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Penance

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Life



# The Catholic Lighthouse

*The Cradle of Texas Immigration*



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FEBRUARY 2021

## Teachers celebrate milestones

**JANET JONES**

*The Catholic Lighthouse*

Gwen Hall and Our Lady of Victory School literally grew up together. She was a student there when the school was still adding grades. She was in the school's first seventh-grade class and was in the first class of eighth-graders to graduate.

In 1971, after finishing college, Sister Emilie Eilers, IWBS, was principal and offered her a job at OLV teaching Texas history. And the rest is OLV history as she helped shape the school in

*See Teacher celebrate, pg. 9*

## WALKING FOR UNBORN LIVES



*Several hundred people gathered at DeLeon Plaza to participate in the Candlelight March for Life on Jan. 28. As they proceeded to Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, they prayed the rosary together for the protection of the unborn and an end to abortion.*

**JANET JONES**

*The Catholic Lighthouse*

VICTORIA -- Laura Reyes, heavy with her fourth boy child (expected in about five weeks), told a crowd of hundreds Jan. 28 about her child in heaven.

She was the featured speaker at the 34th annual Candlelight March for Life in Victoria. The marchers gathered at DeLeon Plaza and prayed the rosary in a procession that ended on the steps of Our Lady of Sorrows church where she spoke.

"Why on earth would I want you to know my business?" Reyes said. "Because God deserves all the glory. ... I'd be a fool not to share the miracle He has done in my life."

What she shared was a heart-breaking story about herself as a teenager who took up with a man in his mid-20s -- someone who took advantage of her innocence, in fact took her innocence, and got her pregnant. Her family decided that abortion was the best solution to get her young life back on track, she said, but it was just the opposite.

She described the procedure in detail and the images that haunted her. "It was the most horrible and painful experience of my life." Her life continued to unravel after that. She called it "living in the dumpster of sin."

Reyes was raised in Columbia where all of those events took place.

*See Walking for unborn lives, pg. 7*

## Local podcasts can bring edification to a busy day



**JANET JONES**

*The Catholic Lighthouse*

"Everybody could use a little Father Gary in their marriage," according to Justin Reyes, director of Family Evangelization for the Diocese of Victoria.

The "Marriage Moment" is a podcast that features pearls of wisdom from the Father Gary Janak, a licensed therapist with a passion for marriage ministry. It is one of the newest offerings from the Office of Family Evangelization. Reyes rolled out that along with other podcasts recently to help feed the

*See Local podcasts, pg. 16*

*The Very Rev. Gary Janak, a licensed therapist with a passion for marriage ministry, records a "Marriage Moment" podcast.*





## Religious orders give light to path we are all called to follow

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

St. John Paul II dedicated the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Feb. 2) as the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life. On this day, 40 days after Christmas, we celebrate the revealing of the baby Jesus as a “Light” to all the nations, and the joyous testimony of Simeon and Anna that God is faithful to His people.

In Victoria, we will be celebrating a special Mass at the cathedral on Feb. 7, thanking God for the gift of consecrated women who serve in our diocese. Members of the following religious orders offer their testimony to the “Light” every day: Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament, Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Vietnamese Dominican Sisters, and the Carmelites of Mary Ever Virgin.

Each of these religious orders has a unique history in its foundation and service, and a specific “charism” (gift) of service to

### A Shepherd’s Message

By Bishop Brendan Cahill



God’s people. One thing I’ve learned over the years is that if you ask a member of a religious order about their charism or their founder or foundress, you should be prepared for a long answer!

While each order is distinct in its foundational gift, the members of each religious order, both men and women, offer their personal testimony through vows to live the evangelical virtues. The Catechism quotes the teaching of the Second Vatican Council about religious life:

*“Christ proposes the evangelical coun-*

*sels, in their great variety, to every disciple. The perfection of charity to which all the faithful are called, entails for those who freely follow the call to consecrated life the obligation of practicing chastity in celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, poverty and obedience. It is the profession of these counsels within a permanent state of life recognized by the Church, that characterizes the life consecrated to God.” (CCC 915).*

The “Light” that we honor in the consecrated women in our diocese hopefully inspires each of us, a disciple of Jesus seek-

ing to follow this path, to live more fully the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. As the beautiful tradition of our church teaches, we are all called to be holy, spirit-filled saints.

Whatever our state in life, we also are preparing to enter into our annual season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17. It may be a good reflection to ask ourselves how we practice these virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience in our own lives, and teach about them in our families.

This Year of the Family has been a special blessing in our diocese. May we continue to focus on our shared prayer, our time at meals, and our time playing together; and may all we do bring us closer to the merciful love of Jesus, the “Light” to the nations.

May God bless you and your families with the gifts of peace and joy; let’s keep each other in prayer,

+Brendan

## Battle with COVID-19 magnifies human connection

### BISHOP MICHAEL SIS

*Special to the Lighthouse*

The coronavirus had been spreading in our area for eight months. I was grateful to God for the gift of health, allowing me to continue serving our people in a time of serious pandemic and social turmoil. Here in San Angelo, we had long been planning a race relations forum, involving community leaders, government officials, university spokespersons, and pastors of various churches. I had great hopes for its potential in confronting racism. Nevertheless, as the number of cases spiked, I decided to postpone the event.

The morning after the event would have taken place, I began to feel feverish at my office. I packed up my laptop and headed directly to the drive-through rapid test facility. A few hours later, they contacted me with the good news of a negative result, saying I could now return to work. However, I did not trust the result, because there was still no explanation for my persistent fever. I kept a self-quarantine just to be on the safe side. I looked for a PCR test and managed to find one at a local pharmacy. Two days later, the pharmacy sent me the fateful email. Before I opened it, I prayed, “Lord, may your holy will be done. Give me the grace to face whatever the result is.” The note from the pharmacy included the word written in red — positive.

My struggle against the coronavirus

raged on for days. I don’t recall ever in my life having a fever that lasted so long. I had a strong desire to avoid hospitalization if at all possible, since hospital resources here in West Texas are stretched so thin. I took vitamins and medications like they were going out of style. I made several new fascinating discoveries — like the fact that the unflavored Pedialyte tastes a whole lot better than the flavored kind. I slept more than ever before, because the fever was just wearing my body out.

Going through day after day of illness put me in touch with my own human weakness and vulnerability. It helped me to identify more closely with the vulnerability of others around the world, including those who are sick, elderly, homeless, in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, refugee camps, and in hospice care. In my illness I felt more deeply connected with the human family everywhere. I embraced a sense of solidarity with those who are in pain, those who care for the sick, those grieving loss, and those



Bishop Michael Sis

who feel fear and anxiety.

It is hard to be productive when you are in quarantine, especially if you are battling illness. There are several projects I was working on that have been delayed. This is frustrating, because I like to get things done. Nevertheless, it is a reminder that the core of our value as human beings is not in our productivity, but rather in the fact that we are made in the image and likeness of God. Our “being” is ultimately more important than our “doing.”

I was sustained by the prayers of many of you, and I am very thankful for that. I also found much consolation in the prayer of the rosary and meditation on the Psalms from the Daily Office. Since I have a chapel in my house, I celebrated the Mass every day, which was the greatest source of grace. In the Eucharist, I was able to pray in union with all of you and with the entire Mystical Body of Christ.

In the depths of my illness, with coughing, fever, and a tightness in my chest, and worried about possible lung complications, I felt very close to Jesus. I recalled what I had read years ago in various scholarly studies that, as Jesus hung on the Cross, one of the many things that he suffered was difficulty in breathing and a lack of sufficient oxygen. Jesus felt the pain and struggle of not being able to get enough air. Therefore, our COVID-19 breathing difficulties can connect us to Jesus. So, in my prayer, I asked Jesus

to join my illness to his experience on the Cross, so I could share in some small way in his redemptive suffering for the good of humanity.

In the midst of my coronavirus experience, on a day when I was not feeling well at all, I was on a teleconference with a few old friends. One of them made a statement that struck me as a profoundly Christian insight. She said, “Make sure to pray for us while you’re sick, because the prayers of those who are suffering are especially powerful.” She inspired me to offer extra prayers of intercession during my illness for the needs of people everywhere.

Another source of Christian wisdom that helped me with my own case of COVID-19 comes from the preaching of Pope Francis in his Extraordinary Moment of Prayer in an empty St. Peter’s Square on March 27, 2020. He said that, as the human race struggles with the coronavirus pandemic, we must remember the experience of his disciples when Jesus calmed the violent storm on the Sea of Galilee in Mark 4:35-41. The waves were breaking over the boat, and it was taking on water. Jesus was fast asleep in the stern, trusting in the Father. His disciples woke him in their fear and anxiety, crying out, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” Jesus immediately calmed the storm and reminded them to have faith.

*See Battle with COVID-19, pg. 3*

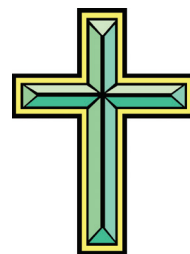


## Bishop Cahill's Schedule

<b>February</b>	<b>18</b>	2 p.m. Blessing of Bethlehem Maternity Home
<b>7</b>		9 a.m. World Day for Consecrated Life Mass, Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, Victoria
	<b>20</b>	Mass with the Carmelites, Meyersville
<b>8</b>		2:30 p.m. Communities of Faith meeting, virtual
		5 p.m. Diocesan Liturgical Commission meeting, Chancery
<b>9</b>		9:30 a.m. Legion of Mary Praesidium meeting, Cathedral Center
<b>11</b>		1 p.m. Pension Board meeting, Chancery
<b>12</b>		8 a.m. School Mass and visit with St. Michael Catholic School, Weimar
<b>13</b>		Mass with the Carmelites, Meyersville
<b>14</b>		11 a.m. Confirmation Mass for Sacred Heart, Flatonia
<b>16</b>		6:30 a.m. Relevant Radio interview call in
		9:30 a.m. Legion of Mary Praesidium meeting, Cathedral Center
		Noon Mass with Missionary Catechists
		6 p.m. Adult Confirmation at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, Victoria
	<b>21</b>	11:30 a.m. Mass for Scouts at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory, Victoria
	<b>22</b>	6 p.m. Diocesan School Advisory Council meeting, Chancery
	<b>23</b>	10 a.m. Kenedy Executive Committee meeting, Corpus Christi
	<b>25</b>	Noon Lunch with IWBS Sisters, Incarnate Word Convent
	<b>26</b>	8:15 a.m. School Mass and visit at St. Phillip the Apostle, El Campo
	<b>27</b>	Mass with the Carmelites, Meyersville
	<b>28</b>	11 a.m. Confirmation Mass for Sacred Heart, Flatonia
	<b>March</b>	
	<b>2</b>	1:30 p.m. Seminary Board meeting at St. Mary's Seminary, Houston
	<b>5</b>	3 p.m. Holy Hour, Chancery
	<b>5-7</b>	TX State Council KofC Diocesan Deputy Meeting, San Antonio

Please remember in prayer the priests of the Diocese of Victoria, who died during the month of February:

Rev. Daniel O'Brien	02/07/2008
Rev. Msgr. Casimir Jarzombek	02/15/2019
Rev. Eugene Janson	02/17/2005
Rev. Brian Crookes	02/23/2003
Rev. Msgr. Vaclav J. Bily	02/23/1990
Rev. Msgr. Victor Schmidtzinsky	02/25/2005
Rev. Jerome Caponi	02/27/2009



"Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace."



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Battle with COVID-19  
magnifies human connection

Continued from pg. 2

When Pope Francis reflected on this Gospel passage, he pointed out several things that help us in our struggle with the coronavirus: We are in the same boat together, and Jesus is right here in the boat with us. He does care about us. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. We need to trust in him. God turns to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. We are to embrace hardships as our way of embracing the Cross of Jesus.

