency, qualities that

their snow days in different ways. Seniors Courtney Lomoro and Catherine Parent had been stuck out of the classroom with the snow, but offered different perspectives on the days.

For Parent, the snow meant a streetcar ride to Scissortail Park for some community time with her mom's childhood sleds. With a crowd of about 50 she said the snow brought people of all kinds.

"A bunch of people only have cardboard or plastic lids from buckets or tubs, and I was like, 'this is simply not going to do,' so I just started teaching everyone out there how to use our sleds," Parent said.

As a seasoned sledder herself, Parent said she had a great time passing on her family's yearly tradition.

"It was so fun," Parent said. "Everyone there was so nice."

Irish Insights

Irish students make the most of snow days

With recent winter weather leaving classes at home to learn virtually, students have been spending



Senior Courtney Lomoro

Parent said she especially liked teaching older sledgers how to use her unique sleds.

"They were so excited because they've never seen these sleds before because they're from 50 years ago," Parent said.

With a park-wide snowball fight underway, the sledgers drew News 9 to the area where Parent said they got a look at "community in action."

"The snowball fight was really fun because a bunch of people clearly didn't know each other, but would run up to each other and absolutely pelt them," Parent said.

Also away from school due to weather, Lomoro said she had a different view on her snow days.

"You have that choice where you could go outside and play in it, but you could also stay inside and sit by the fire with a blanket and a warm cup of tea and read,"



Katherine Menz
Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School

Lomoro said. "That's perfect book weather."

In addition to reading, Lomoro opted to relax and watch the "Twilight" series.

"I've watched the entire series," Lomoro said.

Though the two differ in ideal snow day activities, they agree that the days at home can present some challenges in learning.

"I just think at home, I'm more relaxed and less likely to actually

continued on page 13

Moments at the Mount

MSM robotics teams leading the way

What began as one robotics team at Mount Saint Mary in 2009 has grown into a large four-team department. The need for growth has clearly been established.

The Mount robotics department, headed by Jessica Thompson, currently has its four teams ranked Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 9 in the state. In Thompson's four years, Robotics has gone to state twice.

The competition begins in September with the "Kick Off." The teams are presented with a problem and they have to brainstorm how to solve it. From there they come up with a computer-aided design and work all season to solve the problem.

Jack Ranck, a senior, talked about how robotics has helped him in life.

"Robotics tries to teach you how to work around other people to do your best," he said. "Not to make other people do worse."

"The teams rotate and it teaches you to work with all different types of people. It's definitely helped me at work as well. I don't work with the same coworkers or see the same kinds of customers so robotics has helped me learn to work with others."

"Every competition is different, every day is different. No team is weaker than the other. Everyone is equal and builds themselves up as a team."

New band clubs

This school year the new music teacher, Cullen Smith, has been bringing new life to the department by sponsoring new music clubs. Two opportunities for students to



Mount St. Mary Catholic High School robotics team. Photo provided.

be involved musically without having to be in a music class has been created with the clubs: Modern Band Club and Jazz Club.

"Jazz music has a rich history and many different elements that are very different from your traditional band or orchestra music," Smith said. "As someone who learned to be a better classical player through learning jazz music, I felt it was important to start a jazz club for our music students or anybody that could play an instrument/sing that isn't currently enrolled in any music class."

"In modern band, students are encouraged to perform at a level which they are comfortably able to perform at," Smith said, "while still being encouraged to try and grow as much as possible with music making."

3:30 p.m.

The Jazz Club meets from 3 to 3:30 p.m. Fridays in the music room.

Smith wants to work on rebuilding the music program at Mount Saint Mary. Many fine arts departments at schools have faced a dramatic decline due to the pandemic and haven't quite recovered.

"I want people to know they're

welcome to participate in the music

program at Mount Saint Mary

because it's just as much their

space as it is mine," Smith said.



Lucy Rosenhamer
Mount Saint Mary Catholic High School

Magic at The Mount Gala

Each year, Mount Saint Mary hosts a Gala to raise money for its students. This year's denim and diamonds themed gala was held on Feb. 7, an opportunity for members of the MSM community to join together for an evening of music, alumni and sponsor appreciation and good company.

"The first Magic at the Mount was hosted in the MSM auditorium with spaghetti as the main course made by parents and teachers," said Elle Muzny, the school's director of admissions.

This has now turned into one of the largest fundraising events at the school. The event has live and silent auctions. In years past, the live auction items included vacations, sporting event tickets and even a puppy. The items for the silent auction are donated from members of The Mount community. Some sports teams donate items or baskets for the auction. In previous years the baseball team auctioned off the first pitch at one of its games.

