

Quary ending tenure as OCS superintendent on a high note

JANET JONES

The Catholic Lighthouse

After 16 years as superintendent of the Office Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Victoria, Dr. John Quary has announced his retirement on May 31.

“It’s been a joy,” he said, “... a blessing in my life.”

He is leaving on a high note, he added, having hit some important goals in his tenure, including getting on paper a teacher salary scale, the revamping of the Diocesan School Advisory Committee to have a rotation so that all schools will be represented, updating of the handbooks, new security measures and getting a better handle on the accreditation process to name a few.

Working with the University of Houston-Victoria, he helped establish a fast-track program, through which 12 people recently received their masters’ degrees in education leadership with a focus on Catholic schools. The program was designed to have leaders in the schools qualified to eventually move into principal positions in the Catholic schools.

And he’s especially proud of the motto established: F.I.R.S.T. Class Education for Life, with F.I.R.S.T being an acronym for faith, integrity, respect, scholarship and

See Quary ending tenure, pg. 6



Janet Jones/The Catholic Lighthouse

Very Rev. Charles E. Otsiwah is pictured inside Holy Cross Catholic Church in East Bernard where he is pastor. He also serves in a special role as vicar for clergy.

Shepherding the shepherds

Vicar for Clergy a special vocation among priests

JANET JONES

The Catholic Lighthouse

While our priests immerse themselves in the duties of providing for the spiritual needs of their parishes, there is one among them chosen by the bishop to watch out for their needs.

Very Rev. Charles E. Otsiwah, pastor of Holy Cross in East Bernard, took on that role in the Diocese of Victoria a little

over a year ago. He’s the Vicar for Clergy, an extension of the bishop’s office with the special work of touching base with all of the priests and offering help when they need it.

Before him, Rev. Monsignor John Peters, who is the Vicar General, served in both capacities.

See Shepherding the shepherds, pg. 16

Signs of hope and light can be found in dark times

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

During our Board meeting for Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in December, we received a report summarizing charitable work being done throughout the world. One of the slides in the presentation showed a young husband and wife holding their baby just after baptism. The beautiful couple, well-dressed for the occasion and radiantly smiling, seemed full of hope and life. In the background of the photo we could see the rubble of a building destroyed in the bombing of Gaza.

This photo was published on the CRS website in November: Snapshot of Life in Gaza | CRS. Their website reports stories of hope and love in the middle of violence and destruction from around the world.

As Catholics we pray and realize that we

A Shepherd's Message

By Bishop Brendan Cahill



are “One Body, One Spirit” with our brothers and sisters throughout the world. In each part of the world, people are celebrating the sacraments, receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord in Communion and caring for those most in need of peace.

The Christmas season brings to our spiritual lives the hope that the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem continues to bring to the world. Even in the middle of our suffering

and pain, maybe especially in the middle of this, God shows His love and care for each one of us.

The young couple in the photo described above offer support for our brothers and sisters in a dangerous part of the world. They are hope and light.

There are men and women around our diocese who offer support to us in our times of suffering. Each month I look forward

to reading the stories in the *Lighthouse* about the hope and light people bring to one another. In many ways, my hope and experience in reading these pages is that we see that when we are in mourning or hungry or homeless or in despair, there is someone who is willing to reach out and offer a helping hand.

May God bless you and your families in the New Year 2024, may the peace of the Lord come upon our world and our communities, and may we always know that there is someone willing and able to help us in our need.

Let's keep each other in prayer.

+Brendan

Se pueden encontrar signos de esperanza y luz en tiempos oscuros

Mensaje del Pastor

By Obispo Brendan Cahill



Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

Durante nuestra reunión de la junta directiva de Catholic Relief Services (CRS) en diciembre, recibimos un informe que resume el trabajo caritativo que se está realizando en todo el mundo. Una de las diapositivas de la presentación mostraba a un joven esposo y esposa abrazando a su bebé justo después del bautismo -- la

hermosa pareja, bien vestida para la ocasión y con una sonrisa radiante, parecía llena de esperanza y vida. Al fondo de la foto podíamos ver los escombros de un edificio destruido por el bombardeo de Gaza.

Esta foto se publicó en el sitio web de CRS en noviembre: Instantánea de la vida en Gaza | CRS. Su sitio web informa sobre historias de esperanza y amor en medio de la violencia y la destrucción de todo el mundo.

Como católicos rezamos y nos damos cuenta de que somos «un cuerpo, un espíritu» con nuestros hermanos y hermanas

de todo el mundo. En cada parte del mundo, las personas celebran los sacramentos, reciben el Cuerpo y la Sangre de nuestro Señor en comunión y cuidan de los que más necesitan la paz.

La temporada navideña trae a nuestras vidas espirituales la esperanza que el nacimiento de Jesús en Belén continúa traer al mundo. Incluso en medio de nuestro sufrimiento y dolor, tal vez especialmente en medio de esto, Dios muestra su amor y cuidado por cada uno de nosotros.

La joven pareja de la foto descrita arriba ofrece apoyo a nuestros hermanos y hermanas en una parte peligrosa del mundo. Son esperanza y luz.

Hay hombres y mujeres en nuestra diócesis que nos ofrecen apoyo en estos

momentos de sufrimiento. Todos los meses espero leer las historias del *Lighthouse* sobre la esperanza y la luz que las personas se traen unas a otras. En muchos sentidos, mi esperanza y mi experiencia al leer estas páginas es que vemos que cuando estamos de luto, hambrientos, sin hogar o desesperados, hay alguien que está dispuesto a tendernos la mano y echarnos una mano

Que Dios los bendiga a ustedes y a sus familias en el Año Nuevo 2024, que la paz del Señor caiga sobre nuestro mundo y nuestras comunidades, y que siempre sepamos que hay alguien dispuesto y capaz de ayudarnos en lo que necesitamos.

Mantengámonos unos a otros en oración.