My case of COVID has led me to place more trust in God. It has been an exercise in faith. The letter to the Hebrews says, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen" (Heb 11:1). We cannot see God, but he is here with us. He will never abandon us. He might not spare us from catching the virus, but he gives us the grace to face it more serenely.

The challenges of this disease also remind me of our Christian belief in eternal life. As human beings we are saddened by the reality of death, but as Christians we are consoled by the promise of immortality. Our only true home is in heaven. Ultimately, we are citizens of heaven, and our hearts are restless until they rest there with God. God has created us with an inborn orientation toward our home in heaven, and we will never be completely fulfilled until we get there, and see God face to face. In heaven, there will be no more tears, no more illness, no more

pain, no more loneliness, no more pain of separation, and no more death.

Knowing that some of my co-workers in the diocesan offices also tested positive for COVID-19 around the same time that I did, I am sorry if I may have unknowingly spread the virus to them before I was symptomatic, and for any negative impact this has had on their families. I pray for healing of all those impacted by this pandemic. As I look back, I am very relieved that we did not hold the race relations forum in San Angelo on that day when I unknowingly had the virus. Otherwise, it could have become a real super-spreader event.

I am deeply grateful to those who have helped me in my battle with the coronavirus. These include the ones who reached out, those who dropped things off on my front porch, those priests who covered the Masses I had been scheduled to celebrate, those people who called and emailed, and the many who offered prayers to God on my behalf. Those prayers have made a tremendous positive difference. I am also thankful for all those who work in medical facilities and pharmacies. They face the danger of infection every day, yet they courageously fight on, helping others to heal. I am forever grateful to you all.

We are in this boat together. We must row together and place our trust in God.

## In Memoriam

## Newly ordained Deacon Kotzur passes away

Deacon Jerome George Kotzur, of Victoria, entered into eternal rest on Friday, January 8, 2021. Jerome was born on January 20, 1958 in Karnes City, Texas to the late Sixtus and Mary Ann Kotzur. He graduated from Stroman High School in



Deacon  
Jerome Kotzur

1976. After high school Jerome went on to graduate from Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. Among his proudest accomplishments was being a member of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of 1980. Jerome

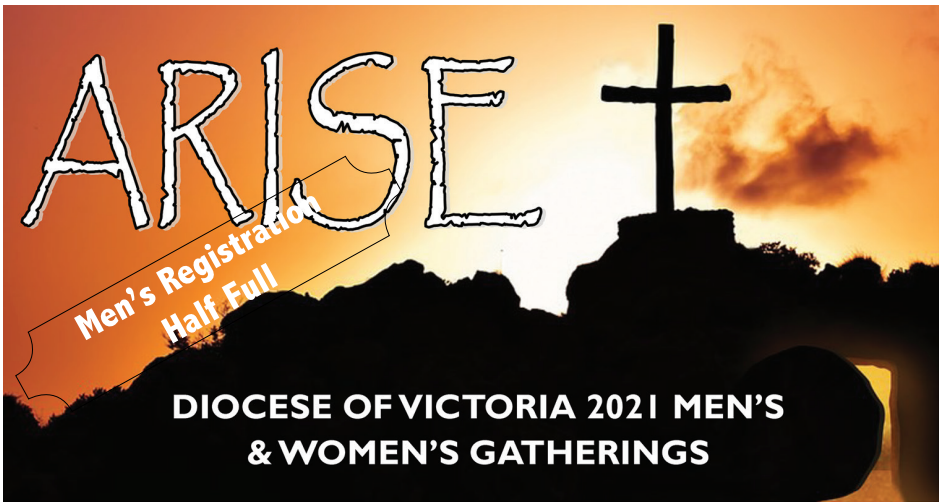
married his high school sweetheart, Tammy, on June 21, 1980. They settled in Victoria, Texas where they started their family.

In 1980, Jerome joined Bumgardner, Morrison, & Company, where he would work for the next 40 years as a Certified Public Accountant and Financial Advisor. He became a partner in 1988 and served as the managing partner of his firm in his last years. Jerome was involved in and served as the president of various of CPA boards.

Jerome was a proud Catholic, and remained involved in his church throughout his life. He served as a lector and Eucharistic minister for many years. In the time his four children attended Our Lady of Victory School, Jerome sat on the school board and the school

See Newly ordained, Deacon Kotzur, pg. 5





MEN

FEB 20, 2021

WOMEN

APR 24, 2021



**FATHER MITCH  
PACWA, SJ: EWTN  
PERSONALITY**



**FATHER CEDRIC  
PISEGNA, CP: EWTN  
PERSONALITY**



**SAM MEIER:  
SPEAKER, AUTHOR,  
COUNSELOR**



**JANICE CARLETON:  
SPEAKER, AUTHOR,  
MUSICIAN**



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## Education of Seminarian Fund

The Education of Seminarian Fund is a fund in which **all of the monies** donated to this fund, as well as the earnings, are available to cover the cost of educating seminarians. The proceeds of the special collection on Holy Thursday are deposited into the Education of Seminarian Fund. Publication of this fund will appear when new contributions are received.

**Donation categories: Lector – \$.01 - \$99.99; Acolyte – \$100 - \$499.99; Candidate – \$500 - \$1,499.99; Transitional Deacon – \$1,500 - \$2,499.99; Priest – \$2,500 >.**

### Lector

Dan & Barbara Respondek  
*in Memory of Ron Friedel and  
Dawn Sandra Warzecha*

Alan & Betsy Lockley  
*in Memory of Patsy Valenta*

### Acolyte

Jane Prihoda  
*in Memory of Molly Cernosek*

Catholic Life Insurance  
Victoria Branch #51

### Candidate

~

### Transitional Deacon

~

### Priest

~

To contribute to the Education of  
Seminarian Fund, send contributions to:

Diocese Of Victoria  
**Education of Seminarian Fund**  
P. O. Box 4070  
Victoria, TX 77903

## Seminary Endowment Fund

Seminary Endowment Fund (formerly known as Seminary Burses) is a permanent fund used for the education of future priests for the Diocese of Victoria. The goal of each burse is \$15,000. The **interest from this amount** is applied yearly to the education of seminarians. The burses are in memory of or in honor of an individual priest or layperson, living or deceased. Publication of the burses will appear periodically when new contributions are received. **Donation Categories: Lector - \$.01 - \$99.99; Acolyte – \$100 - \$499.99; Candidate – \$500 - \$1,499.99; Transitional Deacon – \$1,500 - \$2,499.99; Priest – \$2,500 >.**

January 20, 2021

### • Ascension of Our Lord Church, Moravia Seminary Burse

*Priest*

In memory of Willie J. Barborak and Wife,  
Albina Barborak, Irene Barborak, George  
Barborak and Willie E. Barborak from  
the Estate of Willie E. Barborak

### • Rev. Msgr. John C. Bily Seminary Burse #2

*Acolyte*

In memory of Sir Knight Melroy I. Brandt  
by St. Michael K of C Assembly #1527  
of Flatonia, Schulenburg and Weimar  
In honor of Lucy Lednický's birthday Feb.  
23, by Jesse and Nancy Lednický

### • Rev. Msgr. James C. Brunner Seminary Burse

*Candidate*

In memory of Rev. Msgr. James C. Brunner  
by Leroy Brunner

### • Rev. Wayne Flagg Seminary Burse

*Candidate*

In honor of Rev. Wayne Flagg by  
Michael and Julie Koch

### • Rev. Wayne Flagg and Rev. Philip Brune Seminary Burse

*Lector*

In memory of Raymond Korenek by  
Lambert and Carol Brune  
In memory of Catherine Kaltwasser by  
Elbert and Joan Brune  
In honor of Rev. Philip Brune's birthday  
celebration by:  
Elbert and Joan Brune  
Mark and Sharon Kubicek

### • Chase Goodman Seminary Burse

*Candidate*

In memory of Charles Allen Kutchka, Sr.,  
Bertha Dell McDowell, Pauline "Polly"  
Rab, Dolores Gooding, Janette "Jan"  
Kyle, Dolores Schroller and Julie's  
beloved Godmother, Jackie Anger Tanner  
by Mark and Julie Goodman

### • Rev. Scott Hill Seminary Burse

*Lector*

In memory of Ann Powers Orscheln by  
Daryl and Joan Hill

### • Josephat R. Janak Seminary Burse #2

*Acolyte*

In memory of Brandon Janak by  
Gene and Betty Migura

### • Rev. Robert Knippenberg Seminary Burse

*Lector*

In honor of Rev. Robert Knippenberg by  
K.J.Z.T. Society No. 23, Hostyn

### • Rev. Timothy Kosler Seminary Burse

*Lector*

**In memory of Paul Veselka by:**

Lorene Hengst  
Dorothy Pavlas  
Erline Janik

In memory of Willy (Bill) Bohlmann, Jr. by  
Henrietta Veselka

*Acolyte*

In memory of Paul Veselka by Henrietta  
Veselka

In memory of Brother Knight Larry  
Hoeinghaus by K of C Council #2902,  
Schulenburg

### • Rev. Msgr. John C. Peters Seminary Burse #8

*Lector*

In memory of Rev. James Nischan by:  
Pat Mladenka  
Kubena Funeral Home, Dan, Eugene,  
Andy and Alison

### • Rev. Michael Rother Seminary Burse *Transitional Deacon*

Donation in honor of Rev. Michael Rother

### • St. John the Baptist Church, St. John In Memory of Rev. Brian Crookes Seminary Burse #2

*Acolyte*

In memory of Irene Knebel by  
The Lillian Besetzny Family

To contribute to an existing Seminary  
Endowment Fund, send contributions with  
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Victoria, TX 77903





# No excuse outweighs our need for God

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The following sermon was written for the third Sunday in Lent, Cycle B. Father Kram titled it, "Loyalty and Worship."

In Jesus' day, Jews over 19 years of age were obliged to pay the temple tax, and this tax had to be paid with a coin called a shekel. Jews from many different places came to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover, bringing their own kinds of money with them, so the moneychangers did a landslide business at that time.

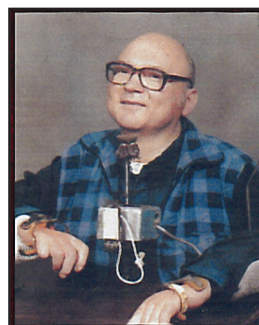
Also, furnishing birds and animals for the pilgrims to use in the temple sacrifices brought much gain to the suppliers. The problem was that the dealers made huge profits and committed many injustices in their business dealings.

Furthermore, these dealings took place in the temple precincts, which was a profanation of the temple.

Abuses like these and Jesus' anger over them should make us take a closer look at our own religious practices and why we perform them.

Recently, a lady told me that she had left the Catholic Church a few years earlier because she was tired of all that Latin – even though Latin had already been out of use in the Church for some 30 years.

If medals were given for the most clever reasons for not going to church, I would award gold to a lady who told me, "I don't go to



1929-2000

## Father Charles Kram Corner

Mass, because I would be going for the wrong reasons, and that's a sin." It's like saying, "I don't pay my bills either, because I would be doing it because I owe them."

A silver medal would go to a man who said, "I don't go because there are hypocrites there." If this well-intentioned man waits until the Church is perfect, he may find that he is not good enough to belong.

And the winner of a bronze medal would be a man who told me, "I quit going years ago because a sick old priest who, in fact, died five days later, wouldn't officiate at my daughter's wedding, and when I tried to talk him into it, he pointed to the door and said, 'There's the door; use it.'" At the judgment he can try telling Jesus, "I kept my distance from you for so long because a half-dead old

priest hurt my feelings 70 years ago."

Our relationship with God must not depend on foolish excuses or trivia.

So let's consider a few sound reasons for remaining faithful to our religious practices.