"One of the highlights of the evening is truly seeing our community come together to raise money for such a special place. A place that has been loved for 122 years," Muzny said. "It's definitely something many of us look forward to every year!"



Fr. Alex Kroll celebrated a school Mass for students at St. Mary Catholic School in Ponca City on Jan. 14. Some students received special scout medals after Mass. Fr. Alex blessed the medals. Photo Cindy Heidlage.



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Jobs Box

Music teacher - OKC

Christ the King Catholic School is seeking for a full-time music teacher for the 2026-2027 school year for grades kindergarten through 8th grade. Responsibilities include general music instruction for kindergarten - sixth grade students; elective classes for seventh and eighth grade; lead the school choir; support the musical and theater program; support the mission of the Catholic Church. Requirements: degree in music or education; certification in music education. Send cover letter and resume to Principal Jenny Richard at jrichard@ckschool.com.

Preschool teacher - OKC

Christ the King Catholic School is seeking a full-time preschool teacher for the 2026-2027 school year. Will be responsible for creating a nurturing and stimulating learning environment for young children, fostering their social, emotional and cognitive development. This role offers an opportunity to make a meaningful impact on children's lives through innovative teaching methods and personalized care, ensuring they develop essential skills for future success. Must have bachelor's degree in early childhood education and certification to teach in the State of Oklahoma. Send cover letter and resume to Principal Jenny Richard at jrichard@ckschool.com.

Fifth grade teacher - OKC

Christ the King Catholic School is seeking a full-time fifth grade

teacher for the 2026-2027 school year. Must have a bachelor's degree in education field or content area. Certification in elementary education and prior teaching experience is preferred but not required. Competitive pay and benefits and faculty and staff a supportive environment. Send cover letter and resume to Principal Jenny Richard at jrichard@ckschool.com.

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 resume to Brad.forshee@stjosephsok.org.

Director of Liturgy - OKC

St. Eugene Catholic Church is seeking a full-time director of liturgy who is a skilled organist, pianist and choral director. Will provide well-prepared liturgies with an emphasis on developing a welcoming, participatory and blended worship environment which reflects and embraces the diversity of St. Eugene parishioners. Must be well-versed and fluent in leading a wide range of traditional and contemporary worship styles, including Gregorian chant, classical choral repertoire.

toire, Gospel / African American Spirituals, and current praise and worship music. Practicing Catholic in good standing with a strong understanding of Catholic liturgy. Proficiency in both organ and piano required. Bachelor's degree in music, liturgy or related field preferred. Strong organizational, communication and leadership skills. Experience choral directing, in a parish liturgy or music ministry context, is highly preferred. Able to pass a background check and abide by archdiocesan Safe Environment requirements when working with children. Must be available to work weekends, evenings and holidays throughout the year, especially Christmas Eve/Day, New Year's Eve/Day, and Easter/Holy Week. Send cover letter and resume to manager@steugenes.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 confidence,

tially, 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 adenris@stjohn-catholic.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.

To see more job openings, go online to archokc.org/jobs-box. Find Catholic school jobs at archokc.schoolspring.com.

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

Who is Saint Valentine, whom many in the world commemorate as a patron saint for love and marriage?

The identity of this saint is not known. There are three or more possibilities that show up in lives of the saints or martyrologies. One has him as a priest in Rome who was martyred in the third century. Another has him as a bishop from a nearby city of Rome who, too, was a martyr. The third choice is a Saint Valentine who was a martyr among other martyrs in Africa.

Anthony DeStefano bases his children's book on the bishop version of Saint Valentine where he was known for encouraging marriage which for some reason was not allowed in Rome in the third century. There is a popular idea that Saint Valentine is a Christianized version of the pagan god Cupid.

DeStefano bases his story on Saint Valentine the bishop and adds an imaginative story where Saint Valentine was caught performing marriages by the Romans and was jailed for that offense. He would give out red paper hearts to those he married.

The story continues where we meet a boy with a limp, Marcus, and Marcella, the blind daughter of the jailer who is in charge of the jail where Saint Valentine has been detained. Marcus asks Saint Valentine for a miracle that Marcella could be able to see. Marcella's father did not like it that Marcus was friends with Marcella and tries to keep them apart.

Saint Valentine prays for the miracle and it happens. And all three became Christians. After this, the Roman Emperor had Saint Valentine executed for his faith. Marcus and Marcella get married as adults. The love that Saint Valentine encouraged continued to spread throughout the world.