+Brendan

Bishop Cahill's Schedule

1	January	11	8:15 a.m. school Mass and visit with Holy Cross; Bay City	• 6:30 p.m. Mass for one-year anniversary celebration for Lavaca's Men's Group; Sweet Home	31	• 8 a.m. School Mass and visit, St. Joseph; Yoakum • 5:30 p.m. CCD visit with Our Lady of the Gulf; Port Lavaca	
	8 a.m. New Year's Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory; Victoria	12	8 a.m. school Mass and visit with St. Michael; Weimar				
2	9 a.m. Legion of Mary Presidium meeting; Victoria	14-16	Diocesan Priests' retreat, Spiritual Renewal Center	23	9 a.m. Legion of Mary Presidium meeting; Victoria	February	
2-5	Region X Bishop's Retreat; San Antonio	15	4:30 p.m. meal with OVISS Healthcare Sisters; Incarnate Word Convent	24-27	Southwest Liturgical Conference; Oklahoma City		
8	2:30 p.m. Communities of Faith meeting	16	6:30 a.m. Morning Air Radio	28	9 a.m. Catholic School Week Mass at Our Lady of Victory; Victoria	3	10 a.m. Blessing of the Seed and Soil; Ganado
9	9 a.m. Legion of Mary Presidium meeting; Victoria	17-20	March for Life, Washington, D.C.	29	1:30 p.m. Pension Board meeting; chancery	4	• 10 a.m. Confirmation Mass for St. Roch, St. Anthony and Sts. Peter and Paul; Columbus
10	• 10 a.m. Presbyteral Council; Chancery	21	10:30 a.m. Mass at St. Agnes (Feast of St. Agnes); Edna	30	• 9 a.m. Legion of Mary Presidium meeting; Victoria • 6 p.m. St. John Bosco Feast Day Vigil Mass; Vanderbilt		• 2 p.m. Confirmation Mass, Our Lady of Victory; Victoria
	• 6 p.m. Visit with St. John CCD classes; New Taiton	22	• Noon Mass with Missionary Catechists				



USPS-001015 (ISSN 0894-7740)

Diocese of Victoria mission:

*To be Christ-like
people who
work together
to serve the Church
so that every person
encounters the
love of Jesus.*



MEMBER

Established 1987
Published Monthly
1505 E. Mesquite Lane, Victoria, TX 77901
(361) 573-0828
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Publisher:
The Most Rev. Brendan J. Cahill

Managing Editor:
Janet Jones
jjones@victoriadiocese.org

Communications Assistant/Graphic Specialist:
Regina Matus-Janak
janakr@victoriadiocese.org

Deadline for advertising and news items is the 15th of the preceding month.

E-mail local stories, photos or festival announcements to:
lighthouse@victoriadiocese.org
(361) 573-0828 / (361) 573-5725 FAX
www.victoriadiocese.org

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Periodical postage paid at Victoria, TX and additional Entry Offices
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
The Catholic Lighthouse
P.O. Box 4070
Victoria, TX 77903

Subscription rates are: \$7 per year within the diocese / \$10 outside the diocese.

Sister Margaret Willburn joined the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament (OVISS) as a novice this past summer. She is shown here during her first profession of vows at the convent chapel.



Contributed Photo

Consecrated Life celebrated Feb. 2

When Jesus was an infant, Mary and Joseph brought him to the temple in Jerusalem to be consecrated to the Lord. The feast day for this remembrance is Feb. 2, also chosen as the day to celebrate World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life.

This year, the Diocese of Victoria in Texas will commemorate this special occasion and celebrate the many religious sisters in the diocese as Bishop Brendan Cahill celebrates Mass at 5:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory.

Families, and especially young adults, are encouraged to attend this special Mass with the Sisters.

Pope St. John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life in 1997. The celebration attached to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is also known as Candlemas Day, the day on which candles are blessed symbolizing Christ who is the light of the world. So, too, those in consecrated life are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to all peoples.

We pray that many more women and men respond to the call to consecrated life.

A grand opening

VICTORIA – The Our Lady of Loreto Resale Shop, formerly the Our Lady of Sorrows Resale Shop, was re-opened and blessed Nov. 29. It has been closed since Hurricane Harvey damaged it. Bishop Brendan Cahill celebrated Mass and led a blessing of the resale shop named for the Blessed Mother and dedicated to helping families, according to Very Rev. Jacob Koether, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows. Father Jacob is pictured here placing the image of Our Lady of Loreto on a shelf. The holy water pot and sprinkler (also called an aspergillum) used to bless the store is seen on the counter. Business hours are Wednesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Donations can be dropped off at regular business hours or by appointment.



Contributed Photo

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

Leona Sedlar
in memory of Eunice Marie Brosch
and Ralph Lau

Acolyte

Mrs. Milburn Kram and Family
in memory of Deacon Milburn Kram

Knights of Columbus #1329
in memory of Steve Motal,
Victor Chovanec, Albert Totah,
Jose Martinez, Wayne Dierlam and
U.A. Schulz

Harvey Michna

Candidate

Callan & Linda Oltmann

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 >.

December 18, 2023

- **Rev. Wayne Flagg and Rev. Philip Brune Seminary Burse**
Lector
In memory of Ewald Schertz by Lambert and Carol Brune
 - **Rev. Joseph Koebel Seminary Burse**
Acolyte
In memory of Rev. Joseph Koebel by Nada Knights of Columbus Council #3371
 - **Rev. Msgr. Timothy Kosler Seminary Burse**
Acolyte
In memory of Mrs. Eunice Brosch by students and faculty of St. Rose of Lima Catholic School
 - **Rev. Msgr. John C. Peters Seminary Burse #8**
Candidate
A donation for Vocations by a friend
 - **Rev. Jerome J. Stryk Seminary Burse #2**
Acolyte
Donation by Daniel Stryk
 - **Anthony and Rose Marie Trippodo Liggio Seminary Burse**
Acolyte
In memory of Bernard Frank Ripper by KC Council #2902, Schulenburg
- **Rev. Msgr. Victor Schmidtzensky Seminary Burse**
Acolyte
In memory of Rev. Monsignor Victor Schmidtzensky by Nada Knights of Columbus Council #3371
 - **Henry A. Schoenfeld Seminary Burse**
Lector
In memory of Mary Pitcher by Mary Jo Rebecsek
 - **Rev. Joe Vrana Seminary Burse, In Honor of his Golden Jubilee Year**
Acolyte
In memory of Rev. Joseph “Joe” Vrana by Nada Knights of Columbus Council #3371
 - **Rev. Kristopher Fuchs Seminary Burse**
Lector
In memory of Kendal D. Gebauer (cousin) by Paul and Helen Flessner
- To contribute to an existing Seminary Endowment Fund, send contributions with the appropriate fund designation to:

Diocese Of Victoria
Seminary Endowment Fund
P. O. Box 4070
Victoria, TX 77903

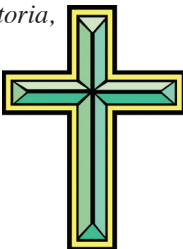
Please remember in prayer the priests of the Diocese of Victoria,
who were ordained during the month of January:

Rev. Dominic Trung Nguyen	01/04/2003	Our Lady of Lavang Quasi Parish, Palacios
Rev. Nelson Gonzalez-Nieto	01/23/2004	St. Anthony Church, Columbus
Rev. Richard Barfield	01/08/2022	Our Lady of the Gulf Church, Port Lavaca
Rev. Tran Dinh	01/08/2022	St. Mary Church, Victoria

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

Rev. Wolfgang Mimms, O.Ss.T.	01/02/2008
Rev. Jerome Stryk	01/05/1999
Rev. Msgr. Gino Bernasconi	01/31/2006

For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord;
so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. (Romans 14:8)



Chancery Office will be closed
Monday, Jan. 15 for
Martin Luther King Day.
Offices will re-open
Tuesday, Jan. 16 at 8:30 a.m.



ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
Victoria, Texas

PARISH FESTIVAL

**SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 4, 2024**
10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Victoria Community Center

**Barbecue Brisket and Sausage, German Potatoes,
Green Beans, Dessert, Tea, Water or Coffee**
Catered by Mike Pozzi Catering, Victoria
Serving 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
\$14.00 a Plate - Dine In or Plates To Go

LIVE AND SILENT AUCTIONS

 Beer Garden - Cake Wheel - Plants
Country Store - Games for Kids - Concessions 

RAFFLE - FABULOUS PRIZES
Tickets Available at the Church Office and at the Festival

Endurance and love made the humble great

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following sermon was written for the Second Sunday in Ordinary time, Cycle A. Father Kram titled it, "Do We Know Jesus?"

Is it not true that sometimes we may have known an individual for a very long time without ever really knowing much about him? And how many great individuals there have been in the past whose accomplishments were not recognized until long after their deaths!

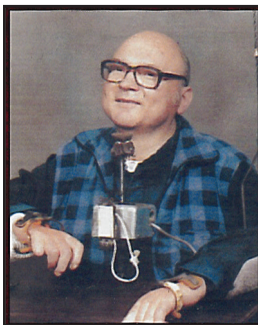
Take, for example, Abraham Lincoln. On the day he made his famous Gettysburg Address, the main speaker was a professional orator named Edward Everett. Everett spoke on for two hours, but now hardly anyone even knows his name.

The officials of the Gettysburg dedication did not even want Lincoln there. They were afraid that he might make a fool of himself and spoil the solemnity of the occasion. He had to be invited because he was president.

Yet the school children of today still memorize his famous words, "Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Lincoln was also the man who issued the famous Emancipation Proclamation, which set the slaves free.

Another example is that of President



1929-2000

Father Charles Kram Corner

Harry S. Truman, the man from Missouri. He was not even expected to be elected. In fact, one influential city newspaper printed the premature headline, "Dewey Wins By Landslide."

His wife complained all his life about his crusty language and he took a shot of whiskey every day in defiance of his Baptist faith.

Yet he was the man who ordered the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which ended World War II and opened the nuclear age. He was the one who fired General MacArthur and saved the world from a disastrous war with China. He had a famous sign on his desk, which read, "The buck stops here."

Then there are all those memorable sculptors and painters and composers from the past who were not recognized in their day but whose works have become priceless heritage.

In the case of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, and the Messiah, he lived among his own people for some 30 years as a carpenter's son.

Even John the Baptist, who by the testimony of Jesus Himself, was the greatest man ever born and the greatest of all the prophets, a man specially chosen to prepare the way for Jesus' coming, did not recognize Him until He came to be baptized in the Jordan and the Holy Spirit revealed to him that Jesus was the one.

When John saw Jesus coming toward him, he called Him the Lamb of God. This title must have stirred up many a fervent response in the hearts of those who heard it. For on the night of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, the blood of the Passover lamb, sprinkled on their doorposts, saved their firstborns from the angel of death.

And now, in John's time, every morning and every evening in the Temple of Jerusalem, an unblemished lamb was sacrificed for the peoples' sins.

In the Christian times in which we live, we can know so much more about the Jesus who was almost a stranger among the people to whom he was first sent.

Sometimes we are asked, "Have you found Jesus?" "Do you know Jesus?" "Do you have faith to be saved?"

For us Christians, the answer is always, "Yes." We have centuries of Christian culture and worship to fall back on. We have the records of countless scholars and saints who have taught and lived the faith down through the ages. We have the moral support and prayers of numberless fellow believers.

To us, Jesus is the Redeemer of the human race; every sinner's best friend. He is our strength and our example in every trial; our secure refuge in our last hour.

St. Teresa of Ávila once knelt before the crucifix and asked Jesus, "Why do you let your friends suffer so much?" Jesus replied, "It is because I love them." The saint answered Him, "No wonder you have so few friends."

She was right. We have a Savior who gained His victory by patient endurance. We know Him by the nail prints in His hands and in His feet and by His wounded side. We must accept Him, cross and all.

We aspire after greatness by making love always our first and finest motivation and by striving to be the humble servants of all and the best that we can be.

Lord Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself to us as the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Help us to make the most out of every opportunity to demonstrate our faithfulness to you. Grant that our fellowship with you may lead many others to know you as we do. Amen.



Contributed Photo

EDNA — Saint Agnes KJZT, Society 111 held a luncheon for the altar servers and their families on Dec. 10 in the Saint Agnes Parish Center. The Christmas luncheon with all the trimmings was donated by Mrs. Aundria Barnes from AJ's restaurant in Edna with the meal being cooked by Mrs. Stephanie Covarrubias. The altar servers received gifts donated by Intoplast Group Corp. as well as gift cards by the KJZT. Santa came to listen to all the Christmas wishes of the little ones. Santa gift bags were given to each one.



Start the New Year Off With Travel

Join us for lunch at our Monthly Travel Meeting on Thursday, January 25, 2024 Sky Restaurant in Victoria (77904) 11:30 a.m. -1:00 p.m. Dutch Lunch **We look forward to seeing you!**

Visit our website and sign-up for our newsletter to stay current on all trips.

Hawaiian Cruise
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For Trip Details See Website:
pathwayswithpatti.com or
Email: gowithlaurie@gmail.com



Contributed Photo

KCs remembered

WEIMAR – The Knights of Columbus, Council 2153, was chartered by the Supreme Council 103 years ago in May 1920. In alignment with the Supreme Council, an annual memorial Mass is devoted to honoring and praying for the 345 knights of the council who have died. During the Mass, they also recognize the Weimar knights who passed away since the previous memorial Mass. This year, those named included: Frank J. Kainer, who became a 3rd Degree Knight in October 1968 and was a member in good standing for 53 consecutive years. He was an Honorary Life Member of the KCs; Eugene (Gene) Garza, a 3rd Degree Knight in good standing with the Weimar Council for the past 12 years. He also was a 4th Degree Member of St. Michael’s Assembly 1527 since February 2017; Walter Lee Kram, a 3rd Degree Member in good standing of the Weimar Council for 67 consecutive years. He was also awarded Honorary Life Membership by the Supreme Council.; and Emil Herzik, a 3rd Degree Member of the Weimar KCs since 2005. He was an active member in good standing of Council 2153 for 18 consecutive years. Pictured after the Mass are Rev. Chase Goodman, pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Church, and Grand Knight Delphin Bartek.