First, since God is the Supreme Being, and since we depend on Him so much as individuals AND as a group, we must pay Him worship in private, by our personal prayers and religious practices, but also in PUBLIC by our GROUP acts of worship together with fellow members of our human family. We can't just say, "I'll say my prayers at home," or "I'll watch on TV." We are not hermits or islands. We are all in this world together.

Secondly, instead of worshipping merely out of a sense of duty, we ought rather to do so out of love and appreciation for God's great goodness to us. We don't say to God, "Lord, I'm here because my parents made me come or because I don't want to end up in hell." We each have a free will and we can choose to be here with the attitude, "Lord, I love you more than anything else on Earth and I am deeply grateful to be able to spend a little time with you."

Thirdly, we owe it to ourselves to remain faithful because, especially in the midst of

weakness and temptation, we are in great need of God's help. Nothing could be a stronger plea for God's help than Jesus' own Body and Blood offered in sacrifice for us and given for our spiritual nourishment in the Holy Eucharist.

In view of such things as these, what conclusions can we draw?

First, if you are young, be sure to keep cultivating good religious habits that will establish a pattern in your life that will keep you close to Christ and to the Church in later years.

If you are married and have children, do it also for them. Example speaks so much louder than words. If YOU don't take God seriously, why should your children? As once happened to a dad who was trying to encourage his little son to behave: He said to the boy, "Don't you want to amount to something? Don't you want to grow up to be somebody?" The little boy answered, "No, Dad, I want to be just like you."

If you are growing old, think of your growing dependence on God in your declining years and of the legacy of faithfulness you will before long be leaving to those who will be taking your place.

Try taking a leisurely stroll through the cemetery sometime and look at the names and dates on the gravestones. Speculate on who the individuals were and how they lived and died and where their souls are now.

As the years go by, we will realize more and more how faithful God is to us in all His promises and how justified we are in remaining true to Him without asking for any more proofs or signs like the Jews did.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for showing us what we must do. Help us always to remain loyal in spite of a multitude of distractions and temptations. Grant that when we worship, it may always be for the best of reasons, in spirit and truth. Amen.*

## Newly ordained Deacon Kotzur passes away

*Continued from pg. 3*

advisory council, and served as the OLV festival chairman. He treasured his time in the OLV adult and teen ACTS ministry, organizing and attending multiple retreats over the years. In Jerome's youth he was a boy scout; and, when his sons became of age to participate, he also joined as an ardent volunteer. He was a constant participant in Cub Scouts and an integral part of the adult leadership for OLV Troop 364. In 2007 he received a De-Leon District Assistant Scoutmaster Award.

As the proudest member of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of 1980- WHOOP, Jerome was active in the Victoria County A&M Club, including serving as president.

In 2016, Jerome proudly became a grandfather to his first grandchild, Nathan James Mikeska. In 2019, his second grandchild, Clifford Ray West IV "River" was born. Jerome's grandchildren were shining lights in his life.

On November 21, 2020, Jerome fulfilled a longtime dream when he was ordained a deacon of the Catholic Church. The same day, he was able to baptize his grandson River.

Jerome was called to this religious vocation and looked forward to humbly serving our Lord and his church community.

Jerome is survived by his wife of 40 years, Tammy; daughter Keleigh and husband Cliff; daughter Katie and husband Bradley; son Kyle and wife Jackie; son Kurt and partner Greg. In addition to his wife and children, Jerome also leaves behind two of the great loves of his life: grandsons Nathan and River. Jerome is also survived by his sister Emma and husband Sammy, brother Eugene, his "adopted mom" Betty Mercer, nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends. Jerome's devoted dog, Khloe, will miss him dearly. Jerome was preceded in death by his father, Sixtus Kotzur, and his beloved mother, Mary Ann Kotzur. The family will host a celebration of life at a later date when it is safe to do so. The family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in his memory to the Our Lady of Victory Cathedral St. Vincent de Paul Society, a Catholic charitable organization that benefits the poor locally.



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# It's time to think about penance

One of the treasured traditional prayers of our religious congregation is the rosary; with each of the mysteries is included is a spiritual fruit. On one of the Sorrowful Mysteries we pray for “love of penance.”

Now I've often wondered how I can ever love penance, but I've continued to say the prayer even though I'm far from achieving that spiritual fruit. I've often reflected on the many opportunities that ordinary life presents for the practice of penance. We have often been told to “offer it up” when faced with unfortunate (in our eyes) events that confront us; however, we can look at such events as an opportunity of practicing penance.

In case you are wondering why we are thinking of penance now, we just have to look at our calendars. We see that Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season Christians call Lent, is almost upon us. During this penitential season, all of us are called to prayer and fasting, almsgiving and penance.

Prayer, lifting and turning our minds and hearts to God, is a way of strength-

## Sisterly Thoughts

By Sister Mildred Truchard, IWBS



ening our relationship with our Creator, Sustainer and Savior. Prayer, always necessary, is needed especially now for peace in our country and throughout the world. Fasting can include depriving ourselves of food (check restrictions), practices that are not life-giving, or activities that do not promote loving family relationships.

Almsgiving, sharing what we have with those who in need, is so necessary now especially during the pandemic when so many of our brothers and sisters are suffering.

And now we come to penance, the topic we had been considering. I like to think that the sacrifices that we are

making because of COVID-19 could be acts of penance. Wearing masks, which can be uncomfortable and make it hard to breathe, can be considered a penance performed to protect others and ourselves. Social distancing and isolating ourselves from loved ones can be a magnificent act

if done in a spirit of penance and caring for one another. Saying “no” to invitations to large family and social gatherings can be real penance.

Finally, all these actions can serve as a loving time of preparation for the celebration of the triumphant feast of Easter.

## Enjoying lunch socially distanced



Father Kristopher Fuchs, pastor of St. Mary's in Victoria, joins a group of students for lunch at Nazareth Academy.

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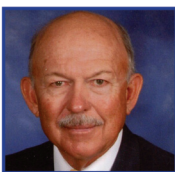
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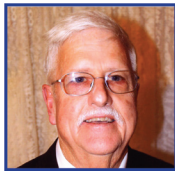
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## HR assistant marks 1 year

Not everybody thought 2020 was so terrible.

Marie Garcia, who on Feb. 14 marks her first anniversary as the human resources assistant at the Diocese of Victoria, counts it as a good one, though different than expected because of COVID-19.

When she was laid off from Pioneer, an oil field company, she said she prayed, “God please just put me where I need to be.”

And she landed at the chancery where she felt at home almost instantly, she said. She added that she still amazed at how much peace working in the chancery has given her.

Garcia has been busy with her HR duties and helping with the Hispanic ministry, but said she is anxious to get on the road more and meet people face to face when the pandemic subsides enough to allow.

Besides Pioneer for eighth and a half

years, Garcia, a West Texas native from Fort Stockton, worked in human resources at the University of Houston-Victoria and Performance Food Group.

She has 19-year-old twin boys, Joshua and Joseph. “My boys are my world,” she said. One of her boys has been attending Victoria College and intends to pursue a degree in music, and the other is recently employed as a corrections officer for the Victoria County Sheriff’s Department.

Her family attends the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory in Victoria.

In her spare time, Marie helps care for her mother daily. She said she unwinds by putting in ear buds and “zoning out” while mowing the lawn.

She is also currently working to gain her Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) certification.



Marie Garcia

## Spiritual Renewal Center

The Spiritual Renewal Center (SRC) is located on approximately 40 acres nestled along the banks of the San Antonio River and about a 25-minute drive from Victoria.

The SRC is open for small or large group which can be a one-day or over night with a kitchen staff to provide meals. There is also an open pavilion for outdoor activities.

Handicap accessible.

For more information or to reserve the SRC contact Matthew Boyle, director, by email [mboyle@victoriadiocese.org](mailto:mboyle@victoriadiocese.org) or at 361-572-0836.



## Seminarian education fund gift

*Contributed Photo*

The late Albert Leo “Puppy” Bures is shown with Bishop Brendan Cahill and seminarian Shane Goertz. Before his death in June 2020, Bures, who once was a Franciscan Brother, established the Albert and Cathy Bures Legacy Fund to support the education of seminarians in Diocese of Victoria. While still a religious brother, he saw potential in pecan farming and asked his superiors to allow him to pursue this agricultural avenue. Later he resigned from the Franciscan Order and continued farming. He later married and is survived by his wife, Cathy (Cook) Bures, as well as a sister, Angelina Bures Smith.

## WALKING FOR UNBORN LIVES

*Continued from pg. 1*

Her parents, in an attempt to steer her away from the influences she’d already chosen, sent her to live with a relative in the United States. She went to school, had relationships, worked and partied. It wasn’t fulfillment.

It was during a visit with her mother, who wanted to attend a Pentecost service at Reyes’ church in Florida, that Reyes experienced a conversion.

“When we walked in the church there was praise and worship music. I knelt to pray and all of a sudden I felt this heat of the Holy Spirit inundating my entire body. I began crying tears of both joy and repentance.”

She said she rejoiced in the healing she felt and confessed her sins “for real this time.” “I cannot describe to you how intense this experience was. But I can tell you it was very, very real.”

She added that the sacraments were suddenly of utmost importance to her. “The Eucharist became essential for me. How could I have received the Lord so unworthily all these years?” she asked herself.

Reyes changed her lifestyle completely and asked God to bring her a man who loved above all, not her, but God. She met her husband, Justin, who proposed by asking if she wanted to “start a holy family” with him.



Laura Reyes was the guest speaker at the 34th annual Candlelight March for Life in downtown Victoria on the evening of Jan. 28.

That was on the feast day of the Holy Family.

Justin, who is now the director of Family Evangelization at the Diocese of Victoria, and Laura, have now become the family that she always wanted.

At the end, she asked those gathered to remember three things: First, pray hard for God to rescue the women who are living in sin – that God will bring them the conversion that she was given. Second, continue the fight against abortion by “living the sacraments as if they were going to be gone tomorrow.” And, third, celebrate life and all the babies who are born into the world.

Bernie Seale, one of the organizers of the march, said she did not know there would be so many this year. “I kept hearing people say that there’s a lot of people talking about it,” she said. But given the pandemic situation and all that has changed, there was no way to know. “In my mind, I didn’t know if we would have a 100 people,” she said.

The success of the event, she things stems partly from recent political happenings -- as the executive orders to make abortion more accessible -- are stirring people’s desire to demonstrate their belief that life begins at conception. “People realize we have to fight for what is true and what is good,” she said.



MARCH  
for LIFE





# Schools report second 9 weeks honor rolls

### St. Rose of Lima in Schultenburg

Perfect attendance: Andrew Besetzny, Mallory Bonner, Miranda Bonner, Brenley Bujnoch, Laramie Bujnoch, Tatum Bujnoch, Brody Cahal, Colson Cahal, William Eudy, Brielle Goedrich, Weston Hollas, Ellie Klein, Mary Beth Krischke, Ainsley Kutac, Cannon Lykke, Abigale McBride, Abraham McBride, Hudson Ohnheiser, Adam Reeves, Austin Reeves, Ian Reeves, Gadiel Robles, Ashtyn Schaefer, Adam Schramek, Jacob Schramek, Justin Schramek, Marcus Seger, Morgan Steinhauser, Nathan Vacek, Tyson Wagner, Ellia Wotipka, & Lillia Wotipka.