Antonio Javier Caparo is the illustrator of this book. The colors that he uses are bright and inspiring. He creates images of Rome with its cobblestone streets and magnificent buildings. The illustrations of the people are appropriate for a children's book. The nature parts of the book are bright and colorful with clouds, flowers, trees and animal life.

This book is meant to be a gift book since there is a place in the front of the

Book review: Your Valentine

book for names of those giving the book, and to whom, with a line for the date. This children's book is recommended for 4-9 year olds, according to Amazon.

Saint Valentine is celebrated on Feb. 14 in the Catholic

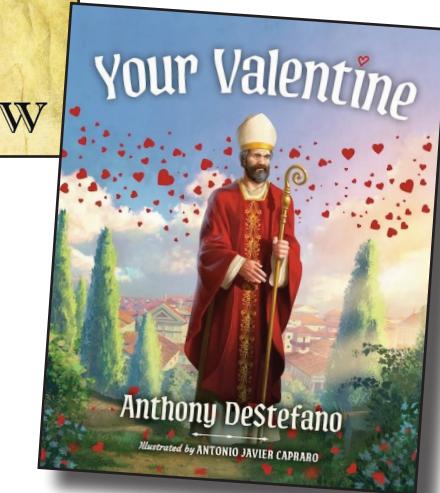
Church, Anglican and Lutheran churches and July 9 and 30 in the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

This book is highly recommended to those who want to give

a meaningful Valentine gift for children.

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

Book Review



■ DeStefano, Anthony. "Your Valentine." Manchester, N.H. Sophia Institute Press, 2025. ISBN 979-8-88911-556-4



GREEN TIE GAIA

02.21 2026

Saturday, February 21, 2026

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

5:30 p.m. Check-in | 6:00 p.m. Cocktail hour

With Special Emcee

Nick Gallo, Sports reporter

Supporting Sanctuary Women's Development Centers and other Catholic Charities programs

This Year's Awardees:

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Mosaic Award: City of Oklahoma City

Honorary Chairs: Gayle & Barney Semtner

Cost: \$50

QR code for ticket purchase

Sponsorships and tickets available at onecau.se/gtg2026

Questions? Please contact Tessa Traxler at ttraxler@ccaokc.org



INVITE ONE BACK

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?

NEW DATE

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!



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



SEMINAR SERIES: MARY, MODEL OF FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

MARCH 5, 12, 19

6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

Discover the richness of Marian doctrine and gain a deeper understanding of the dogmas. Mary was the first to follow Jesus and is honored as a model of faith and obedience. Come and learn more about her life and her role in salvation history.

Catholic Pastoral Center
7501 Northwest Expressway, Oklahoma City
St. Peter's Basilica
Light Refreshment Provided

Cost: \$50

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altuminstitute.org/discipleship/sse

For more information: (405) 720-2759
afraire@archokc.org

Seminar Series will be presented by: Troy Bodman



Seminar Series: Mary's Heart Revealed through the Rosary

Explore the rosary as a prayer that leads us into Mary's heart and closer to Christ. This series will deepen your understanding of Marian devotion and offer practical ways to make the rosary a source of grace in daily life.

APRIL 9, 16, 23, 30

6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

Catholic Pastoral Center
7501 Northwest Expressway, Oklahoma City
St. Peter's Basilica
Light Refreshment Provided

Cost: \$50

QR code for ticket purchase

Seminar Series will be presented by: Amber Johnson

altuminstitute.org/discipleship/sse

For more information: (405) 720-2759
afraire@archokc.org

Lánzate a lo más Profundo
Luke 5:4

Cuaresma: Un camino hacia el amor del Padre

Este artículo fue publicado anteriormente en la edición del 26 de febrero de 2023 de Sooner Catholic.

Hemos comenzado nuestro camino de Cuaresma hacia la Pascua. Es un camino espiritual, un camino de fe, pero el destino no es un destino físico. No veremos un cambio en la geografía o el lugar cuando lleguemos, pero el camino es totalmente real. Si perseveramos en el camino, nos moveremos de una manera vieja de relacionarnos con Dios a una nueva.

Este camino de Cuaresma es muchas veces representado como un caminar en el desierto, en recuerdo de los 40 años que Moisés y los israelitas pasaron en el desierto después de haber sido liberados de la esclavitud de Egipto.

Esta imagen del desierto es también evidente en el Evangelio del Primer Domingo de Cuaresma, el cual nos cuenta cómo Jesús fue llevado al desierto por el Espíritu Santo. Ahi, fue tentado por el maligno durante 40 días, en los cuales Jesús puso en evidencia su naturaleza divina y sin pecado, al mantenerse firme y unido al amor de su Padre Celestial.