Quary ending tenure as OCS superintendent on a high note

Continued from pg. 1

tradition. In the last few years, the Office of Catholic Schools has also established the annual F.I.R.S.T-Class Awards presentation, which includes teachers of the year for elementary, middle and high school ages and the outstanding alumni from each school.

Dr. Quarry, who also worked as an educator in Sugar Land and in the Los Angeles, Calif., area said he has been amazed at the commitment and love that the small communities have for their schools.

“Bishop David Fellhauer (who hired Quarry) told me, ‘The Catholic roots run deep. They run deep and they grow strong.’”

He said he found out just how strong when a donation was given to one school through a parent-teacher organization that was about \$100,000. At first he thought the amount reported was a large error, because in Los Angeles, he would have been fortunate to get a \$10,000 donation from such an organization. But the amount was correct. In fact, he said, he was told it was a “slow year.”

He also said the resilience of the schools, as displayed during the 2020 pandemic, and the determination to maintain the Catholic presence in the community makes the diocese special.

Ideally, Quarry said, the next superintendent would be hired by April, which would make a smooth transition in the Office of Catholic Schools. As for the next superintendent, he said, “I’m hoping that they will build upon what we have and get involved in the curriculum.” He also said he hopes they can be “more intentional with grant writing.”

Dr. Quarry will continue serving as superintendent for two schools that are administered through the Ordinate of the Chair of St. Peter, which is based in Houston. One school is in San Antonio and one is in Houston.

But he also will enjoy his retirement years with other pursuits.

One thing he will do for himself, he hopes, is travel more. He and his son, Charlie, plan to visit Juneau, Alaska, in 2025, which will make their 50th state capital to visit.

“I would really like to finally get back into my music and finish an album,” he said. He has written some 40 songs of various genres.

And he wants to immerse himself in



Dr. John Quarry

Spanish by traveling to Spain at some point so he can become more proficient in the language.

No matter what he chooses, he knows his years as superintendent here have changed him for the better. “During my time in the Diocese of Victoria, the growth in my own faith has been noticeable and impactful in my life. ... It has given me the opportunity to see God’s work up close and personal throughout our schools and parishes.”

He said he owes a his heartfelt gratitude to the “remarkable group of principals” with whom he’s collaborated over the years, as well as his colleagues in the other departments of the diocese and also to his parents, family and the extended circle of friends for their “unwavering support and prayers.”

Heavenly Helpers

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and

- Shannon Thomas, LMSW, Coordinator of Pastoral Care and Outreach, Diocese of Victoria, (361) 827-7186, pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org.

or

- Bishop or Chancellor of the Diocese of Victoria, (361) 573-0828
Written allegations can be mailed

marked “Personal and Confidential” to
Office of the Bishop
P.O. Box 4070
Victoria, TX 77903



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 Shannon Thomas at (361) 827-7186 or pastoralcare@victoriadiocese.org.

New Year’s challenge: a month of prayer for 12 people

Every year on Jan. 1, many people start a New Year’s resolution. Most of the time it’s to join the gym and eat healthier. One thing I did last year, which I will do again this year, is ask my friends for book recommendations. I asked for 12 recommendations and read a recommendation a month.

I did not only read 12 books. As I’m writing this still in December, I am on book number 70. This is a record for me and I’m pretty happy about it. Reading the recommendations from my friends not only gave me a different insight of them, but also introduced me to books I may have not ever considered picking up and reading.

When I think about how this little fun practice changed my life for the better, even if it was just a little bit, I wonder what could happen if, instead of books, I chose a person to pray for each month.

Obviously, I pray for many people all the time -- all my family, my friends, the people of the diocese, and so forth. These people will always have a spot in my prayers, but maybe I could intentionally pray more often for one person during that month.

Earlier in December, I was asked to lead a half-day retreat in Pasadena. I hate driving in heavy traffic, especially when I do not know where I am going. On the drive up there I noticed that all the cars seemed to

Finding Beauty in Mystery

By Sister Rosario Resendez, OVISS



stay at least one car length away from me. It was like I was driving in my own personal bubble. I started to wonder if something was wrong with my car or if I had cooties or something. Then again, if the other cars did think I had cooties, it didn’t bother me, because I felt so free driving down the highway.

After the retreat I was talking to the couple who invited me and told them about the traffic and how I thought it was funny that everyone was staying away from me. The wife looked at me and said she had prayed for days asking the Blessed Mother to protect me as I traveled to the retreat. She had even specifically said, “May no one get near her as she drives.”



This little locket holds the names of people for whom Sister Rosario Resendez prays every day.

I was, once again, astonished to see the power of prayer, because that was literally what had happened -- no one got near me. Now it was time for me to travel back, and I asked her if she had also prayed for my trip back. She laughed and said she hadn’t but she would start at that moment. We laughed and said our farewells. The trip back wasn’t as pleasant, as I was stuck in a couple of traffic jams, but I still made it home safely.

Still, that whole experience made me think that, if a few days of intentional prayer could open up the highways for somebody, what could a whole month do?

I wear a small silver locket around my neck. In that locket are names of people I pray for every day, and every time I touch that locket, I remember them. They are not aware that their names are in my locket, and I would like to keep it that way; however, when they ask me to pray for them, my answer is always, “Every day.”

So this year I would like to challenge you. As one of your New Year’s resolutions, if not your only one, choose 12 people to pray for, and assign one person per month, then pray for them. They do not have to be your friends, or, dare I say, choose someone you don’t really like or get along with. It is

a blessing to pray for those you find it hard to pray for. Don’t tell these people you are praying for them; let it be between you and God. When you see the blessings start flowing in, smile and thank the Lord. I would like to up the challenge one more notch: When choosing who to pray for and what month to assign them to, be sure one month is assigned for you. Do not be afraid to pray for yourself, there is nothing selfish about it. You need prayer, too, and if you can’t find the words to pray, sit with the Lord. He will help you find the words you need to say.

“How good it is for us to pray together. How good it is to encounter one another in this place where we see one another as brothers and sisters, where we realize that we need one another. Today I want to be one with you. I need your support, your closeness. I would like to invite you to pray together, for one another, with one another. That way we can keep helping one another experience the joy of knowing that Jesus is in our midst and that Jesus helps us to find solutions to the injustices which He Himself already experienced.” — Pope Francis St. Patrick parish, Washington, D.C., Sept. 25, 2015

• Contact Sister Maria del Rosario Resendez by e-mailing her at bishopsecretary.dov@gmail.com.