Fourth grade: honors – Rilee Durfey, Tenley Zbranek, William Eudy, Brett Hollas, Reese Dusek, Bo Brossmann; high honors - Mallory Bonner, Caroline Bartek, Weston Hollas, Holden Holub

Fifth grade: honors – Jenna Guentert, Layne Besetzny, Ashtyn Schaefer, Allen Ballard, Brock Seger, Anna Oeding, William Taylor; high honors – Miranda Bonner, Valerie Sedlar

Sixth-grade: honors – Joseph Schindler, Morgan Steinhauser, Colson Cahal, Brayden Stoeve, Brant Redman; high honors - Ian Reeves, Dillon Goedrich

Seventh-grade: honors – Clara Magliolo, Grace Schramek, Jamison Bennett, Mikayla Stang, Landry Zapalac, Keeley Warnken; high honors – Kenna Oliver, Reagan Dusek

Eighth-grade: honors – Mary Beth Krischke, Claire Oeding, Emma Schmidt, Avery Helms; high honors – Marcus Seger, Madison Kunschick

### St. Joseph High School, Victoria

Ninth-grade: honors – Maanvi Agarwal, Enzo Bruschini, Ava Carson, Brynn DeBord, Tyler Kirkpatrick, Ethan Lara, Patricia Manning, Cassidy Nethery, Matthew Pena, Nathan Pena, Parker Preiss, Aleya St. Jean, Tomas Tejera, Kayleigh Valderrama; high honors – Bridget Bludau, Thomas Copeland, Emma Dugi, Harper Edwards, Diego Garza, Grace Harrison, Katherine Kopecky, Morgan Korinek, Emmett Lee, Mia Mabray, Nissa Pham, Safiya Qureshi, Spencer Settles, Kaylen Smith, Madeline Stefka, Ethan Tucker, William Weischwill

10th-grade: honors – Hogan Bazan, Ian Etienne, Aryan Gaalla, Samuel Harrell, Audrey Janak, Grace Janak, Luis Ramos, Avery Reyes, Xavier Richmond, Jace Saddle, Mallory Santana, Reice Tibiletti; high honors – Avery Belew, Joshua Bonorden, Eve Brogger, Larkin Burris, Emily Dickinson, Lisa Du, Seth Fry, Joshua Henry, Cora King, Anna Paula Llompert, Thomas Lopez, Megan Miori, Jacqueline Nguyen, Amy Pham, Anya Tomanek, Hailey Urban, Samuel Whitaker,

Hannah Zimmerman

11th-grade: honors – Caitlin Alstrom, Kerigan Baumgartner, Lauren Berryhill, Emma Cruz, Sarah Culpepper, Allison Garcia, Emilee Irby, Dawson Lehnert, Juan Llompert, Alexa Morris, Joshua Munoz, James Perez, Gracen Rodgers, Jackson Stefk; high honors – Grant Carson, Dugan Chandler, Kloe Cowan, Katherine Fairly, Coleman Fromme, Isabela Garza, Mary Hall, Andrew Hicks, Arely Ibarra, Quinn Jones, Kate Letsinger, Raymond McCormick, Lindsay McKinney, Callie Nelson, Sydney Partain, Ryan Pham, Jacob Pyatt, Kylie Rodgers, Nicholas Rodriguez, Quinn Ruschhaupt, Lauren Theriot, Anna Valenzuela, Ryan Ward, Gabriel Weaver, Sarah Ybarra

12th-grade: honors – Emily Chandler, Emily Chaney, Katelyn Delgado, Peter Eaves, Taylor Foeh, Anjali Gaalla, Dalton Hempel, Om Patel, Thea Porr, Zachary Shaver, Anna Southern, Preslie Thomas, Eric Tibiletti; high honors – Priyam Bhakta, Neha Chandna, Rylee DeLaGarza, Jenna Eastham, Lauren Estraca, Ashley Fleener, Kieran Grones, Gordon Hicks, Matthew Janak, Devin Johnson, Madison Korinek, Elaina Lee, Emma Milam, Brittany Olivares, Jacob Pena, Kristen Pham, Jose Ramos, Reed Rivera, Abigail Sparkman, Tara Swor, Heidi Terry, Austin Thompson, Maiya Tillman, Emily Webb

### St. Michael's Catholic School, Cuero

First-grade: honors: Emma Bargmann, Brylee Dlugosch, Korbyn Flack, Taylor Hoefling, Liam Krueger, Poppy Sprinkle; high honors – Boston Lincke

Second-grade: honors – Shelby Arguellez, Annie Crain, Charlie Derouen, Brenlie Knox, Julian Naranjo, Cameron Rodriguez, Dutch Ticken; high honors – Ryder Beldin, Bentlee Dlugosch, Kellan Hahn, Mary-Kate Kucera, Kloe Saenz

Third-grade: honors – Michael Capak, Jesse Harryman, Carlton Orch, Paige Ripamonti, Abree Zengerle; high honors – Ellie Bargmann, Elias Gomex, Aadin Koopman, Camille Person

Fourth-grade: honors – Ally Hoefling, Orrin Holland, Skyland Lamprecht; high honors – Drake Corpus, Elena Gomez, Maria Gonzales

Fifth-grade: honors – Kiley Flack, Madelynn Hiles; high honors – Cannon Carbonara, Palyn Koopman, Charlene Orch

Sixth-grade: honors – Rylie Krueger, Makayla Cardenas; high honors – Claire Person

See Schools report second  
9 weeks honor roll, pg. 9

## Schultenburg mayor helps celebrate Catholic Schools Week

Contributed Photo

SCHULTENBURG — St. Rose of Lima students were present for the signing of a city proclamation naming the week of Jan. 31 “Catholic Schools Week.” Shown with Schultenburg Mayor Elaine Kocian are, from left, (front) Nathan Vacek, Jade Williams, Bailey Beeman, Ree Lichnovsky, Addison Johnson, Brayden Rainosek, Abigale McBride, Tripp Brown; (middle row) Morgan Steinhauser, Colson Cahal, Brody Cahal, Rylee Wright, Clare Besetzny, Austin Reeves, William Eudy, Bo Brossmann; (back) Principal Rosanne Gallia, Claire Oeding, Dakota Wick, Kellen Mechura, Reagan Dusek, Miranda Bonner and Denver Carr. The school has plans for every day of the week, including Mass, special prayer times, fundraisers, service projects, games, and more.



## Learning about conservation

Contributed Photos

SCHULTENBURG — St. Rose of Lima students who won awards in the Fayette Soil and Water Conservation District coloring, poster and essay contests are as follows:

**Coloring Contest:** Kindergarten – 1st Emma McCourt, 2nd Haven Sheppard, 3rd Brody Brossmann; First grade – 1st Brylee Stoeve, 2nd Andrew Besetzny, 3rd Jack Schiffli; Second grade – 1st Rylee Wright, 3rd Gage Smrkovsky; **Poster Contest:** Third grade – 2nd (tie) Brynn Bubela & Austin Reeves, 3rd Abraham McBride; Fifth grade – 1st Layne Besetzny, 2nd Valerie Sedlar, 3rd Brock Seger; Sixth grade – 1st Ian Reeves, 2nd Caden Herzik, 3rd Connor Lichnovsky; **Essay Contest:** Fourth grade – 2nd (tie) Holden Holub & Bo Brossmann, 3rd Courtney Magliolo; Eighth grade – 2nd Emma Schmidt







# Teachers celebrate milestones

Continued from pg. 1

many ways.

Georganna Meismer, now retired, taught with Hall for 26 years and calls her a top-notch teacher. “She is the best Texas history teacher you will ever, ever have,” Meismer said.

Hall said sharing her own experiences as a Texan — learning about fishing and marine life and farming -- help bring her teaching to life for her students.

Meismer and Hall were seventh-grade teachers together for many years. According to Meismer, one of the many gifts Hall brings to the profession is a strong faith.

Hall said the rosary has always been very important to her and she has made it a point to make sure the students know how to pray the rosary and have the chance to do so in school.

She also has organized the Stations of the Cross during Lent and her students have loved that, according to Meismer. And she organized for the seventh and eighth grade a rosary before class on days during Lent.

“It’s all about the kids,” said Jody Brown, longtime friend of Hall and someone who has helped Hall coach students. Brown said Hall started the PE and athletics program at the school and remembers when the practices were in the Mesquite street parking and everyone who was involved was hands on in setting up a playing field.

Brown said that, although Hall is no longer coaching, she works hard to teach the values of sportsmanship and respect to the children. Her methods are old school and “successful,” Brown said. About her dedication, which is self-evident given her years of service, Brown

said, “She probably eats, drinks and lives Our Lady of Victory.”

Hall said that, yes, the same morals and values she began teaching are still important today. And now she is teaching grandchildren of some of her early students. When she has been asked to take other jobs, she has always consulted with Sister Emilie, who brought her there in the first place. She said Sister Emilie has always convinced her to stay because the children need her.

Sister Emilie asked Hall to create a special program, Guidance, which Hall did and that has given her a chance to help kids on a deeper level. Hall said Guidance is a class period where the students can learn how to navigate the difficulties of adolescence by talking it out.

Through it all, Meismer said, the children have simply loved her. “I’m here for the kids.” She has said that from the get-go,” Meismer said, “You’ll just never find another Gwen.”



Gwen Hall in her seventh-grade classroom, Room 401 that has been her classroom for 50 years. (Catholic Lighthouse File Photo from 2009-2010 school year)

Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Victoria have many dedicated staff members celebrating landmark anniversaries this year. They are:

Gretchen Boyle, 35 years at St. Joseph High School in Victoria. Boyle was a graduate of St. Joe who returned to help keep the mission strong. Sandy Darr, 30 years of service at St. Anthony School in Columbus; Mary Sue Ferrell, 30 years of service at St. Joseph in Yoakum; Dorothy Gehrke, 30 years of service at Our Lady of Victory; Suzanne Krejci, 30 years of service at Nazareth Academy in Victoria; Mona Dornak, 25 years of service at Our Lady of Victory; Rosalia Gomez, 25 years of service at Our Lady of Victory; Sabra Sauer, 25 years of

service at St. Joseph in Victoria; Matt Bonner, 20 years of service at St. Rose of Lima in Schulenburg; Jeannie Mican, 20 years of service at St. Rose of Lima; Rosanne Gallia, 15 years, St. Rose of Lima;

Tammy Grabarkievtz, 15 years at Shiner Catholic Schools; Donna Hagel, 15 years at Shiner Catholic Schools; Kerri Knippa, 15 years at Our Lady of Victory; Jerry Lapinski, 15 years at Holy Cross in Bay City; Alvin Mumphord III, 15 years at St. Joe in Victoria; Virginia Olsovsky, 15 years at St. Rose of Lima; Laura Walla, 15 years at St. Anthony; Jennifer Carson, 10 years at St. Joe, Victoria; BJ Chavez, 10 years at Holy Cross; Jen Korenek, 10 years at St. Joe in Victoria; Amy Lara, 10 years at Our Lady of Victory; J. Daryl McCollough, 10 years at St. Joe in Victoria; Brenda Ortmann, 10 years at Our Lady of Victory; Maria Perez, 10 years at St. Philip the Apostle in El Campo; Judy Barrett, 5 years, St. Philip the Apostle; Debbie Bollom, 5 years, Shiner Catholic Schools; Jennifer Bossley, 5 years, Holy Cross; Jane Cole, 5 years, Holy Cross; Rebecca Gray, 5 years, Our Lady of the Gulf in Port Lavaca; Twinkle Johnson, 5 years, Our Lady of the Gulf; Sally Leinen, 5 years, Our Lady of Victory; Cheryl Marwitz, 5 years, Our Lady of the Gulf; Amanda Matula, 5 years, St. Philip the Apostle; Paula McCauley, 5 years, Our Lady of the Gulf; Monica Morales, 5 years, Our Lady of Victory; Ripple Neta, 5 years, St. Philip the Apostle; Lisa Omecinski, 5 years, Our Lady of Victory; Shelly Reissig, 5 years, Nazareth Academy; Destiny Sager, 5 years, Nazareth Academy; Jackie Scott, 5 years, St. Anthony; Karen Wysocki, 5 years, Sacred Heart in Hallettsville; and Steve Zornes, 5 years, Sacred Heart

## Schools report second 9 weeks honor rolls

Continued from pg. 8

### Sacred Heart Catholic School, Hallettsville

Fifth-grade: honors — Phillip Broussard; high honors — Ainsley Grahmann, Ben Meinkowsky