Como lo dice el Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica, "La Iglesia se une todos los años, durante los cuarenta días de la Gran Cuaresma, al Misterio de Jesús en el desierto" (CIC 540).

Este camino cuaresmal es un tiempo de oración y de dar limosna, pero también es un tiempo de penitencia, una palabra que muchas veces tiene connotaciones negativas.

La penitencia es simplemente una conversión continua e intencional de nuestra vida, apartándonos de confiar en nosotros mismos

para depender más profundamente de Dios.

El desierto ha sido por mucho tiempo asociado con la penitencia, debido a que los primeros cristianos dejaban las ciudades, con sus valores mundanos, para irse a un lugar desértico para vivir ahí el Evangelio de manera radical. En el desierto, nos hacemos dolorosamente conscientes de nuestra vulnerabilidad y dependencia de Dios.

La Cuaresma es un tiempo para que nos adentremos en el desierto y experimentemos la misma dolorosa conciencia de nuestra propia vulnerabilidad y dependencia del amor de Jesús.

Realizamos este camino con Jesús, y acompañados por otros miembros de la Iglesia, siguiendo juntos los pasos de muchos cristianos a lo largo de los siglos que han hecho este camino antes que nosotros.

En nuestro deseo de santidad, algunas veces nos acercamos a la Cuaresma confiando en nosotros mismos y no creciendo en nuestra dependencia de Dios. Usamos la Cuaresma como un concurso de levantamiento de pesas espiritual, en el cual tratamos de demostrarle a Dios, a nosotros mismos y a los demás, lo que somos capaces de hacer. Al igual que Jesús, seremos tentados en el desierto, y esta actitud puede ser una tentación que se convertirá en obstáculo en nuestro crecimiento espiritual.

Entonces, ¿cómo debemos vivir la Cuaresma? Comencemos con los tres elementos bíblicos tradicionales de oración, ayuno y limosna. Pero si estas buscando dirección en el comienzo del tiempo de Cuaresma, te sugiero que te preguntes: ¿Cuál es el más grande obstáculo que

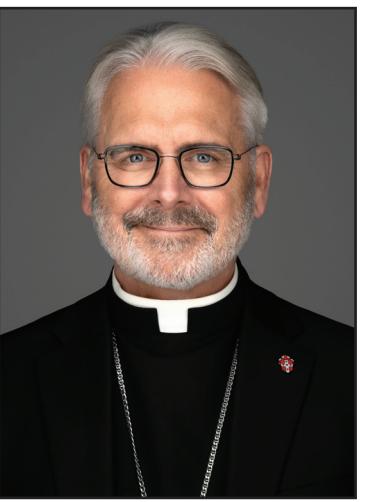
debo vencer para poder aceptar y depender del amor de Dios? ¿Es un pecado en particular? ¡Si es así, ayuna de ese pecado!

La Cuaresma es un camino que nos lleva más allá de los obstáculos que nos mantienen atrapados en hábitos, relaciones o cosas que no son Dios. Podemos comenzar nuestro camino cuaresmal pidiéndole a Dios, en fe, que remueva ese obstáculo. Le podemos también pedir a Dios que nos muestre cuáles otras prácticas de oración, penitencia y limosna nos llevarán a dejar de confiar en nosotros mismos y depender más profundamente del amor de Dios.

Con estas recomendaciones en mente, recuerda también ir ligero de equipaje. Algunas veces menos, es más. No necesitamos hacer demasiado para demostrar nuestro punto. Acompañados por Dios y bajo su dirección, podemos identificar, poner atención y buscar ir más allá de las cosas que dificultan nuestro progreso.

El objetivo de la Cuaresma no debería ser un crecimiento en la confianza en nosotros mismos, sino crecer en la confianza en Dios.

Durante estos días de Cuaresma, le pido a Jesús que nos dé a cada uno de nosotros la gracia de superar los obstáculos que no nos permiten disfrutar el amor de Dios en su totalidad. Haré oración por ustedes, por favor, oren por mí.



Arzobispo Pablo S. Coakley

PESCADO FRITO de Cuaresma

El Consejo 16214 de los Caballeros de Colón de la Iglesia Católica San Pablo Apóstol organizará un pescado frito de Cuaresma de 5 a 6:30 p. m. los días 20 y 27 de febrero, y 6, 13, 20 y 27 de marzo en 3901 S. Sunnyleane Rd. en Del City. La donación sugerida es de 12 dólares por plato. Se puede comer allí o pedir comida para llevar.