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St. Aloysius restored to historic state

WESTHOFF – Bishop Brendan Cahill, right, pours chrism on the new altar at St. Aloysius Catholic Church during a dedication of the altar on Dec. 1. The church has completed a restoration that included removing the drop ceilings, uncovering its wooden beams across the vaulted ceiling and the tops of the clear glass windows. The church interior was painted and the pews refinished, among other things. Before anointing the altar, Rev. Jacob Mendoza, pastor, presented Bishop Cahill with the altar stone that covers the relics placed inside the altar and Bishop Cahill installed the stone. After the anointing, incense was burned on the altar to signify that Christ’s sacrifice, as it ascends to God as an odor of sweetness. Father Jacob, above, is shown with the brazier for the incense. Finally the altar is dressed with an altar cloth and candles to signify that it is the Lord’s table where his people are refreshed by his Body and Blood. During his homily, Bishop Cahill said, “The most beautiful part of this picture here, is you and me. The human being is the most beautiful” of all creations. He also spoke of God’s desire for his people to be merciful and said the people of the parish have shown their love by caring for this parish home and providing a beautiful place for their community. “God is merciful we us, we are called to be merciful in the world in which we live,” he said.



Photos: Janet Jones/The Catholic Lighthouse



Contributed Photo

For 37 years of service

HALLETTSVILLE – Bishop Brendan J. Cahill presents an appreciation award to Roman Shimek for the 37 years he served on the Diocese of Victoria finance board, which advises the bishop in financial affairs for the diocese. Pictured with them are Mrs. Roman (Gertrude) Shimek and Rev. Monsignor John Peters, pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and Vicar General for the Diocese of Victoria.



Janet Jones/The Catholic Lighthouse



Contributed Photo

Christmas at Sea gets underway

Above, Brenda Ortmann, left, administrative assistant for the Chancellor’s Office at the Diocese of Victoria, and Val Buentello, administrative assistant for the Office of Safe Environment, hand wrapped gifts to Bishop Brendan Cahill that were taken to the Point Comfort Seafarer’s Center. Rhonda Cummins (with cell phone in the background), the Stella Maris associate for the diocese who runs the center, helps coordinate the Christmas at Sea gifts each year. Crews of ships that come to the port will be given a wrapped box to let them know they are remembered during the Christmas season even if they cannot be at home.

KJT Donates



Contributed Photos

VICTORIA – (above) St. Joseph KJT Society #115 presents a contribution to KJT for the Retired Religious Fund. Pictured above from left are KJT officers Robert A. Stryk, secretary; Margaret Holik, KJT state director; and Joe Putska, treasurer.

(below) KJT Society #115 presents a donation to Our Lady of Victory Cathedral for a televised Mass. Below from left are Joe Pustka, KJT treasurer; Very Rev. Kirby F Hlavaty, rector/pastor Our Lady of Victory Cathedral; Robert A. Stryk, KJT secretary; Rev. Samuel Asantey and Rev. Jonas Kuubeta, parochial vicars of Our Lady of Victory parish.



Contributed Photo

KJZT donates to school improvements

BAY CITY – Officers of KJZT Family Life, Society 100, Our Lady of Snows, Bay City, present Rev. Stephen Vacek of Holy Cross Church with a check for \$2,500 from funds generated from the 2023 Phantom Bake Sale. Society officers pictured with Father Stephen are Margaret Hicks, Treasurer, Margaret Lawrence, president, Jeanette Frontz, vice-president, and Karen Owens, secretary. The money will be added to the Holy Cross Restore, Renew Revitalize Fund for school and church repairs and improvements.



Contributed Photo

KJT donates to IWBS Convent

VICTORIA – KJT Society #115 Victoria, made a contribution to Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament for their good deeds. Pictured from left, are Joe Pustka, society treasure; Sister Kathleen Goike, OVISS; Donald B. Dusek, society president/agent.

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The stages of Mass mirror Jesus' life

Every year the Church remembers and celebrates the mysteries of Jesus' life through the different liturgical seasons. It's like we relive His life and try to soak up the graces in every stage of it.

In Advent, we pray with the ancient Israelites who yearned for a Savior. In Christmas, we marvel at God's humility in taking on a human nature. In Ordinary Time, we grow in the Good News that Jesus proclaimed by word and deed. In Lent, we spend time with Him in the desert and at the foot of the cross as He defeats every evil. And in Easter, we rejoice in the Lord's resurrection, His ascension into heaven, and the gift of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts.

This reliving of the Lord's life is something that we also do in the mysteries of the rosary. With the help and intercession of Our Lady, we walk with Jesus through His life, reflect on His words and actions, and discern ways we can better imitate Him.

This reliving of the Lord's life, or rather, His living His life in us, is a central component of our faith. St. Paul spoke of it to the Galatians: "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me."

And almost 2,000 years later, St. John Paul II put it this way in his document on catechesis: "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity."

Life in Christ is salvation. The more closely we are conformed to Him, the better we are living out our Christian faith and the closer we are to heaven.

We can see this also in the way that we worship as Catholics in the Mass, which is fitting because the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. St. Frances de Sales wrote about this in his "Introduction to the Devout Life," offering a way to pray through the Mass with the life of Jesus in mind. And as we continue in this year of Eucharistic Revival, perhaps this strategy of praying the Mass can help you grow in communion and intimacy with Jesus.

Consider how the different stages of the Mass mirror the stages of the life of Jesus.

Just as Jesus began His life in humility and weakness, we begin Mass by making ourselves small, humbling acknowledging our weaknesses and sins. It's like a mini-Advent or Christmas. Even the Gloria is a



In
Communion



By Very Rev. Jacob Koether

hymn taken from the songs of the angels that night when they proclaimed the arrival of the Messiah to the humble shepherds in their fields. "Glory to God in the highest, and, on earth, peace to people of good will!"

In the Liturgy of the Word, Jesus the incarnate Word of God proclaims the Good News to us again, showing us that He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He also reminds us of all He did in the past during His public ministry so that we can be confident of what He wants to do for us now.

Right before the Eucharistic Prayer, we remember Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week, and take up that song that the crowds shouted in joy, "Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

During the Eucharistic Prayer, we gather around the table of the Last Supper with the apostles when Jesus changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood, connecting the Passover meal to His sacrifice on the cross. Through this ritual we are invited to participate in the offering of the Son to the Father, which unlocks heaven, gives God the worship He is due, and reconciles us to Him. And only after being renewed in that reconciling sacrifice of Jesus do we then dare to call God "Our Father."