Sixth-grade: honors — Ysabella Arellano, Jillian Whited; high honors — Kenzie Chance, Allison Clark, Layne Sevcik

Seventh-grade: honors — Avery Beach, Brody Etzler, Lanie Haas, Alaina Halata, Timber Janak, Mabry Machac, Bransen Miranda; high honors — Ella Demel, Rylan Dworsky, Ryan Janak, Ty Noska

Eighth-grade: honors — Sam Bludau, Caleb Brooks, Abigail Hill, Thia Ashley Infante, Hudson Kutac, Mallory Mueller, Harley Wilson, Heather Wilson; high honors — Lance Barton, Annika Brooks, Brianna Clark, Karley Kostelnik, Adalyn Pohl

Ninth-grade: honors — Chloe Alex-Hartensteiner, Idan Awuah, Lillieana Bludau,

Peyton Cull, Allyshia Grahmann, Kathryn Ivey, Amanda Janak, Maryn Machac, Anneliese Noska, Paige Wright, Alyssa Zbranek; high honors — Nicholas Angerstein, James Cesarz, Klayton Chance, Kalynn Fikac, Kylie Fikac, Joseph Goodwyne, Elena Grahmann, Kayla Immekus, Alexandra Kraatz, Ava Lackey, Ava Matias, Haley Noska, Natalie Osina, Braxtyn Sitka

10th-grade: honors — Madelyn Hynes, Lilly Machicek, Katherine Pavliska, Sarah Slatter; high honors — Arabella Arellano, Ann Estelle Brown, Savannah Filip, Kylie Grahmann, Bailey Haas, Arianna Henke, Melea Henke, Jules Janak, Kathryn Kostelnik, Garrett Ridgeway, Brett Sestak

11th-grade: honors — Allie Bludau, Jillian Brown, Erin Fawbush, Elizabeth Grahmann, Michael Koeth, Austin Kutac, Myles Machicek, Audrey Weber, John Luke Wysocki; high

honors — Quade Henneke, Victoria Kraatz, Bailey Schindler

12th-grade: honors — Emma Hawkins, Brennan Kana, Kyle Lemke, Trey Ridgeway III; high honors — Abigail Clark, Katy Shank, Beth Ventura

### St. Joseph School, Yoakum

Fourth-grade: honors — Allie McKinney, Josephine Pilat, Weston Tucker, Faith Wenske; high honors — Avery Driskell

Fifth-grade: honors — Nicholas Adamek, Shooter Laqua, Ty Smith; high honors — Jaxson Eggemeyer, Trent Ferry, Caden Werland

Sixth-grade: honors — Avery Mendoza, Trevor Moreno; high honors — Reagan Respondek

Seventh-grade: honors — Adison Poole, Teagan Ratley; high honors — Jordyn Driskell, Erin Fisher, Madisen Grant, Kilynn Poole, Kyleigh Powell, Gracyn Wolf

Eighth-grade: honors — Gael Castillo, Tabitha Hiles, Ben Jahn, Christian Rivas; high honors — Samantha Adamek, Gracee Respondek

### St. Michael School, Weimar

Second-grade: honors — Brandt Kahanek, Cade Wessels, Owen Berger, Chandler Williams, Frank Janecka; high honors — Hayes Kloesel

Third-grade: honors — Olivia Elstner, Macie Davis; high honors — Gage Kainer, Andie Melnar

Fourth-grade: honors — Chloe Brandt, Joseph Rowland, Sarah Jane Berger, Layne Schimcek; high honors — Emily Wied

Fifth-grade: honors — Dayson Mace, Cullen Marek, Dawson Brandt, Hudson Hillje, Victoria Sherwood, Kendall Jahn; high honors — Ella Herzik

Sixth-grade: honors — Trey Silcox, Madelyn Rich, Emma Koeth, Trevor Bentley, Tucker Janak, Robert Sanchez; high honors — Hunter Shupak

Eighth-grade: honors — Bralen Heger, Hannah Hillje, Huxton Kloessel, Jonathan Shupak, Erica Billeck, Claire Pavlu; high honors — Logan Kainer, Lily Berger





# Batalla con la COVID-19 aumenta conexión humana

## BISHOP MICHAEL SIS

### Especial para el Lighthouse

El coronavirus se había estado propagando en nuestra área ya por ocho meses. Le agradecí a Dios por el don de la salud, que me permitió seguir sirviendo a nuestro pueblo en un momento de grave pandemia y agitación social. Aquí en San Ángelo, llevábamos mucho tiempo planeando un foro de relaciones raciales, en el cual incluía líderes comunitarios, funcionarios gubernamentales, portavoces universitarios, y pastores de varias iglesias. Yo tenía grandes esperanzas en su potencial para enfrentar el racismo. Sin embargo, dado que el número de casos aumentó, decidí posponer el evento.

La mañana después de que el evento se hubiera llevado a cabo, empecé a sentirme febril en mi oficina. Empaqué mi computadora portátil y me dirigí directamente a la instalación de pruebas rápidas. Unas horas más tarde, me contactaron con la buena noticia de un resultado negativo, diciendo que ya podía volver al trabajo. Sin embargo, no confiaba en el resultado, porque todavía no había explicación para mi fiebre persistente. Mantuve una auto-cuarentena solo para estar seguro. Busqué una prueba de PCR y logré encontrar una en una farmacia local. Dos días después, la farmacia me envió el fatídico correo electrónico. Antes de abrirlo, oré: “Señor, hágase tu santa voluntad. Dame la gracia de afrontar cualquier resultado”. La nota de la farmacia incluía la palabra escrita en rojo - positivo.

Mi lucha contra el coronavirus se prolongó durante días. No recuerdo nunca en mi vida haber tenido una fiebre que duró tanto. Tenía un gran deseo de evitar la hospitalización, en la medida de lo posible, ya que los recursos hospitalarios aquí en el oeste de Texas son escasos. Tomé vitaminas y medicamentos como si estuvieran pasando de moda. Hice varios descubrimientos fascinantes, como el hecho de que el Pedialyte sin sabor sabe mucho mejor que el saborizado. Dormí más que nunca, porque la fiebre estaba agotando mi cuerpo.

Pasar por la enfermedad día tras día me puso en contacto con mi propia debilidad y vulnerabilidad humana. Me ayudó para identificar más de cerca con la vulnerabilidad de otras personas en todo el mundo, incluyendo los que están enfermos, ancianos, personas sin hogar, en prisiones, hospitales, hogares de ancianos, campos de refugiados, y en los cuidados paliativos. En mi enfermedad me sentí más conectado con la familia humana en todas partes. Abracé un sentido de solidaridad con los que sufren, los que cuidan de los enfermos, los que sufren una pérdida, y los que sienten miedo y ansiedad.

Es difícil ser productivo cuando estás en cuarentena, especialmente si estás luchando contra una enfermedad. Hay varios proyectos en los que estaba trabajando que se han retrasado. Esto es frustrante, porque me gusta hacer las cosas bien. Sin embargo, es un recordatorio de que el núcleo de nuestro valor como seres humanos no está en nuestra productividad, sino más bien en el hecho de que estamos hechos a imagen y semejanza de Dios. Nuestro “ser” es, en última instancia, más importante que nuestro “hacer”.

Me sostuvieron las oraciones de muchos de ustedes, y estoy muy agradecido por eso. También encontré mucho consuelo en el rezo del Rosario y en la meditación de los Salmos del Oficio Diario. Como tengo una capilla en mi casa, celebraba la misa todos los días, que era la mayor fuente de gracia. En la Eucaristía, pude rezar en unión con todos ustedes y con todo el Cuerpo Místico de Cristo.

En la profundidad de mi enfermedad, con tos, fiebre, y una opresión en mi pecho, y preocupado por las posibles complicaciones pulmonares, me sentí muy cerca de Jesús. Recordé lo que había leído hace años en diversos estudios académicos que, colgado en la Cruz, una de las muchas cosas que Jesús sufrió fue la dificultad para respirar y falta de oxígeno suficiente. Jesús sintió el dolor y la lucha de no poder tomar suficiente aire. Por lo tanto, nuestras dificultades respiratorias de COVID-19 pueden conectarnos más íntimamente con Jesús. Entonces, en mi oración, le pedí a Jesús que uniera mi enfermedad a su experiencia en la Cruz, para que yo pudiera compartir de alguna manera su sufrimiento redentor por el bien de la humanidad.

En medio de mi experiencia con el coronavirus, un día en el que no me sentía nada bien, estaba en una teleconferencia con algunas viejas amistades. Uno de ellos hizo una declaración que me pareció profundamente cristiana. Ella dijo: “Asegúrate de orar por nosotros mientras estés enfermo, porque las oraciones de los que están sufriendo son especialmente poderosas.” Ella me inspiró a hacer oraciones adicionales de intercesión durante mi enfermedad por las necesidades de las personas en todas partes.

Otra fuente de sabiduría cristiana que me ayudó con mi propio caso de COVID-19 proviene de la predicación del Papa



Obispo  
Michael Sis

Francisco en su Momento Extraordinario de Oración en la Plaza de San Pedro vacía el 27 de marzo de 2020. Dijo que, mientras que la raza humana lucha con la pandemia del coronavirus, hay que recordar la experiencia de sus discípulos cuando Jesús calmó la tormenta violenta en el Mar de Galilea en Marcos 4:35-41. Las olas rompían sobre el barco, y se llenaba de agua. Jesús dormía profundamente en la popa, confiando en el Padre. Sus discípulos lo despertaron con miedo y ansiedad, gritando: “Maestro, ¿no te importa que perezcamos?” Jesús inmediatamente calmó la tormenta y les recordó que tuvieran fe.

Cuando el Papa Francisco reflejó en este pasaje del Evangelio, hizo resaltar varias cosas que nos ayudan en nuestra lucha contra el coronavirus: Estamos juntos en el mismo barco, y Jesús está aquí en el barco con nosotros. Él sí se preocupa por nosotros. Nada puede separarnos del amor de Cristo. Necesitamos confiar en él. Dios vuelve a lo bueno todo lo que nos pasa, incluso las cosas malas. Debemos abrazar las dificultades como nuestra forma de abrazar la Cruz de Jesús.

Mi caso de COVID me ha llevado a confiar más en Dios. Ha sido un ejercicio de fe. La Carta a los Hebreos dice: “Tener fe es tener la plena seguridad de recibir lo que se espera; es estar convencidos de la realidad de cosas que no vemos” (Heb. 11:1). No podemos ver a Dios, pero él está aquí con nosotros. Él nunca nos abandonará. Puede que no nos libere de contraer el virus, pero nos da la gracia de enfrentarlo con más serenidad.

Los retos de esta enfermedad también me recuerdan de nuestra creencia cristiana en la vida eterna. Como seres humanos, nos entristece la realidad de la muerte, pero como cristianos, nos consuela la promesa de la inmortalidad. Nuestro único verdadero hogar está en el cielo. Al final, somos ciudadanos del cielo, y nuestros corazones están inquietos hasta que descansen allí con Dios. Dios nos ha creado con una orientación innata hacia nuestro hogar en el cielo, y nunca estaremos completamente satisfechos hasta

que lleguemos allí, y veamos a Dios cara a cara. En el cielo, no habrá más lágrimas, no más enfermedades, no más dolor, no más soledad, no más dolor de separación y no más muerte.

Sabiendo que algunos de mis compañeros de trabajo en las oficinas diocesanas también dieron positivo por COVID-19 alrededor del mismo tiempo que yo, lamento la posibilidad de haberles transmitido el virus sin saberlo antes de tener síntomas, y por cualquier impacto negativo que esto ha tenido en sus familias. Rezo por la sanación de todos los afectados por esta pandemia. Al mirar hacia atrás, me siento muy aliviado de que no llevamos a cabo el foro de relaciones raciales en San Ángelo en ese día en que, sin saberlo, yo tenía el virus. De lo contrario, podría haberse convertido en un evento de superpropagación para el virus.