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Ignacio Ruiz, enseñando con el ejemplo: construyendo puentes multi-culturales

By Bella Gutiérrez
The Sooner Catholic

de Español y maestro el área de tecnología.

"Yo estaba sorprendido porque, tal como le dije a ella, 'Vine aquí para estar contigo,'" dijo él.

Ella respondió: "Tienes mucho más para ofrecer."

"Y aquí estoy," dijo él.

En efecto, Ruiz fue contratado por Mount Saint Mary. Y él está activo, enseñando español, aplicaciones de computación, televisión/transmisiones y medios de comunicación.

En sus comienzos, se dió cuenta de que los estudiantes con herencia Hispana estaban siendo asignados en clases regulares de español.

"Esto me llevó a comenzar una asignatura de español para estudiantes de ya tenían noción del idioma español para ayudarlos con el lenguaje y, también para crecer y estar orgullosos de otros aspectos de sus cultura," él dijo, agregando que todo el material está vinculado con la fe católica y los valores fundamentales de Mount Saint Mary.

En San Antonio, trabajó para un canal de televisión católico y luego dió sus primeros pasos como maestro de adolescentes en una escuela local católica, donde les enseñó a usar cámaras y a operar equipos.

Después de 30 años enseñando en Texas, se mudó a Oklahoma para estar con su madre, María Pérez de Ruiz, después del fallecimiento de su padre.

Un día, su madre lo sorprendió, mostrándole un aviso en el periódico Sooner Catholic anunciando que la escuela secundaria Mount Saint Mary estaba buscando un maestro

"El apoya la misión de la escue-

la y desarrolla una fuerte relación con sus estudiantes, y los inspira a ellos a buscar la excelencia en su trabajo académico y en su vida espiritual," dijo Cain.

Luke Ranck, un estudiante del último año, dijo que aprender otro idioma, como español, le permitirá comunicarse mejor con otros en su vida como profesional, o con sus pares de otros países en el futuro por venir.

Las clases con Ruiz, dijo Ranck, son creativas e interesantes.

"El semestre pasado, por ejemplo, tuvimos que hacer un video de nosotros mismos explicando la Inteligencia Artificial, pros y contras, y los efectos en las redes sociales en adolescentes como nosotros," dijo Ranck, "y cómo esto está afectando el día a día en nuestras vidas. Lo hicimos solo en español y esta fue realmente una gran experiencia."

Para Danika Burgdoff aprender acerca del Camino de Santiago en Europa abrió sus ojos a una de las más famosas peregrinaciones en Europa, con España como punto central.

"Aprendiendo acerca del Camino me di cuenta que esto no es solo España o español como lenguaje," dijo Burgdoff, "es comprender mejor la cultura que hay detrás de esto."

Una vez en Oklahoma, Ruiz se involucró también en el Instituto de Cultura Hispana Beato Stanley Rother en la Iglesia Católica San José en Norman, fundado por sus padres en 2007 junto con algunos profesores de la Universidad de Oklahoma, incluyendo a Luis Cortest, y el Diácono Angelo Lombardo y su esposa, Annie, quienes vieron la necesidad del clero de aprender español. Y ahora, como un servicio a la comunidad, esto no es solo para el ministerio, sino también para otras personas interesadas en aprender acerca de esto.

"Yo disfruto encontrar nuevos temas y lecciones para enseñar y explorar, de manera que otros puedan ver la belleza de mi cultura y que reconozcan que esto no es uno, sino más de 20 distintas cul-



Ignacio Ruiz en su aula del instituto Católico Mount St. Mary Catholic High School de Oklahoma City. Foto Bella Gutiérrez/Sooner Catholic.

turas que se cobijan bajo la figura de la cultura Hispana," dijo Ruiz, actual coordinador.

"Cuando yo comparto la cultura Hispana, yo comparto el pasado, las raíces de ser hispano, y ahora nosotros adaptamos la cultura Hispana para encajar en este entorno. Tenemos una cultura estadounidense y un estilo de vida que nos une, pero dentro de esa cultura, podemos compartir nuestro pasado y nuestra cultura," declaró.

"Esto enriquece nuestra cultura americana. Pienso que entendiendo a otros, Podemos entenderlos a nosotros mismos."

Libby Gillett ha estado participando en el Instituto por 13 años. Ella dijo que ve a Ruiz animando a otros, que si es posible aprender otro idioma.