After the Eucharistic Prayer, we arrive at the present stage of Jesus' life, which is His resurrected life in heaven. And now with His sacred presence on the altar, we are also with Him there. And we witness what the apostle John described in Revelation, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, standing on the altar as if slain, but alive and worthy of all worship.

But Jesus isn't there in the sacred



Janet Jones/Lighthouse File Photo

Recalling the life of Jesus while praying through the Mass can help us grow in intimacy with Him.

species only to look gaze upon. He gives Himself to us as food so that we can be wholly united to Him and can say with St. Paul that it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And like the Father

sent the Son into the world, the Son then sends us to go in peace and glorify the Lord by our lives.

• Contact Father Jacob Koether at jkoether@victoriadiocese.org.



May God bless you and your family throughout the New Year!

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Signs of mercy

Landowners in rural areas give drivers a reminder of Jesus’ love

JANET JONES
The Catholic Lighthouse

SCHULENBURG – Forrest Lauer recalls a traffic accident when a truck driver lost control and went off the highway, coming to a stop just short of the sign on his property. When the driver looked up, he saw the image of Jesus and the words, “Jesus, I trust in You.” He told Lauher, “I guess He was looking out for me.”

Farmers, ranchers and others who own property have a powerful tool for evangelization, especially if a busy highway borders their land. And nine Divine Mercy images are now dotting the highways in the northern parts of the Diocese of Victoria.

Bishop Brendan Cahill, who has been an active part of Catholic Rural Life ministry said, “I think it’s a wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit that in our rural area we desire to be reminded and to let the world know of the mercy of Jesus. The devotion to the Divine Mercy that flows from the Heart of Jesus is always a powerful message for our world in every time.”

Lauher was inspired to erect the Divine Mercy image because he has seen them frequently over 20 plus years on Interstate 70 through Kansas.

And Interstate 10 borders his own property.

The image is of Jesus holding up one hand as if giving a blessing and, with the other hand, touching his heart. From His heart there are two rays of light, one red and one a bluish white, symbolizing blood and water. Below the image, usually, are the words “Jesus, I trust in You.” This was the vision of St. Faustina who, ultimately, shared it with the world.

Lauher got in touch with a church in Colby, Kan., and they helped him contact a farmer who had a Divine Mercy sign for some information. The first of those signs in the Diocese of Victoria was made in Kansas and hauled to Texas in the back of Lauher’s pickup. Rodney Schmidt of Schulenburg welded the steel frames for those signs and loaned a tractor to help erect them.

In time, three signs were erected on Interstate 10 west of Schulenburg and east of Flatonia and on Highway 77 north of Schulenburg.

Deacon John McCourt from the Queen of the Holy Rosary parish in Hostyn saw the signs and also wanted to put some along the roads. They got help from others in the construction of the steel frames and artwork and made more signs. Now, he said, his parish is flanked by Divine Mercy signs.

The next to get involved were the Flatonia Knights of Columbus. McCourt Construction helped fabricate four more signs that now exist near Praha on FM 1295, at Cistern on Texas 95, on S. Faires Avenue in Flatonia and at the intersection of Highway 90 and FM 2436.

The main difference is that, in Texas, the rules of placing signage on the highway require that the name of a church be on the sign, so each has the name of the closest church on them. And Rev. Jasper Liggio and Rev. Felix Twumasi have blessed the signs that point to their parishes.

In their quest to find more real estate for the signs, Lauher said they began knocking on doors of people who own good spots for the Divine Mercy signs. Landowners who said yes include Rodney and Melissa Schmidt, Leon and Frances Kubenka, Georgia Mae Popp/LeonPopp/Dorothy Bartos, Colton and Morgan Bubela, Joel Heber, Ted Hoffman, Delphin and Joyce Janecka, Helen Schaefer and Richard and Keli Schacherl.

It’s not exactly and easy or inexpensive job getting the signs completed. It can cost from \$4,000 to \$5,000 when all is considered – the steel, the art, the construction, the concrete and the equipment to make the sign sturdy enough to withstand powerful winds.

Lauher and McCourt said it takes a team effort and, if fortunate, some people willing to donate labor and/or materials. Some of the donors who have made these signs possible in the Diocese of Victoria include Schmidt Land & Cattle, McCourt Equipment, Flatonia Knights of Columbus 3295, Kopperhead Custom Fab & Auto, Chuck Stanley, Hank Novak, Stephen and Bernedette Muras, Mark and Debbie Hudec, Ralph and Linda Schmidt, Deacon John and Eileen McCourt, Eamon and Pat McCourt and Forrest and Mary Kay Lauher.

“The devotion to the Divine Mercy that flows from the Heart of Jesus is always a powerful message for our world in every time.”

Bishop Brandan Cahill



Forrest Lauher is shown standing in front of the first Divine Mercy sign erected in the Diocese of Victoria on his property in Schulenburg.

Contributed Photos



Rev. Felix Twumasi blesses one of the Divine Mercy signs erected in his area of the Diocese of Victoria. So far, nine such signs have been placed on private property, giving drivers an inspiration for a deeper devotion to Jesus.



Janet Jones/Lighthouse File Photo

Marchers carry signs and rosaries as they pray during this past January’s March for Life in downtown Victoria.

37th March for Life happens Jan. 25

VICTORIA – This 2024 March for Life, organized annually by the St. Gianna Beretta Molla Pro-Life Ministry, takes place Jan. 25.

This year those who want to march will gather at St. Mary’s Activity Center parking lot at 6:30 p.m. and then will proceed to Our Lady of Sorrows at 7 p.m. In previous years, DeLeon Plaza has been the gathering spot, but the plaza is currently under construction.

During the procession, marchers carry pro-life signs and pray the rosary. The marchers will conclude the walk at Our Lady of Sorrows on River Street as usual.

Guest speaker this year is Heather Hobbs, “an anti-abortion speaker, advocate for life, warrior against human trafficking, rape survivor, domestic violence activist and mother of four from Texas,” according to the St. Gianna promotional materials.

Participants are encouraged to bring a flashlight and rosary. Those who cannot walk the distance are welcomed to meet at Our Lady of Sorrows for the presentation following the walk.



Regina Matus-Janak/The Catholic Lighthouse

Sinking monuments in cemeteries can be fixed

VICTORIA – Have you ever gone to see your loved one at the cemetery and notice that the monument or marker is sinking? The Office of Catholic Cemeteries will help you out if the grave is in one of its Catholic cemeteries.

According to Debbie Escalante, manager of the Catholic cemeteries in Victoria, “We will get the monument raised and leveled at no extra fees to our families. All that we need is an email or a phone call to the cemetery department at 361-573-0828, Ext. 2233. We will then submit a customer service request to have it corrected.”