Estoy profundamente agradecido con quienes me han ayudado en mi batalla contra el coronavirus. Estos incluyen a los que se pusieron en contacto conmigo, los que dejaron cosas en mi porche, los sacerdotes que cubrieron las Misas que estaba programado para celebrar, las personas que llamaron y enviaron correos electrónicos, y los muchos que ofrecieron oraciones a Dios en mi favor. Esas oraciones han hecho una enorme diferencia positiva. También estoy agradecido por todos los que trabajan en instalaciones médicas y farmacias. Todos los días ellos se enfrentan al peligro de contraer una infección; sin embargo, luchan con valentía para ayudar a otros a sanar. Les estaré eternamente agradecido a todos ustedes.

Estamos juntos en este barco. Debemos remar juntos y poner nuestra confianza en Dios.

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**Office of Family  
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## Las órdenes religiosas iluminan el camino hacia vidas más virtuosas

Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

San Juan Pablo II dedicó la Fiesta de la Presentación del Señor (2 de febrero) como el Día Mundial de Oración por la Vida Consagrada. En este día, 40 días después de Navidad, celebramos la revelación del niño Jesús como una “Luz” a todas las naciones, y el gozoso testimonio de Simeón y Ana de que Dios es fiel a su pueblo.

En Victoria, celebraremos una misa especial en la catedral el 7 de febrero, agradeciendo a Dios por el don de las mujeres consagradas que sirven en nuestra diócesis. Los miembros de las siguientes órdenes religiosas ofrecen su testimonio de la “Luz” todos los días: Verbo Encarnado y Santísimo Sacramento, Catequistas Misioneros del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús y María, Hermanas de la Caridad del Verbo Encarnado, Hermanas Dominicas vietnamitas y Carmelitas de María siempre Virgen.

Cada una de estas órdenes religiosas tiene una historia única en su fundación y servicio y un “carisma” (don) específico de servicio al

### Mensaje del Pastor

By Obispo Brendan Cahill



pueblo de Dios. Una cosa que he aprendido a lo largo de los años es que si le preguntas a un miembro de una orden religiosa sobre su carisma o sobre su fundador o fundadora, ¡debes estar preparando para una respuesta larga!

Si bien cada orden es distinta en su don fundacional, los miembros de cada orden religiosa, tanto hombres como mujeres, ofrecen su testimonio personal a través de votos para vivir las virtudes evangélicas. El Catecismo cita la enseñanza del Concilio Vaticano II sobre la vida religiosa:

“Cristo propone los consejos evangélicos, en su gran variedad, a cada discípulo. La perfección de la caridad a la que están llamados

todos los fieles, conlleva para quien libremente sigue la llamada a la vida consagrada la obligación de practicar la castidad en el celibato por el Reino, la pobreza y la obediencia. Es la profesión de estos consejos dentro de un estado de vida permanente reconocido por la Iglesia, lo que caracteriza la vida consagrada a Dios”. (CCC 915).

La “Luz” que honramos en las mujeres consagradas de nuestra diócesis, ojalá nos inspire a cada uno de nosotros, discípulos de Jesús que buscamos seguir este camino, a vivir más plenamente los consejos evangélicos de pobreza, castidad y obediencia. Como enseña la hermosa tradición de nuestra iglesia,

todos estamos llamados a ser santos, santos llenos del espíritu.

Cualquiera que sea nuestro estado en la vida, también nos estamos preparando para entrar en nuestra temporada anual de oración, ayuno y limosna. La Cuaresma comienza el miércoles de ceniza, 17 de febrero. Puede ser una buena reflexión preguntarnos cómo practicamos estas virtudes de pobreza, castidad y obediencia en nuestras propias vidas, y cómo las enseñamos en nuestras familias.

Este Año de la Familia ha sido una bendición especial en nuestra diócesis. Que podamos continuar enfocándonos en nuestra oración compartida, nuestro tiempo en las comidas y nuestro tiempo jugando juntos; y que todo lo que hagamos nos acerque al amor misericordioso de Jesús, la “Luz” de las naciones.

Que Dios los bendiga a ustedes ya sus familias con los dones de paz y gozo; mantengámonos en oración.

+Brendan

## Solicitantes de asilo cerca de frontera sienten esperanza con Biden

DAVID AGREN

Catholic News Service

MATAMOROS, México – Idalia Reyes recuerda la desesperación que la empujó a buscar a coyotes para que llevaran a sus niños a los Estados Unidos. Reyes y sus hijos vivían en un campamento de tiendas de campaña en la rivera del Río Grande, donde aguantaban crimen, rachas de frío y plagas de insectos y serpientes.

Después de que sus niños, de 7 y 4 años, sufrieran un ataque de pústulas, buscó a los coyotes que cruzaron a los niños por el río durante la medianoche al lado de los Estados Unidos. Los niños enseguida se entregaron a los oficiales de inmigración y se reunieron con su padre, que ya residía en Estados Unidos con un hijo mayor.

“Es difícil ver sufrir a tus hijos,” recordaba Reyes durante una noche lluviosa en el campamento. “Por eso decidí mandarlos a cruzar el río”.

A pesar de las dificultades de seguir en el campamento y de extrañar desesperadamente a sus hijos, Reyes habló con cierta esperanza de reunirse con su familia. Citó una sencilla razón: el presidente Joe Biden, quien prometió un giro total en las políticas de inmigración y asilo de los Estados Unidos.

“Nosotros teníamos la esperanza puesta en Joe Biden porque él lo había dicho que nos iba a ayudar y nosotros queríamos que él ganara”, dijo Reyes.

Reyes está todavía varada en Matamoros—al otro lado de Brownsville, Texas—como parte de los Protocolos de Protección de Migrantes, que obligan a quienes buscan asilo a esperar en México a que se escuche su caso en los tribunales de los Estados Unidos. Biden ha prometido retirar los protocolos y anunció que los nuevos participantes no se

inscribirían después del 21 de enero, aunque pocas personas estaban siendo procesadas debido a las restricciones de entrada puestas en vigor durante la pandemia de COVID-19.

Los detalles de lo que va a ocurrir ahora con personas que buscan asilo todavía no están claros, y muchos aún tienen citas en cortes estadounidenses, que se han ido posponiendo repetidamente durante la pandemia.

Los católicos que trabajan con los participantes en los programas, los exhortan a seguir teniendo paciencia. Algunos están animando a la administración Biden a ir clausurando el programa, que describen como “injusto” y diseñado para desanimar a los que solicitan

asilo.

“Deberían eliminarlo. No tiene sentido para nadie”, dijo el padre escalabriniano Pat Murphy, director de un albergue para migrantes en Tijuana. “Lo más pronto posible sería bueno comenzar un proceso de asilo que sea justo después de tantos años de injusticia de parte de la administración de Trump”.

A pesar de la escasez de detalles, la perspectiva de un cambio total bajo una nueva administración en Estados Unidos ha elevado los ánimos de los solicitantes de asilo que están varados en ciudades mexicanas inseguras a lo largo de la frontera de Estados Unidos y México.

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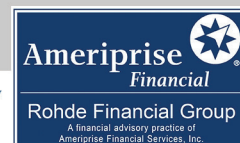
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# Real love is truly divine

It's February, and we know what that means: Valentine's Day is coming!

Seems that any store we walk into right now has hearts filled with chocolates, teddy bears, and balloons or cards for that "special someone." Valentine's Day is no doubt a special day, and one that can rekindle our love for our spouses.

But what is love? And how do we love? Love begins with a person. Love begins with Jesus Christ. If we want to love our neighbors, let alone our spouses, we need to begin with loving God.

How does Christ show us love? As Catholics, we need to only look at the crucifix or gaze upon the Most Blessed Sacrament. In both, Christ shows his free, total, faithful and fruitful love. He gives us the perfect example of love for our marital vows, for we are also called to love our spouse with unselfish and perfect love. Yes, we may fail at times, but Christ's endless mercy will pick us back up if we allow.

It may seem like an odd idea, but the per-

## On the Table

By Justin Reyes



***"Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love,"***  
— 1 John 4:7

fect way to prepare Valentine's Day is going to confession. When Christ cleanses us from sin, and we experience His infinite love, we will be better equipped to love our spouses and cherish them on that special day on Feb. 14. If you haven't been to confession in a while, I encourage you to do so now to also prepare for the upcoming season of Lent.

Did you know that the word "love" appears more than 300 times in some of the most commonly used translations of the Bible? Here are two my favorite verses about God's love, which in turn can show us how to love one another (NRSVCE translation): "Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love," — 1 John 4:7. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life," — John 3:16.

So, if you want to love your spouse well this Valentine's Day, start by loving God. By accepting His love, you will be able to love others.

Until next time, I hope this reflection helps you to love well, and if you have any questions at all, please reach out to me at 361-573-0828, Ext. 2265.

God bless!

• *Justin Reyes is the director of Family Evangelization for the Diocese of Victoria in Texas. E-mail Justin at jreyes@victoriadiocese.org.*

## Sunday Readings from Feb. 14 to March 14

February 14 ~ Sixth Sunday  
in Ordinary Time  
Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46  
Psalms 32:1-2, 5, 11  
1 Corinthians 10:31—11:1  
Mark 1:40-45

February 21 ~ First Sunday of Lent  
Genesis 9:8-15  
Psalms 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9  
1 Peter 3:18-22  
Mark 1:12-15

February 28 ~ Second Sunday of Lent  
Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18  
Psalms 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19  
Romans 8:31b-34  
Mark 9:2-10

March 7 ~ Third Sunday of Lent  
Scrutiny Year A Readings  
Exodus 17:3-7  
Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9  
Romans 5:1-2, 5-8  
John 4:5-42

March 14 ~ Fourth Sunday of Lent  
Scrutiny Year A Readings  
1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a  
Psalms 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41

**Special Days in the Catholic Church**  
February 17 ~ Ash Wednesday  
Joel 2:12-18  
Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17  
2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

## Blessing of New Life

Birth is an elusive mystery: an everyday occurrence in nature and rural life that is nonetheless marvelous to behold. Its wonder and splendor are fresh with each new entrance into creation. At the appointed time, a universal labor of intense energy opens the womb of Nature's gateway and ushers into the world an innocence and hope that is always a gift.

In a moment of revelation, we are privileged to witness and perhaps assist the birth of the latest member of our renewing world. Hand in hand with the Creator, we grasp the rhythm of new life, new breath and new hope.

In the spirit of this month's blessing, consider preparing a simple meal on the day of the blessing. Gather with family or friends in the early evening. Light a new candle. After a moment of silence, begin this service.

To see the prayers for this service, visit [www.catholicruralife.org](http://www.catholicruralife.org)



## Safe Environment

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and

- Vicki Pyatt, LMSW, Coordinator of Pastoral Care and Outreach, Diocese of Victoria, (361) 827-7186, [pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org](mailto:pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org).

or

- Bishop or Chancellor of the Diocese of Victoria, (361) 573-0828  
Written allegations can be mailed to  
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If sexual abuse by a member of clergy has occurred in another diocese, the Diocese of Victoria will help bring your concerns to church officials. For assistance contact Vicki Pyatt at (361) 827-7186 or [pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org](mailto:pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org).



For daily and Sunday readings, as well as a daily reflection video, visit [www.usccb.org/bible/readings](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings).

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## How to Support DSA

The Diocesan Services Appeal (DSA) is committed to fund administration offices and programs that help bring the light of Christ to each of the priorities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in the Crossroads. Evangelization, Marriage and Family, and Human Life and Dignity are a few that Bishop Cahill has chosen as his focus. DSA also supports the retired and infirm priests, Permanent Diaconate, Spiritual Renewal Center, Emmaus Center, and many other ministries. To support the DSA contact Rene Garcia at 361-573-0828.





# Families of religious also affected by choice of vocation

JANET JONES

*The Catholic Lighthouse*

Three-quarters of men and women who professed perpetual vows in religious orders in 2020 come from families where both parents were Catholic. No surprise there. And 89 percent of those who responded to an annual survey said there was a person in their life that had a great influence on their choice of vocations.

The survey, conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, also showed that the primary influencer on the decision of men and women to join religious orders is someone outside of the family.

For parents, who chose the vocation of marriage, it seems like a normal expectation that your child is going to follow the same path, according to Margaret Klekar of Hallettsville whose daughter, Cherise is now a professed member of the Apostles of the Interior Life and is currently studying in Rome.

Margaret's first reaction to Cherise's choice of vocation? "At first, I guess, I wasn't sure," she said.

"I think she was kind of nervous telling us," Margaret's husband, Robert said.

Ultimately they knew their daughter was in the right place. There were signs. Robert says Cherise is always beaming and joyful and would sing hymns way past when the music stopped when she was a tiny child. He said you just think back on those kinds of things when they take their vows.

Christi Lara, whose sister, Sister Maria del Rosario Resendez, joined the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Sisters in Victoria, said she likes having a religious in the family. "It just makes you feel ... special," she said. "It's humbling. I don't know how to explain it."

Lara said when her sister was discerning religious life she would sometimes go with her to encounter different communities. It was obvious that the religious life is where she was supposed to be, she said.

When Sister Rosario first told her family she was going into the convent, Lara said, it did not go over well with her mother or her grandmother, who cried. "Eventually, they loved that she was there," Lara said. And her family in Mexico celebrated that someone in the family would be praying for them. She said they all felt a little closer to God.

The first two years Lara did not see her sister very much, and that was the hardest part for her, she said.

The Klekars have not seen their daughter since 2019, but Skype with her every Sunday if possible.

"I'm ready to see her. I'm ready to hug her," Robert said. "Texting hugs just aren't the same."

Ultimately, Lara and the Klekars agreed that they have gained a kinship with the congregations who are the new families of their loved ones. They both said they have enjoyed the kindness, thoughtfulness and welcoming of the religious communities.

"I'm just so proud of her," Margaret said of Cherise. "This is her calling. She's at home."

The survey of religious counted responses from 55 sisters and nuns and 57 brothers and priests. The following are some of the other findings of the report:

- On average, responding religious report that they were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life.

- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2019 is 38. Half of the responding religious are age 34 or younger. The youngest is 24 and the oldest is 71.

- Seven in ten (71%) responding religious report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian, European American, or white. One in ten (13%) identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. Fewer than one in ten identifies as African/African American/black (7%) and one in twenty (5%) identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a).

- Three-fourths of responding religious (76%) were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most common country of origin is Vietnam.

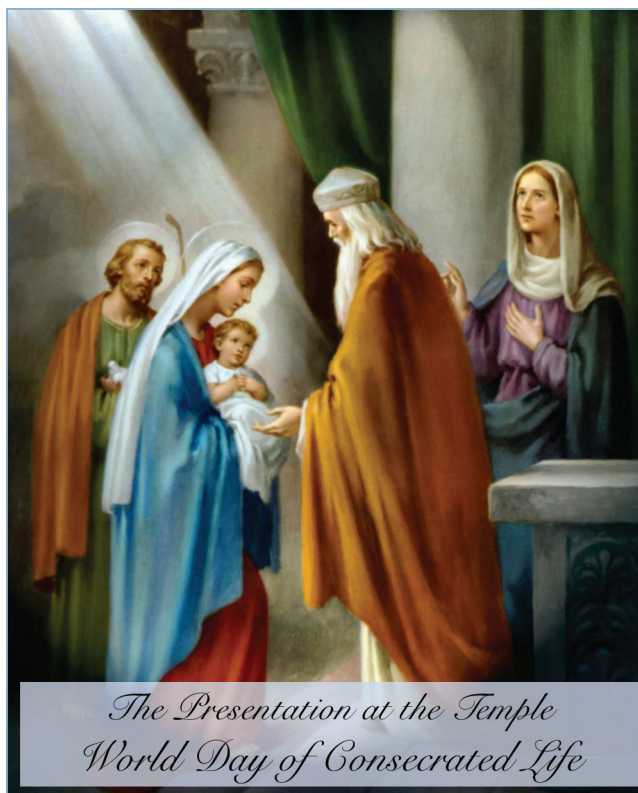
- On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 24 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 13 years before perpetual profession.

- Nine in ten (89%) responding religious report that someone encouraged them to consider a vocation to religious life. Respondents are less likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from parish priests, friends, or from a religious sister or brother.

- Three-fourths (74%) of the Profession Class of 2020 have more than one sibling. A quarter (25%) has one brother or sister. A third (35%) report having two or three siblings. Two-fifths (39%) have four or more siblings.

- Three quarters of the respondents (75%) are from families where both parents are Catholic. Just over four in five (84%) have been Catholic since birth. Among the 16% of respondents who became Catholic later in life, the average age at which they entered the Church was 20 years old.

- Nearly half of the responding religious (45%) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is higher than that for all Catholic adults in the United States (16%). These respondents are also more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (38 of responding religious, compared to 8% of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (38% of responding religious, compared to 5% of U.S. adult Catholics).



*The Presentation at the Temple  
World Day of Consecrated Life*

*Bishop Brendan Cahill celebrated World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life at 9 a.m. Mass on Feb. 7 at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory in Victoria.*

## The Emmaus Center

The Emmaus Center provides individual, couple, family, adolescent and children's counseling as well as specialized support groups from a Catholic perspective.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (361) 212-0830.



Join in listening to Bishop Brendan Cahill every third Tuesday of the month at 6:30 a.m. on *Relevant Radio Morning Air with John Harper*. Listeners can call in with questions or comments. You can listen to past podcasts online.

Relevant Radio® has been helping people bridge the gap between faith and everyday life through informative, entertaining, and interactive programming twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. The Relevant Radio network is currently serving the Church with 127 stations reaching 39 states, with a potential listening audience of 133 million people. Programming can be heard worldwide via streaming audio at [relevantradio.com](http://relevantradio.com) and on the mobile app.

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# ‘Tolton’ production coming to diocese

“Tolton: From Slave to Priest,” a 75-minute live multimedia drama about the first African American priest is coming to the Diocese of Victoria this fall. More information will be released when a date is set.

The diocese already had contracted with Saint Luke Productions to have four performances this month, but due to COVID-19 spikes, the diocese and the production company agreed it would be best to postpone the production. Two performances were set for school audiences only and two were to be

open to the public.

Jim Coleman is the actor playing the role of Father Tolton. He is best known for his role of Roger Parker in the Nickelodeon show, “My Brother and Me.”

“Father Tolton’s story needs to be told,” Coleman was quoted in a press release from Saint Luke Productions. “As a black man, this very important part of history is something that I want the world to hear about. I truly feel blessed to be one to share Father Augustus Tolton with all who will listen!”



Actor Jim Coleman portrays Father Augustus Tolton in a new drama about the priest’s life, produced by Saint Luke Productions.

## Born into slavery, Tolton shattered many barriers

**BY MONTENEGRO FLYNN**  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Father Augustus Tolton, who in 1886 became the first identified Black priest ordained for the United States, challenged the status quo to bring about social change.

Father Tolton lived a life of joy, rooted in his desire to help others and humbly work to achieve equality and justice for all, said participants of a panel discussion about the priest’s legacy.

The Archdiocese of Chicago opened Father Tolton’s sainthood cause in 2010. Pope Francis declared him “venerable” in June 2019 after a theological commission

unanimously recognized his “virtuous and heroic life.” Two steps of the process remain: beatification and canonization.

Father Tolton served as a parish priest in Chicago, where he died in 1897 at age 43.

Last year in August, an online presentation called “Tolton’s Legacy: A Roadmap to Unity,” was organized by the Tolton Ambassador Corps, a nationwide group of Catholics commissioned to spread awareness about the significance of Father Tolton’s cause for sainthood.

Panelists addressed lessons from the life of the African American priest who struggled with slavery, racism and injustice, but persevered because of his faith. They said his

life is an example of faithful commitment to justice that can inspire today’s Catholics.

“The church really, truly formed him because they really saved him. They took him from the ravages of his background and made something out of him, and gave him a chance in life that otherwise he would not

have received from others,” said Auxiliary Bishop Joseph N. Perry of Chicago, archdiocesan postulator of the sainthood cause.

Father Tolton was born in Missouri in 1854. While he was still a child, his mother escaped slavery with her children, opening the door to a Catholic education that later flourished into a vocation. As his repeated efforts to enter seminaries in the U.S. were rebuffed, Father Tolton pursued his priestly formation in Rome and was ordained a priest there in 1886.

After his ordination, he was sent back to the U.S. to serve in Illinois, becoming the first African American priest to do missionary work in his own country. Throughout his ministry, Father Tolton encountered widespread racism, but he remained focused on shattering barriers of prejudice and hatred.

Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, director of the Institute of Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans, called for greater access to faith formation and active involvement of parishioners in the life of the church.

“If we’re going to have a thriving clergy, if we’re going to have religious, then we as laypeople have to be partners with them. We have to be recruiting them, we have to be supporting them, we have to make sure we stand up for them when they run into hardships,” Bellow said.

Bishop Perry invited families and parish communities to nurture vocations like the religious people who encouraged Father Tolton to consider his vocation.

“Regardless of what is dished out to us,” Bishop Perry said, “we have to return respect and love and that in itself will save the world.”

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## Meals • Picnics and More

February

Lent begins  
on  
Ash Wednesday  
February 17

**El Campo**—St. Philip the Apostle School Virtual Dinner, Dance and Auction on Feb. 20. Visit their Facebook page at StPhilipCatholicSchool or website <https://stphilipschool.org/>. For more information, call the school office at 979-543-2901.

**Victoria**—A silent retreat planned for Lent. “From Ashes to Glory” is a silent Lenten retreat set for Feb. 25-28 at the Spiritual Renewal Center. The Rev. Michael Rother, pastor of St. Phillip the Apostle Catholic Church in El Campo, along with Deacon Larry Hoelscher of St. Philip and his wife, Patricia Hoelscher who is a spiritual director for the Emmaus Counseling Center in Victoria, are leading the retreat. All rooms will be private, and the organizers are following strict COVID-19 procedures. Cost of the retreat is \$225 and includes seven meals. Payment can be made to St. Philip Catholic Church, c/o Deacon Larry Hoelscher, 304 West Church St., El Campo, TX 77437. More information and the registration form are available by visiting [www.stphilipapostle.org/faith-formation](http://www.stphilipapostle.org/faith-formation), or by calling Patricia Hoelscher 979-257-9984.

March

**Hillje** — St. Procopius Spring Festival March 7 at the parish hall. A fried chicken, white rice, gravy and corn dinner will be served starting at 11a.m. at \$10 each (plate-to-go only). There will be a raffle drawing after meal served.

April

**Victoria** — Our Lady of Sorrows and Santísima Trinidad 2021 Raffle Sale will be held April 18, at Our Lady of Sorrows after the 2 p.m. Mass. Tickets are \$5 each for a chance at 30 prizes (need not be present to win). To purchase tickets they will be sold before and after Mass, at the Rectory, or call Louis Rodriguez 361-648-3971, Cruzy Cervantes 361-676-6258, Susie Verver 361-218-8320, or Mercedes Robles 361-218-5839.

Do you have any  
calendar of events for the  
Lighthouse?

Submit to  
[lighthouse@victoriadiocese.org](mailto:lighthouse@victoriadiocese.org)

## Ministries • Ongoing Activities

*All Ministries and Ongoing Activities at this time are scheduled to change with the pandemic. Before attending a meeting please call ahead to verify that the meeting is being held.*

**ACTS Retreats**—Anyone needing any information regarding ACTS Retreats in the diocese should email [dovactschapter@victoriadiocese.org](mailto:dovactschapter@victoriadiocese.org).

**Catholic Family Services** —To find Catholic organizations that focus on family, visit the Catholic Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers at <http://www.nacflm.org>.

**Courage** — Ministers to persons with same-sex attractions and their loved ones. The ministry also has an outreach, EnCourage, which ministers to relatives, spouses, and friends of persons with same-sex attractions. It is a Roman Catholic Apostolate endorsed by the Pontifical Council for the Family. For information, visit <http://www.couragerc.net>.

**Crisis Pregnancy Center of Victoria** — A sister organization to the Gabriel Project staffed by volunteers that offers help to girls and women who find themselves in a difficult situation due to an unplanned pregnancy. Office located at 1501 E. Red River, is open 1-4 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Free pregnancy tests offered and medical referrals are made for prenatal care. New volunteers are welcome. For information call 361-575-6171.

**Emmaus Center** — Offers individual, couple, family, adolescent and children’s counseling, as well as specialized support groups. Spiritual direction is also available if requested. To make an appointment, call 361-212-0830.

## School Registrations

**Diocese of Victoria**—New student registration is happening now or soon to happen in our Catholic schools throughout the diocese. Call your local school for dates and times to enroll your children for a Catholic education.

## What’s on the web?

## Weekly Wednesday Webchats

Each week Justin Reyes, director of Family Services, posts an interview with someone in our diocese. Sometimes he will interview a member of the clergy, and sometimes it is the personal story of one of the faithful. One Wednesday a month he will post “Cinco Preguntas!” a Spanish-language interview featuring a local minister.

## Bite-Sized Catholic

Check out this new Facebook page that helps explain Catholicism a bite at a time. This was created to help Catholics share their faith with others who may be seeking answers. It is a good way to engage in conversations about what we, as Catholics, believe. Visit [www.facebook.com/bitesizedcatholic](http://www.facebook.com/bitesizedcatholic).

## Year of the Family Prayer Jar

Did you know we have a prayer jar for special intentions during this Year of the Family? Place your intentions in the prayer jar by going to <https://forms.gle/UGR46RC739AntJbp8>. Visit [www.victoriadiocese.org](http://www.victoriadiocese.org) to learn more about the Year of the Family resources.

**Engaged Encounter** 2021 Dates: April 16-18, June 4-6, September 17-19, November 12-14. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Fee must accompany registration form. For information, call 361-573-0828 or visit [www.victoriadiocese.org](http://www.victoriadiocese.org).

**Gabriel Project of the Crossroads** — Helps women experiencing a crisis pregnancy as an alternative to abortion. Victoria: Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at 101 W. Convent. Light supper included. For angel workshop/training dates, contact Lisa Kainer 361-676-3264 or [lisa\\_heysquierdo@yahoo.com](mailto:lisa_heysquierdo@yahoo.com); DeWitt County: Meetings are the third Monday of each month during the school year at 5:30 p.m. at the Yorktown Public Library, 103 W. Main St. Coordinators for DeWitt Chapter are Wayne and Margie Smith 361-491-0067; Lavaca County: Meets 6 p.m. (during the school year), contact Julie Kubena Lavaca County Coordinator at 361-798-3579 for dates and location.

**Grief Ministry** — An ongoing Grief Group meets at the Holy Family Church conference room in Victoria at 7 p.m., on the first and third Thursdays each month. Adults who have experienced the death of a loved one may attend (after three months have passed). Call Sharon at 361-578-7572 before attending.

**id.9:16 Ministry** — For adults in their 20s and 30s, single or married. Held at Holy Family in Victoria every first Thursday of the month. Starts with 6 p.m. Mass followed by dinner and a talk live streamed from the headquarters in Michigan and fellowship. Childcare available to those who RSVP. It is open to all young adults of the diocese. For information, or to RSVP for events, e-mail [id916victoria@gmail.com](mailto:id916victoria@gmail.com).

**Incarnate Word Prayer Group** — Praise and worship 7:30-9 p.m. Mondays in the auditorium at Incarnate Word Convent, 1101 N.E. Water St. For information, contact Sr. Louise Marie Jones at 361-575-7111 or [amormeus@yahoo.com](mailto:amormeus@yahoo.com).

**Mothers of Grace** — A new mothers’ group at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory. For information, contact Leslie Book at [book.leslie@gmail.com](mailto:book.leslie@gmail.com) or visit their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/Mothersofgraceolv/](http://www.facebook.com/Mothersofgraceolv/).

**Natural Family Planning** — NFP is the only church-approved form of family planning. For the CREIGTON MODEL Fertility Care System (CrMS) featuring NaPro TECHNOLOGY™ contact Susanne Koch in Wharton at 505-710-0903 or [susannekoch614@gmail.com](mailto:susannekoch614@gmail.com). Also in the Cuero area contact, Ashley Rodriguez at 361-293-0700 or [ashleyfay09@gmail.com](mailto:ashleyfay09@gmail.com).

**Raphael’s Refuge** — To build and maintain a memorial in honor of babies, born and unborn. It is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Flatonia. Peer counseling and spiritual direction are available for those suffering a loss of a baby due to miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death or abortion. For information, contact Midge Elam at 361-865-3021, 361-258-1514, or visit [www.raphaelsrefuge.org](http://www.raphaelsrefuge.org).

**Retrouvaille** — Retrouvaille, meaning “rediscovery,” is a marriage-healing ministry offered in the diocese to couples in difficult marriages. Contact John and Jennifer Vincent at [jbvjov@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jbvjov@sbcglobal.net) or 361-580-2770; or call 800-470-2230; or visit [www.helpourmarriage.org](http://www.helpourmarriage.org) or [www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org).





# Virtual 5K for moms in need has wide participation

Every deanery in the Diocese of Victoria had people signed up to participate in a virtual 5K to benefit the new Bethlehem Maternity Home in Victoria.

At press time on Jan. 29, more than 100 people had registered and raised more than \$2,000, according to Shannon Thomas, chairman of the Year of the Family committee in the diocese. The event took place Jan. 21-29 and participants could sign up at any time and complete the 5K at any time during that eight-day period.

Winning parishes were to be announced by Friday, Feb. 5. The parish with the greatest participation and the parish that raised the most money each will receive a traveling trophy – a statue of Mary, Mother of the Unborn.

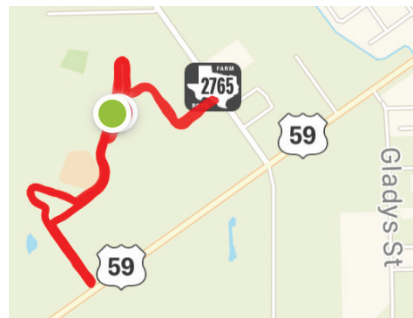
Parishes represented include: Holy Cross, East Bernard; Holy Family, Victoria; Our Lady of Lourdes, Victoria; Our Lady of Victory, Victoria; Sacred Heart, Hallettsville; St.

John Bosco, Vanderbilt; St. Joseph, Inez; St. Mary, Victoria; St. Michael, Cuero; St. Peter, Blessing; St. Philip, El Campo; Sts. Cyril & Methodius, Shiner; St. Michael, Weimar; and Queen of Peace, Sweet Home.

Bethlehem Maternity Home and First English Lutheran Church in Victoria also had representation.

The maternity home, a venture of the Gabriel Project of the Crossroads, recently found a property and is undergoing renovations to accommodate pregnant women in crisis so that they have a safe, supportive home when they bring their new babies into the world.

Barbara Williams, a board member of the Gabriel Project, said the home is currently looking for staff members – full and part time. For job description and other information, contact Lisa Howard, director, at Howard.lisa39@yahoo.com, or 361-866-5027.



Susie Orsak, right, sent in this photo of her family finishing the virtual 5K to benefit the Bethlehem Maternity Home in Victoria. The screen shot shows their route. With her are her daughter, Kimberly Orsak Eide, and grandchildren, Jacob, Parker and Jaxson. They are members of St. Philip the Apostle in El Campo. (Contributed Photo)



# Local podcasts can bring edification to a busy day

Continued from pg. 1

souls of families on the go.

The first podcast, an introduction to the DOV Family Podcast series, refers to the “Marriage Minute,” as Father Gary’s spot was originally called, but the segments may or may not be within the 60-second mark, so it is officially a “moment.”

“He’s such an amazing wealth of knowledge on marriage,” Reyes said.

Father Gary said he was apprehensive about doing a podcast at first because it is new to him, but he has become enthusiastic about the good he could do using this format.

“I hope to reach as many couples as possible. My passion is working with married couples and assisting them in building stronger marriages. In doing so, I truly believe this will strengthen the gift of family life throughout our diocese and beyond,” Father Gary said. “Some of the topics are based on the particular liturgical season, while others are inspired by the couples I work with in my parish and counseling ministry. To be honest, sometimes I read a particular Gospel, view something on television or read a newspaper or Internet article and I am inspired to develop it into an article for married couples.”

And though Father Gary already has many jobs – vicar general, chancellor, pastor, counselor, director of the Emmaus Center for counseling – this is not something he perceives as another item on his to-do list. “I thoroughly enjoy working with and minister-

ing to married couples and seeking to build up the sacrament of matrimony. When I do, I discover something new about myself, my ministry and how I can better minister to my spouse, the Church. It is a vital component of who I am and what I do every day.”

It’s been a little more than a year since Justin Reyes joined the Diocese of Victoria staff and started growing the Office of Family Evangelization. He has developed several new ways to evangelize and solicits feedback to figure out what works best. His Wednesday Webchats have been popular, especially when he interviews parish priests. “I noticed that people loved hearing from their pastors,” he said.

And some of his listeners suggested the podcasts.

Two other Victoria-area priests, the Rev. Kristopher Fuchs, pastor of St. Mary Catholic Church, and the Rev. Jacob Koether, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows have teamed up to

discuss other aspects of theology and discipleship and will be a regular feature available through the podcast.

Father Jacob said he is open to discussing anything from a Catholic point of view in hopes of helping people see things “with a Catholic imagination that will then inform their living.”

“I think people want, among many things, security, confidence, clarity, transcendence, strength, joy, and peace. Everyone is look-

ing for it in different ways. But the only One who can provide it to the degree which we need is Jesus, who reveals Himself fully in the Catholic Church. I think people need Him. Really, I think most even want Him but just don’t realize it yet. As far as topics, the big one would be the basic Gospel message in all its various forms: God is real, He loves you, He sent His Son to free you, and He wants to walk with you every day, guiding you deeper into light and new life,” Father Jacob said.



**DOV  
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*“Marriage Moment”  
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DOV Family Evangelization  
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[www.buzzsprout.com/1404520](http://www.buzzsprout.com/1404520)



Reyes also plans to have “special guests” at least once a month on the Wednesday Webchat/podcast. The first guest scheduled was the Rev. Bryan Heyer, pastor of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Shiner, whose segment was broadcast on Jan. 27.

It was in September, Reyes said, that he realized he needed to add a new level to his family evangelization ministry. He was learning about podcasting at home through some of his personal projects and decided to bring the idea to work. Because the podcasts are available on many platforms, it could reach a wider audience. “Different demographics use different platforms,” he said.

“In fishing for men, you have to try a bunch of different lures before finding the right one. Right now I think we’re just casting to see if we get any bites,” according to Father Jacob. “Hopefully, we can be of some assistance to families and at the very least provide some positive content in their news feed.”

The DOV Family Podcast was announced as a gift to the diocese at Christmastime. “I think this will fill a need,” he said. “Hopefully these will be good conversation starters for families.”

The series can be downloaded to a smartphone via Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify and most other platforms, viewed on the DOV Family Evangelization Facebook Page or YouTube, or listeners can go to <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1404520>.