"Cada martes él presenta interesantes tópicos profundizando en la cultura, gastronomía, música, bailes, arte, historia y mucho más relacionado con el mundo hispano," dijo Gillett.

Bolivia, Perú, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, México y España son los países de habla Hispana que Gillett ha visitado.

"He hecho muchos amigos en estos países y nada de esto hubiera sido posible sin la influencia del instituto y los esfuerzos continuos de Ignacio," dijo ella.

Para Ruiz, todo esto forma parte de su misión.

"Me esfuerzo para ser un ejemplo, no sólo como instructor de los estudiantes, pero también en la fe," dijo. "Les muestro a ellos como, a veces, esto puede ser gratificante y difícil."

"Pero la parte importante es perseverar, no perder la confianza en Dios, no perder la fe, no perder ese espíritu de perseverancia en el camino hacia el Cielo."

Bella Gutiérrez es escritora independiente para el Sooner Catholic.

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Briefs

World Youth Day 2027

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City invites youth and young adults to join in on a pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2027 from July 30 to Aug. 10, 2027, in Seoul, South Korea. Thousands of young Catholics from around the globe will unite for prayer, worship and fellowship. Imagine Pope Leo celebrating Mass, sleeping under the stars and exploring the rich Catholic heritage of Korea, all while encountering Christ in a powerful way. Verso Ministries is partnering with the archdiocese to provide a comprehensive pilgrimage package that includes: round-trip flights from Oklahoma City; accommodations; WYD registration; spiritual preparation resources. Fundraising support is available through Verso's Fundraising Kit for Youth and Young Adults, packed with practical strategies, sample letters and event ideas. Learn more and reserve a spot at versoministries.com/departures/wyd-seoul-2027-archdiocese-of-oklahoma-city.

Camp registration open

Registration is open for the 2025 Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp season. campguadalupe.org/summcamp

Come and see

The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita will host a come and see weekend Feb. 27-March 1 at the IHM Motherhouse, 3550 N. 167th St. W., Colwich, Kansas. Single women between ages 18-35 who are discern-

ing or wanting to learn more about religious life can RSVP with Sr. Marie Therese at (316) 722-9316; vocations@sistershmofwichita.org. Visit sistershmofwichita.org.

Holiness and Marriage retreat

A Holiness and Marriage retreat presented by Fr. Peter Shults, O.S.B. will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Feb. 14 at the St. Gregory's Abbey Conference Center, 1900 W. MacArthur St. in Shawnee. Attendees must pre-register by e-mailing retreats@monksok.org, via the link at monksok.org or call (405) 875-5656. Cost is \$30 prepaid or \$35 at the door. Lunch included.

Valentine dinner, dance

A Valentine dinner and dance is set for 6-10 p.m. Feb. 14 at St. John Nepomuk Catholic School gym, 600 Garth Brooks Blvd. in Yukon. Tickets \$30. Event for people 21 years of age and up. Catered dinner, beer, wine and dancing.

Valentine's Day dance

The Marriage Encounter Group of St. Benedict Catholic Church

in Shawnee will hold a Valentine's Day dance from 7 to 11 p.m. Feb. 14 at the Benedict Center of the church, 632 N. Kickapoo. Tickets are \$20 per person or \$40 a couple if purchased in advance, or \$25 and \$50 at the door. Cost includes unlimited hors d'oeuvres and beverage buffet. Attendees may bring their own wine or beer. Free nursery will be provided. All attendees are eligible for a drawing for a free

get-away package at the Grand Casino and Hotel Resort. Proceeds will go towards sponsoring a couple to attend a future Marriage Encounter Weekend. Advanced tickets may be purchased after all weekend Masses, by contacting the office at (405) 275-0001 or online at stbenedict.us.

The forge

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

ACP luncheon

Assembly of Catholic Professionals

luncheon, 11 a.m., Feb. 19, Petroleum Club, 100 N. Broadway Ave., Oklahoma City. The guest speaker is Elizabeth Lev, art historian, author and internationally known speaker on Christian art and architecture. cfook.org/acp.

Fish Fry

The St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church Knights of Columbus Council 16214 will host a Lenten fish fry from 5 to 6:30 p.m. on Feb. 20 and 27; and March 6, 13, 20 and 27 at 3901 S. Sunnyside Rd. in Del City. Suggested donation cost is \$12 per meal. Dine in or take out.

Green Tie Gala

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 onecau.se/gtg2026.

Women's Vocations Brunch

Women 14-40 years old are invit-

ed to a vocations brunch at 11 a.m. Feb. 22 at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave. in Oklahoma City. Contact rachelsandoval2020@gmail.com.