The office will contact families once the work is done.

Email the office at cemeteries@victoriadiocese.org. Go to the website to learn more at www.victoriadiocese.org/catholic-cemeteries.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.
And let the perpetual light shine upon them.
And may the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Praying for the souls in Purgatory is one of
the Spiritual Works of Mercy. These souls
long for God but they need to be purified of
their sins before they can enter Heaven.

Sunday Readings from Jan. 1 to Feb. 14

- January 1 ~ Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God
The Octave Day of Christmas
Numbers 6:22-27
Psalms 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

January 7 ~ The Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

January 14 ~ Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19
Psalms 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10
1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20
John 1:35-42

January 21 ~ Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalms 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

January 28 ~ Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9
1 Corinthians 7:32-35
Mark 1:21-28
- February 4 ~ Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Job 7:1-4, 6-7
Psalms 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6
1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23
Mark 1:29-39

February 11 ~ 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 14 ~ 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

For daily and Sunday readings, as well as a daily reflection video, visit www.usccb.org/bible/readings.
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Elie Mejia’s passion is to continue to spread God’s Word and is delighted to include a monthly puzzle from the Mass Readings. Please mail all completed October puzzle forms to arrive in The Catholic Lighthouse office, P. O. Box 4070, Victoria, TX 77903 by Oct. 31 to be entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of the following books:

For 2023, the monthly winner of the puzzle contest will receive a sampler copy of *Elie’s Spiritual Treasures, Volume 2 – The New Testament: Matthew and Mark* and the monthly winner of the youth contest will receive a sampler copy of *Elie’s Spiritual Treasures, Volume 2 – The New Testament: Matthew and Mark, Children’s Series*.

To date, Elie has published 20 books. Most of her books can be purchased at [www. searching-for-jesus.com](http://www.searching-for-jesus.com), Amazon or by calling 361-648-5832. The prices range from \$4.99 and \$19.99.

Congratulations to Beth West from Cuero on being our November 2023 adult winner. She’ll receive the Adult version of the Matthew and Mark Sampler Book!

There was a Grand Drawing from all the 2023 entries. They are receiving the *Liturgical Calendar Celebrations Bible Word Search Puzzle Book*. It is endorsed by the USCCB. Those winners are: Mary Ann Pustejovsky from Hallettsville; Mildred Targac from Shiner; Georgie Smith from Yoakum; Mrs. Vernell MacIk from Shiner; and Mary Ann Pavliska from Hallettsville.

January 8, 2024

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

GOSPEL – MARK 1:7–11

A **reading** for the **holy gospel** according to **Mark**: This is what **John the Baptist** proclaimed: / “**One mightier** than I is coming **after** me. / I am not **worthy** to **stoop** and **loosen** the **thongs** of his **sandals**. / I have **baptized** you with **water**; he **will** baptize **you** with the **Holy Spirit**.” ¶ It **happened** in those **days** that **Jesus** came from **Nazareth** of **Galilee** / and **was** baptized in the **Jordan** by John. / On **coming** up **out** of the water he **saw** the heavens being **torn open** / and **the** Spirit, **like** a **dove**, **descending** upon **him**. / And a **voice** came **from** the **heavens**. / “You **are** my **beloved Son**; with you I am **well pleased**.”

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Blessing of Silence and Rest

The start of a new year: a time to renew and get back on track. But before carrying out our resolve for the year, it serves to remember that rest and silence are also valuable.

Winter’s natural stillness allows a welcomed pause to the frenzied pace of our lives. As the activities of the year come to an end, we may also feel the need to slow down. The boisterous hum of family life and work is now replaced by quietness, if only for a moment.

The month of January is a good time to avail yourself to silence and rest. Do these appear as strangers to us? With practice, silence and rest can become trusted friends that fill us with deeper awareness, recharge us, and provide greater creativity for the tasks that await us in the coming spring.

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

Opening Prayer

Loved ones, let us open our hearts. God of the ages, You call your people to seek You in the quietist of places. Free us from what detracts and blinds us; let us behold your marvelous Presence. Renew us by the teachings of your Word so that we may live more abundantly. When life around us appears dark, make us a harvester of Light. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: (*Verses from Psalm 62: 2-3, 8-9, 11-12*)

Response: *Only in God will my soul be at rest.*

My soul rests in God alone from whom comes my salvation.
God alone is my rock and salvation, my fortress; I shall never fall. **Response**

My deliverance and honor are with God, my strong rock; my refuge is with God.
Trust God at all times, my people! Pour out your hearts to God our refuge! **Response**

Do not trust in extortion; in plunder put no empty hope.
On wealth that increases, do not set your heart. **Response**

One thing God has said: strength and mercy belong to God;
For You repay to each of us according to our deeds. **Response**

Reading: Luke 10:38-42 (*Martha and Mary*)

Selective Readings from Scripture: *Exodus 20:8-11; Psalm 62:1-2, 5; Psalm 116:7; Isaiah 40:28- 31; Matthew 11:28; 1 John 3:19; Philipians 4:6-7*

Silent reflection or invite sharing of thoughts and feelings

Closing Blessing

(*Invite everyone to gather around a lit candle. Dim or turn off other lights.*)

Let us pray: O Lord, we long for your peace. We come to you like Martha, racing about with busy hands and minds, but with our hearts that are left closed and empty.

We also come to you in silence, like Mary who ceased all activity to sit at your feet and listen, ready and willing to receive what you alone can give.

Bless this silence. Teach us to recognize the treasures it gives and to desire it more often.

Bless this rest. Help us to trust it with the same faith, which we give to work. Strengthened by our participation in holy silence and rest, may we come to see in winter not a death that is a final ending, but rather an opening that leads to the next life.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

• *To see other blessings, visit www.catholicrurallife.org.*

Meals • Picnics and More

January

Victoria – The 2024 March for Life will be Jan. 25, beginning at 6:30 p.m. St. Mary’s Activity Center downtown. The procession will take place at 7 p.m. and end at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church where Heather Hobbs will speak.

East Bernard – CDA, Court St. Bernadette 1108, will host the annual chicken noodle soup and sandwich supper Jan. 31 at the American Legion Hall. Serving begins at 5 p.m. and will continue until sold out. Soup is \$5 per bowl. (dine in or bring a container), chicken salad sandwiches \$5 each, and pastries. There will be a raffle drawing for 71 prizes at 7 p.m.

February

Victoria – St. Mary’s Parish Festival Feb. 4 at the Victoria Community Center. See ad on pg. 4 for more information.

Victoria – The Diocese of Victoria’s 2024 Men’s Conference “This is My Body, This is My Blood” will be Feb. 17 at Holy Family Church from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Coach Lou Holtz will be the keynote speaker. Also speaking are Justin Reyes, director of the Office of Catechism and Evangelization for the Diocese of Joliette and former Family Evangelization director for the Diocese of Victoria, and Rev. Dempsey Rosales-Acosta, professor at St. Thomas University in Houston. Cost is \$60, which includes, lunch, snack and a T-shirt. For more information, visit www.DOVmen.com.

Ministries • Ongoing Activities

ACTS Retreats – Anyone needing any information regarding ACTS retreats in the diocese should e-mail 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.couragec.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.

Engaged Encounter – 2024 Dates: Jan. 26-28, April 26-28, Aug. 16-18, and Nov. 8-10. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Fee must accompany registration form. For information, call 361-573-0828 or visit <http://www.victoriadiocese.org>.

Gabriel Project of the Crossroads – Helps women experiencing a crisis pregnancy as an alternative to abortion. Our mission is to protect the unborn by providing spiritual and emotional support as well as supplies. We provide housing through the Bethlehem Maternity Home and have an outreach ministry that visits pregnant women in our community. Our services cover Victoria, Calhoun, Colorado, DeWitt, Fayette, Goliad, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda and Wharton Counties. For more information, please contact our helpline at 361-576-1156.

Grief Ministry – Please join Strength for the Journey team for their monthly meeting, 6:30-8 p.m. Jan. 9 in the parish hall at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, 108 6th St. in Ganado. The meeting is open to anyone who has experienced the death of a child at any age. For more information, contact Pat Hoelscher 979-257-9984 or phoelscher@victoriadiocese.org.

Healing Through Grace grief support group – Please join us at the Emmaus Center in Victoria on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 9 a.m. at the Cathedral Center (St. Raphael meeting room). Please call 361-212-0830 for more information and to register.

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 Sister Louise Marie Jones at 361-575-7111 or e-mail amormeus@yahoo.com.

Ministry of Love Caregiver Support Group – Come to the Emmaus Center on the first Tuesday of each month at 9 a.m. in the Cathedral Center (St. Gabriel Hall.) Please call 361-212-0830 for more information and to register.

Mothers of Grace – A mothers’ group at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory. For information, contact Leslie Book at book.leslie@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page at 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 mailto:susannekoch614@gmail.com. Also in the Cuero area contact, Ashley Rodriguez at 361-293-0700 or e-mail ashleyfay09@gmail.com.

Raphael’s Refuge – Raphael’s Refuge is the home of the Monument to the Innocents which honors babies who have died (from conception to one year). We are a non-profit organization located outside of Flatonia, Texas. Peer counseling is available for those suffering the loss of a baby due to miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death or abortion. For information, call Therese at 361-258-1514, e-mail raphaelsrefuge@att.net, or visit <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 or 361-580-2770; or call 800-470-2230; or visit <http://www.helpourmarriage.org>

A one-day silent retreat on Saturday, Jan. 20, from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. The retreat presented by Deacon Eddie Huse is entitled, “The Sacraments: our Personal Spiritual Flotation Devises to Help Us Navigate the Stormy Seas of Life.” For further information or to register call 361-575-7111 or email, amormeuscenter@gmail.com.

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Shepherding the shepherds

Continued from pg. 1

Bishop Brendan Cahill said he asked Father Charles, a priest for 38 years, to take on the responsibility for many reasons. “He has a calm and peaceful demeanor and a background in counseling. He just has a lot of different experiences.”

Father Charles said, “This is very, very important to the bishop so I know he has confidence in me.”

After Father Charles was asked, he considered it carefully before giving his answer. “I just had to pray about it and reflect upon it and ask for the Blessed Mother’s guidance and support.”

In the work of this office, Father Charles said he makes time to reach out to all the priests and check on their well-being. Not only does he serve the active clergy, he visits the priests who are retired or who are ill. He meets with Bishop Cahill on a regular basis and discusses any needs the priests may have or to advise the bishop about anything that affects the priests such as assignments within the diocese.

The vicar for clergy is not intended to be the one to fix all problems, but to be a companion to his brother priests when they are going through a difficult time or simply to cheer them on.

Father Charles said he has found a source of joy in being the vicar for clergy. “The fact that you are doing something for Christ, for the diocese, for your brother priests, that’s my joy. We have to support one another.”

Bishop Cahill said another reason he chose Father Charles is because he is from Ghana. The diocese now has 26 priests from Ghana and Father Charles who is now incardinated into the Diocese of Victoria, can understand first-hand what it’s like to come to the U.S. from Ghana.

“For them to have a Ghanaian priest as a vicar for clergy, it’s very exciting, because they feel at home with me,” Father Charles said.

Father Charles first came to the U.S. in 1995, then returned to Ghana. He came back in 2008 and stayed. He was at the Cathedral for five years and then moved to Meyersville as administrator, then went to Goliad for two years. He has been in East Bernard now for four and a half years.

In the past two years, there have been several new priests in the diocese coming from Ghana. Before they take on their assignments, they spend time with Father Charles. “Being here with me, for them, it was a blessing. They must know how to live in America, and they were very appreciative. They are excited to know someone who knew them before, who is also here and knows the culture.”

Though the Catholic Church is the same worldwide, there are some differences. For example, in the U.S., Mass is about an hour long, while, in Ghana, it may go on for hours. Father Charles said he advises them to keep the homilies to 15 minutes.

“Some of them will preach about 30 minutes (in Ghana) – maybe 45 minutes – They have more time to worship than for themselves. In America, people are too busy. In Ghana, they will not place a football game or whatever above Mass,” he said. “Ghanaians are very emotional and when worshipping they feel they have to give all of themselves to go. They come, they worship, they dance. They put the collection in front of the altar and people walk up and go with joy, music and dancing and praising God. And that might take a very long time, too.”

Father Charles said he also advises the

newly relocated priests to practice Spanish. He does so himself. “I really love relating to the Hispanic community.”

As he supports the clergy, he gets his support from other vicars for clergy. The national Episcopal Vicars for Clergy Conference hosts a zoom meeting each month for the vicars to share and discuss chal-

lenges and issues that come with the office.

The lay people in the parishes are also a good support for the clergy. “This is my family. They are always there for me if I have any issue, any difficulty. Every priest should be open to his parishioners. You can’t be an island. That is how it should be in every parish,” Father Charles said.



Janet Jones/Lighthouse File Photo

Very Rev. Charles E. Otsiwah, second from right, is shown in this 2022 photo listening to Rev. Felix Twumasi on the day the church in Hostyn was destroyed by fire. With him are several priests who had just recently arrived in Texas from Ghana.