Zoom and see

The Dominican Sisters of Peace will be hosting a free Zoom and See retreat from 5 to 7 p.m. (CT) Feb. 27 and from noon to 2:30 p.m. (CT) Feb. 28, focusing on the Lenten journey. The theme is "Beyond Giving Things Up: A Lenten Discernment Retreat" and is open to single Catholic women, ages 18-45 who are contemplating a religious life. Visit oppeace.org/become-a-sister or contact Sr. Ana Gonzalez at (475) 224-0519 or ana.gonzalez@oppeace.org.

March Seminar Series

The Altum Institute will present a Seminar Series - Mary, Model of Faith and Obedience, from 6:30 to 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. The presenter is Troy Bodman. Cost \$50. Contact (405) 720-2759; afraire@archokc.org. altuminstitute.org/discipleship/seminar-series.

The St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church Knights of Columbus Council 16214 will host a Lenten fish fry 5-6:30 p.m. on Feb. 20 and 27; and March 6, 13, 20 and 27 at 3901 S. Sunnyside Rd. in Del City. Suggested donation cost is \$12 per meal. Dine in or take out.

Lenten Fish Fry

5-6:30 p.m.

Feb. 20 and 27

March 6, 13, 20 and 27

DINE IN OR
TAKE OUT

St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church
3901 S. Sunnyside Rd., Del City



Calendar

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

February

8	Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time.	14	Valentine dinner, dance, 6-10 p.m., St. John Nepomuk Catholic School gym, 600 Garth Brooks Blvd., Yukon.	19	Assembly of Catholic Professionals luncheon, 11 a.m., Petroleum Club, 100 N. Broadway Ave., Oklahoma City. Visit cfook.org/acp .	21	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 .
10	Feast of St. Scholastica.	14	Valentine's Day dance, 7-11 p.m., St. Benedict Catholic Church, Benedict Center, 632 N. Kickapoo, Shawnee.	19	Summit, 7 p.m., The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave., Oklahoma City. An evening of adoration, confessions, praise and worship every third Thursday of the month.	21	The Lay Missionaries of Charity meeting. Contact Toni Harrelson, (405) 341-2199.
11	Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.	16	Presidents' Day.	20	Friday after Ash Wednesday.	21	The Oklahoma City Community of Secular Carmelites meeting, Little Flower Catholic Church, 1125 S. Walker Ave., Oklahoma City. Anyone interested in deepening prayer life with community support, call William Ginn, (405) 737-2024.
11	Catholic War Veterans USA Post No. 168 meeting, 5 p.m., Sunnyside Family Reception Center, 3900 S.E. 29, Del City. Mass at 6:15 p.m. Contact Ronald Sandhop, CWV Post 168 Adjutant, (405) 640-0450, resandhop@gmail.com .	17	The Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order.	20	Lenten fish fry, 5-6:30 p.m., St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church, 3901 S. Sunnyside Rd., Del City.	21	Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Green Tie Gala, 6 p.m. Feb. 21, National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, 1700 NE 63 St., Oklahoma City.
14	Feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius.	17	Monthly Novena to the Infant Jesus of Prague begins.	21	Feast of St. Peter Damian.		
14	St. Valentine's Day.	17	Serra Club of Oklahoma City meeting, 11 a.m., Catholic Charities, 1232 N. Classen Blvd., Oklahoma City. Visit serraokc.org .	21	Oklahoma Catholic Women's Conference, 8:30 a.m., Oklahoma City Convention Center, 100 Mick Cornett Dr.		
14	Holiness and Marriage retreat, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Feb. 14, St. Gregory's Abbey Conference Center, 1900 W. MacArthur St., Shawnee.	17	Catholic in Recovery meeting, 7 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 1901 N.W. 18, Oklahoma City.	21	Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Green Tie Gala, 6 p.m. Feb. 21, National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, 1700 NE 63 St., Oklahoma City.		
14	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 .	18	Ash Wednesday.	21	Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Green Tie Gala, 6 p.m. Feb. 21, National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, 1700 NE 63 St., Oklahoma City.		
19	Thursday after Ash Wednesday.						

Young Adult and Campus Ministries Office

The Young Adult and Campus Ministries office holds a variety of events to get OKC young adults and college students involved with their community.

Annual Events Include:

- Theology on Tap
- OKCCYA Softball League
- Archbishop's Young Adult Cookout

[@okccatholic](http://okccatholic.org) OKC Catholic Young Adults

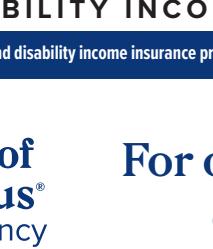
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‘Leave Me Broken ...’

In Central Mexico, a sculpture offers a Lenten reflection

By Fr. Christopher Hai Tran

In January 2026, I went on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe Empress of the Americas Patroness of Latin America Queen of Mexico. There I also visited “Cristo Roto” (Broken Christ), which is a statue of a Broken Christ.

The statue is purposefully broken and it is a popular pilgrimage site in the state of Aguascalientes, where the majority of the population is Roman Catholic. Basically, the purpose behind the statue can be summed up in a plaque at the foot of the statue featuring a core message.

“Leave Me Broken ...”

The soul of Mexico’s Cristo Roto in Aguascalientes comes from its message of solidarity with the suffering, represented by its broken form symbolizing the oppressed – not a complaint, but a loving invitation from Christ himself. The original text and its more complete and accurate translation carry a deeper meaning:

Original English text: “Leave Me Broken. I want you to see me broken. Remember that many of your brothers are like me, broken, beaten, indigent, oppressed, sick, mutilated ... Without arms, because they don’t have possibilities or a way to work; without feet, because their paths have been blocked; without a cross, because their honor has been taken from them, both their honor and their prestige. All forget them and turn their backs to them, although they are like me ... A broken Christ.”

Around the world, there are countless magnificent statues of Christ, often depicted with perfect beauty, in a posture of blessing or triumph over death. But on a small island in the middle of the Plutarco Elias Calles reservoir in San José de Gracia, Aguascalientes, Mexico, the sculpture leaves anyone who beholds it speechless because of its unique form.

This is not an unfinished or damaged work of art. Standing a towering 25 meters tall (28 meters including the base), this statue of Christ deliberately bears horrific wounds. He is missing his right arm, his right leg and there is no cross for him to lean on. This intentional “unconventional” appearance is not a symbol of failure, but rather a question, a silent and profound sermon that attracts thousands of pilgrims and tourists every year who come to listen to the message resonating from this brokenness.

The story of El Cristo Roto is intrinsically linked to the history of the town of San José de Gracia itself. In the mid-20th century, the old town was submerged to build the Plutarco

Elias Calles dam, forcing the inhabitants to relocate to a new area. This event symbolized a

to leave the broken form as it was. The image of the wounded Christ was not meant to be “repaired,” but rather to reflect the countless broken and suffering lives of humanity.

Inspired by that, the project to build a giant statue of the Broken Christ was born, as a tribute and remembrance to those who have lost their homeland, and more broadly, to all those who are suffering throughout the world. This sculpture, made of steel and reinforced concrete, was completed and became a unique symbol of faith in Mexico.

This message is powerful to the viewer’s consciousness. The statue not only represents the suffering of Jesus on the cross, but also embodies all the suffering of the world.

The loss of Christ’s arm is not meant for us to beg for a miraculous healing for him, but for us to become his “arm,” reaching out to help those who are no longer able to work, those who are marginalized in society.

The feet of Christ are meant to remind us of those who are bound in chains, those who cannot walk their own path, and to urge us to become the “feet” that support them.

The face is no longer intact, and the cross, a symbol of those who have been humiliated and stripped of their dignity, is also missing. The statue calls upon us to restore their lost honor.

El Cristo Roto challenges faith. Instead of looking up at an all-powerful, perfect God in heaven, the statue forces us to confront the painful reality of the world. It affirms that Christ is present in the ragged, sick and oppressed people we encounter every day. Turning our backs on them is also turning our backs on God.

During this Holy Lenten season, I invite you to join me in meditating on “A Broken Christ,” reflecting on his ultimate sacrifice, on the physical and spiritual suffering he endured for humanity, so that we may recognize his boundless love, his weakness, and his strength. And thereby find inner peace, compassion and a desire to live a holier life, united with him in the Paschal mystery.

Ultimately, El Cristo Roto is an affirmation: Faith is not about escaping from harsh reality, but about courageously confronting brokenness – both our own and that of others – and finding God precisely in those wounds.

Father Christopher Hai Tran is pastor at Saint Wenceslaus Catholic Church in Prague and rector of the National Shrine of the Infant Jesus of Prague.



“Cristo Roto” (Broken Christ) statue in Mexico. Photo provided.

“breaking,” a loss of their homeland.

The direct inspiration for this statue is said to have come from an old wooden crucifix that a priest had acquired. The crucifix was also in a broken and damaged state, missing hands and feet. When he considered having it restored, the priest received a divine revelation: