



THE VALLEY CATHOLIC

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 10

SERVING MORE THAN A MILLION CATHOLICS IN THE DIOCESE OF BROWNSVILLE

SPRING 2021

Year of

ST. JOSEPH



“God entrusted to him his most precious treasures:

Jesus and Mary,
and he responded fully with faith,
with courage,
with tenderness,
with a father's heart.”

-Pope Francis

Read more about
the Year of St. Joseph

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**Rally & Rosary
for Life**
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Motorists gather
outside H-E-B Park
for rally and prayer
in support of life.



**United
in Prayer**
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Telethon supports
parishes,
showcases
local talent



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of Brownsville

on its social media pages.   



»From our shepherd

St. Joseph's example for us



Most Reverend Daniel E. Flores

Bishop of Brownsville



To believe with love – this is part of what the mystery of faith is.”

St. Joseph's feast day is a special day in the life of the Church, of the patron of the universal Church, protector of the mysteries of God present in the world.

It is one of only two days in the entire Lenten season – the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, and the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19, that we sing the Gloria and say the Creed during Lent. The Church in a special way recognizes the singular importance of St. Joseph and the Annunciation of the Virgin.

I would like to offer a brief meditation on the faith of St. Joseph. To believe with love. This is part of the mystery of faith, and part of what I want to say about St. Joseph, because he believed with great love.

The word of God, which he accepted in faith, is something that can present itself to us as outside of our experience, outside our way of understanding. It's a challenge because the word of God comes from heaven and in this case because the angel transmitted the word to Joseph via a dream. It was presented as something almost incredible, practically unbelievable. But the word of God always comes to us as something that is a little bit strange. God does not think like we do, and it's difficult for us to think like God does. It is part of the difficulty of the faith that is lived.

The angel gave him a word in his dream, and this word was, "Do not be afraid to take Mary into your home, for she is conceived by the Holy Spirit." It's something — the moment of faith, will you believe it or not?

Joseph could have found lots of excuses to say, "Well, no, that was a dream. I don't know if it was real or not." Nowadays we would probably go into a psychological analysis of sorts into what the dream was about.

But no, Joseph received the word. The moment of faith — did he accept or not? But it wasn't a question. It wasn't completely without reason, even though it was a difficult word. Why? Because Joseph understood two things, which was enough for him to recognize that this was a word from God.

Joseph, a just man, knew the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He knew the ways of God. It was in his heart; it was in his flesh and blood. And what he knew was that God chooses not according to human appearance. God is wise, God chooses the humble, God

chooses the innocent, God chooses the good.

So, when the angel came with this message — this Child comes from the Holy Spirit, it was very credible that God had chosen the Virgin. It was not beyond his understanding — it was a challenging thing the angel said, but he understood.

He knew something else, too. St. Joseph not only knew the Scriptures; he also knew Mary, and he knew her as the humble, as the innocent, and as the good. He loved Mary and knew her by heart, and it was easier for him to believe what the angel said than to believe something evil of Mary.

I don't think it cost him much to get up in the morning and say, "Let's go." Joseph accepted the commitment, and gave his permission, and he accepted Mary, in obedience to the word presented by the angel.

These two things with the word of the angel came to an agreement in his heart. So, he accepted and gave his permission, and he accepted Mary. It is the greatness of Joseph's faith. And it is a lesson for all of us. We have to understand the ways of God, his choosing of the humble and the innocent, and follow that example. That, in a sense, is why faith is to believe with love, love of God, because only by love do we understand the things of God. It is an understanding of the heart; it is not just an understanding of many books. Sometimes books prevent us from understanding these things. The scriptures, yes. The heart, yes. And he surrendered. *Y se entregó.*

Without saying a single word, Joseph, teaches us the greatness of the mystery of faith that requires courage and commitment. And his life was a life in the service of Mary and the Child. That is why he is the patron of the Church, because to date he is at the service and protection of the Virgin Mary who in a mysterious sense of things in the Church gives light to Christ in our lives. It is the Virgin who brings us Christ in the Eucharist, and as St. Joseph gave his life to protect the Virgin and Child, we live life defending the greatness of the mystery of the Virgin and the Christ present to us in the Holy Eucharist.

The Feast of St. Joseph this year marked the anniversary of when we suspended public Masses in 2020. I remember I said the last



Mass before the suspension of Masses March 19, the Solemnity of St. Joseph at the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan.

It was a sad day — people crying outside the church. I tell you it was the most difficult decision I have made in my entire life as a bishop. But why this decision? To protect the Church, to protect her people, so that we could one day again celebrate the mystery of the altar, because we continue in the way of the Lord, and God does not forget us. The proof is, here we are, and thanks to God and St. Joseph, we can celebrate his feast day together as a community of faith.

May God continue to bless us and give us the courage to defend the holy things of God in our world. There is no defending the mysteries of God without defending people, because people are the ones who bear the mystery. And God helps us, and great St. Joseph continues to animate his church. Amen.

<https://www.facebook.com/128264227192252/videos/243663687453665>

Ordination Mass set for May 24

The Valley Catholic

BROWNSVILLE — Transitional Deacon Alejandro Garcia Angel will be ordained a priest by Bishop Daniel E. Flores during a special

Mass on Monday, May 24.

The Ordination Mass is set for 6 p.m. at Mary, Mother of the Church in Brownsville.

Deacon Garcia was born and raised in Mexico City. He is the son of the late Fidel Garcia Pineda and Librada Angel Vegas, who still resides in the capital. He has four brothers and three sisters.

Deacon Garcia earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León in Monterrey, Mexico. He then had a first career as an accountant

He completed his theology studies at St. Mary's Seminary in Houston and earned a master's degree in divinity from the University of St. Thomas School of Theology there.

Deacon Garcia was ordained to the diaconate at Mary, Mother of the Church on Aug. 15, 2020.

Another ordination is set for June 5 in Cameron County. Caleb De La Rosa will be ordained a transitional deacon on that date at St. Anthony's Church in Harlingen.



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With praise and thanksgiving to God,
the Diocese of Brownsville
together with **Garcia-Angel Family**
joyfully announces and invites you to attend the

THE ORDINATION OF

Don. Alejandro Garcia Angel

TO THE SACRED ORDER
OF PRIESTHOOD
THROUGH THE IMPOSITION OF HANDS
AND THE INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BY

THE MOST REVEREND DANIEL E. FLORES, S.T.D.
BISHOP OF BROWNSVILLE

Monday, May 24, 2021 at 6:00pm
St. Mary, Mother of the Church

LIVE Catholic Diocese of Brownsville Facebook Page

Mission parish pitches in to help migrants

By PAUL BINZ
The Valley Catholic

MISSION — When the tide of refugees and asylum seekers nearly overwhelmed the Respite Center in downtown McAllen earlier this year, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Mission threw its doors open to help.

The old parish school building, underused since classes ceased a few years ago, suddenly would find repurpose as guest quarters, and service as a satellite respite center out west.

“They said, ‘We’re going to have an overflow that we can’t handle,’ Father Roy Snipes, the pastor, said. “We had a meeting with the two mayors and Sister (Norma). We said, ‘We’ve got a beautiful parish hall and a beautiful school that we can’t even use now because of the pandemic. Y’all come on over.’ And they did, and it just worked out perfect.”

Volunteers from the parish is what makes this hospitality possible, Father Snipes said.

“So happy. So joyful,” Father Snipes said. “They’re just glad to pitch in. You’d have to say, they’re having a very good time just being hospitable to these new neighbors.”

When the need arose, Father Snipes said, all he had to do was ask.

“It’s beautiful,” he said. “No big committee meetings or plans or anything — we just said we’re going to need some help, and they just ... The way it suddenly came together was really inspiring.

“People starting calling — ‘Hey, we’ve gotta receive these new friends, these new

neighbors.’ They all pitched in. Some of them are groups, and some are just individuals coming in to help ... just wanting to be good neighbors.

“In fact, even the crew that was here this morning said, ‘We’ll come back in the evening and fix supper,’ he said. “And I said, ‘Well, I think we’ve got that taken care of, so you just come back tomorrow morning.’

Sometimes more than 20 volunteers are willing to lighten the load on a given day.

“You’ve got people cleaning and people cooking and people waiting on the folks. It’s a pretty good crew.”

“They’re all from teenagers to grandparents. One of the ladies who just lost her beautiful husband to COVID — we buried him on Friday; Sunday night she was here serving people,” he said. “I’m sure it was good for her broken heart.

“She said, ‘Some of these babies don’t have clothes, good clothes, warm clothes. I’m going to run out to Walmart and get some more clothes for them.’ ... I said, ‘Well, take the parish credit card.’ And she said, ‘No, I’ll take care of everything.’ *Puro corazón.*”

Father Snipes said that busloads of their visitors start arriving late afternoon in time for supper and then are put up in overnight lodging in the former classrooms. Early next morning, the volunteers cook the breakfasts at home, bring them to the parish starting about 6:15, then begin serving them up about an hour later. After breakfast the visitors, fed and refreshed, are taken back to McAllen for the start of their journey to family con-



Paul Binz / The Valley Catholic

Father Roy Snipes, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Mission, and his assistant Albert Solis talk about volunteer efforts on behalf of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers that have filled their parish hall for morning and evening meals. Meanwhile, one of the parish's canine mascots takes advantage of downtime.

nections in other parts of the country.

“These are sweet people. It’s not hard to be generous to them at all,” Father Snipes said. “It’s like Mary and Joseph on their flight to Egypt.”

“They’re grateful, and we’re grateful that we’re able to at least put a smile on their faces,” said parishioner Albert Solis.

“These are the people Jesus would tell us to help,” Father Snipes said.

Jesuit novices sample full Valley experience

By PAUL BINZ
The Valley Catholic

BROWNSVILLE — Five first-year novices — the first stage of Jesuit formation — from the Jesuit Novitiate of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Grand Coteau, Louisiana, spent seven weeks in the Rio Grande Valley in January and February sampling by immersion a life of service.

The seminary summarized their mission on its Facebook page.

“... We missioned our 1st-year men to their ‘class experiment’ (an experiment of living and working in a more intentional way). The 10 novices of this class were missioned with half headed to New Orleans, LA and half to Brownsville, TX. ... We will post photos of these experiments with the hope of encouraging, maybe even inspiring all of us to greater generosity, deeper care for those most vulnerable, and gratitude for whatever comes our way. Be assured of our prayers; please pray for our novices (and for vocations to religious life).”

The five novices assigned to the Valley attended Mass at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral and the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle-National Shrine. They met and interacted with Bishop Daniel E. Flores; Father Jorge Gomez, rector of the Basilica; and Sister Norma Pimentel, director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley. They assisted with imposing ashes to the faithful on Ash Wednesday in rural Cameron County, helped out at Good Neighbor Settlement House in Brownsville and moved furniture during remodeling at the Culture of Life Ministries Medical Clinic in Harlingen. They also endured the coldest weather in the area in 31 years, huddling with blankets by candlelight when the power went out at their lodgings in Brownsville.

The novices are Stephen Lauer, 32, of Des Moines, Iowa; Josh Rueschhoff, 33, of Angelus, Kansas; Nicholas Vivanco, 22, of Pearland, Texas; Edgardo Morales Snyder, 41, of San Juan, Puerto Rico;



Courtesy Photos



Five novices from the Jesuit Novitiate of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Grand Coteau, Louisiana spent seven weeks in January and February immersing themselves in Rio Grande Valley and Texas-Mexico border culture, meeting with Church dignitaries, helping parish priests and visiting Diocese landmarks before returning to their home base and starting their next assignments as teachers.

and Jason Britsch, 26, of New Orleans.

Their experiences here were weighted toward the plight of asylum seekers and refugees on the border, with multiple visits to the refugee camp in Matamoros, study of immigration law with the Project Dignity Legal Team, and helping at the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen and La Posada Providencia in San Benito.

They posted their favorable reactions to the Valley throughout their visit, including this one about their stop at La Posada Providencia.

“A work of the Sisters of Divine Providence, La Posada offers shelter in a rural context, and can offer assistance for families that need more time before transitioning. We were inspired by the care so tangibly offered by the staff, and we loved the animals on campus that were eager for a scratch behind the ears.”

The five seemed to particularly enjoy their time at San Pedro Parish on Military Highway outside Brownsville, as their postings indicate.

“Their pastor, Fr. Joel, is an amazing priest. He is sending us out to meet the people of the local colonias and help with sacramental preparation. On Saturdays we join him for ‘capilla móvil’ where we take a mobile chapel out into the colonias for Mass. What a cool way to be with the people!”

“We also learn(ed) a ton from Fr. Joel and the parish community of San Pedro Catholic Church. Situated on the border the parish ministers to extensive colonias. Mrs. Blanca of the parish has done great work in teaching us about how a parish responds to the spiritual and tangible needs of the community all while inspiring us with her zeal, passion to help, and hopeful vision for us! Thanks to all who teach us how to be a community that begins to look more and more like the Kingdom of God!”

The five returned to their seminary in Louisiana at the end of February, where their next task — a teaching assignment — awaited them.

Year commemorates saint's naming as patron of universal Church

Vatican News staff

ROME — With the Apostolic Letter *“Patris corde”* (“With a Father’s Heart”) released late last year, Pope Francis proclaimed a “Year of St. Joseph” from Dec. 8, 2020 until Dec. 8, 2021. The Holy Father’s letter recalled the 150th anniversary of Blessed Pope Pius IX’s declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church.

In announcing this Year of St. Joseph, Pope Francis drew attention to the virtues of the saintly carpenter of Nazareth. Joseph, foster father of Jesus and husband of Mary, was the man chosen by God and entrusted with the responsibility of providing for the needs and protection of the Holy Family.

Joseph faced many challenges and trials as he wrestled with the mystery of Mary’s motherhood, protected the infant Jesus from the murderous rage of Herod and raised Jesus, God’s divine son, during the hidden years of his earthly life.

Pope Francis notes that St. Joseph was a man of steadfast faith, creative courage and love in action. In the face of problems, Joseph turned difficulties into moments of God’s grace and providential care.

In the *Patris corde*, Pope Francis describes St. Joseph as a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, and a father in the shadows.

A beloved, tender, obedient father

St. Joseph, in fact, “concretely expressed his fatherhood” by making an offering of himself in love “a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home,” writes Pope Francis, quoting his predecessor Pope St. Paul VI.

And because of his role at “the crossroads between the Old and New Testament,” St. Joseph “has always been venerated as a father by the Christian people” (PC, 1). In him, “Jesus saw the tender love of God,” the one that helps us accept our weakness, because “it is through” and despite “our fears, our frailties, and our weakness” that most divine designs are realized. “Only tender love will save us from the snares of the accuser,” emphasizes the Pontiff, and it is by encountering God’s mercy especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation that we “experience His truth and tenderness,” — because “we know that God’s truth does not condemn us, but instead welcomes, embraces, sustains and forgives us.”

Joseph is also a father in obedience to God: with his *“fiat”* he protects Mary and Jesus and teaches his Son to “do the will of the Father.” Called by God to serve the mission of Jesus, he “cooperated ... in the great mystery of Redemption,” as St. John Paul II said, “and is truly a minister of salvation.”

Welcoming the will of God

At the same time, Joseph is “an accepting Father,” because he “accepted Mary unconditionally” — an im-

portant gesture even today, says Pope Francis, “in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence towards women is so evident.” But the Bridegroom of Mary is also the one who, trusting in the Lord, accepts in his life even the events that he does not understand, “setting aside his own ideas” and reconciling himself with his own history.

Joseph’s spiritual path “is not one that explains, but accepts” — which does not mean that he is “resigned.” Instead, he is “courageously and firmly proactive,” because with “Holy Spirit’s gift of fortitude,” and full of hope, he is able “to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments.” In practice, through St. Joseph, it is as if God were to repeat to us: “Do not be afraid!” because “faith gives meaning to every event, however happy or sad,” and makes us aware that “God can make flowers spring up from stony ground.” Joseph “did not look for shortcuts but confronted reality with open eyes and accepted personal responsibility for it.” For this reason, “he encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak.”

A creatively courageous father, example of love

Patris corde highlights “the creative courage” of St. Joseph, which “emerges especially in the way we deal

» Please see **St. Joseph** p. 10



Church grants plenary indulgence for the Year of St. Joseph

Vatican News staff

When Pope Francis announced a special year dedicated to St. Joseph from Dec. 8, 2020 through Dec. 8, 2021, the Apostolic Penitentiary also issued a decree granting special indulgences for the duration of the special year to celebrate the anniversary and “to perpetuate the entrustment of the whole Church to the powerful patronage of the Custodian of Jesus.”

During this period, the faithful will have the opportunity to commit themselves “with prayer and good works, to obtain, with the help of St. Joseph, head of the heavenly Family of Nazareth, comfort and relief from the serious human and social tribulations that besiege the contemporary world today.”

Devotion to St. Joseph

The decree signed by Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, the Major Penitentiary of the Apostolic Penitentiary, and the Regent, Father Krzysztof Nykiel, notes that devotion to St. Joseph has grown extensively throughout the history of the Church, “which not only attributes to him high reverence after that of the Mother of God his spouse but has also given him multiple patronages.”

At the same time, the Magisterium of the Church continues to discover “old and new greatness in this treasure which is St. Joseph, like the master in the Gospel of Matthew who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old.”

Therefore, the gift of indulgences granted through a decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary by mandate of the Holy Father “will be of great benefit to the perfect attainment of the appointed purpose.”

Conditions for the plenary indulgence

The plenary indulgence is granted to the faithful under the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the Pope’s intentions) to Christians who, with a spirit detached from any sin, participate in the Year of St. Joseph on these occasions and manners indicated by the Apostolic Penitentiary:

Meditate at least 30 minutes on the Lord’s Prayer, take part in a Spiritual Retreat

• The plenary indulgence is granted to those who will meditate for at least 30 minutes on the Lord’s Prayer, or take part in a Spiritual Retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on St. Joseph. “St. Joseph, an authentic man of faith, invites us,” the decree reads, “to rediscover our filial relationship with the Father, to renew fidelity to prayer, to listen and correspond with profound discernment to God’s will.”

Perform a spiritual or corporal work of mercy

• The indulgence can also be obtained by those who, following St. Joseph’s example, will perform a spiritual or corporal work of mercy. St. Joseph “encourages us to rediscover the value of silence, prudence and loyalty in carrying out our duties,” the decree notes.

Recite the Holy Rosary

• The recitation of the Holy Rosary in families and among engaged couples is another way of obtaining indulgences, in order that “all Christian families may be stimulated to recreate the same atmosphere of intimate communion, love and prayer that was in the Holy Family.”

Entrust daily activity to protection of St. Joseph

• Everyone who entrusts their daily activity to the protection of St. Joseph, and every faithful who invokes the intercession of St. Joseph so that those seeking work can find dignifying work can also obtain the plenary indulgence. On May 1, 1955, Pope Pius XII instituted the feast of St. Joseph “with the intent that the dignity of work be recognized by all, and that it inspires social life and

laws, based on the fair distribution of rights and duties.”

Recite the Litany to St. Joseph

• The plenary indulgence is also granted to the faithful who will recite the Litany to St. Joseph (for the Latin tradition), or the Akathistos to St. Joseph (for the Byzantine tradition), or any other prayer to St. Joseph proper to the other liturgical traditions, for the persecuted Church *ad intra* and *ad extra*, and for the relief of all Christians suffering all forms of persecution. Because, the decree notes, “the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt shows us that God is there where man is in danger, where man suffers, where he runs away, where he experiences rejection and abandonment.”

A universal saint

In addition to these, the Apostolic Penitentiary grants a plenary indulgence to the faithful who will recite any legitimately approved prayer or act of piety in honor of St. Joseph, for example, “To you, O blessed Joseph” especially on “19 March, on 1 May, the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, on St. Joseph’s Sunday (according to the Byzantine tradition) on the 19th of each month and every Wednesday, a day dedicated to the memory of the saint according to the Latin tradition.”

The decree recalls the universality of St. Joseph’s patronage of the Church, noting that St. Teresa of Ávila recognized him as “a protector for all the circumstances of life.” Pope St. John Paul II also said that St. Joseph has “a renewed relevance for the Church of our time, in relation to the new Christian millennium.”

For the sick

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis, the gift of the plenary indulgence is also extended to the sick, the elderly, the dying and all those who for legitimate reasons are unable to leave their homes.

They too can obtain the plenary indulgences if they are detached from any sin and have the intention of fulfilling, as soon as possible, the three usual conditions and recite an act of piety in honor of St. Joseph, offering to God the pains and hardships of their lives.

Daily and Sunday Mass continues online

SAN JUAN — Although Mass attendance is open under strict protocols, the dispensation for Sunday Mass remains in effect and the faithful can view the Mass livestreamed:

- Sunday Mass with Bishop Daniel E. Flores livestreamed from the Immaculate Conception Cathedral at 11 a.m. on Facebook and KRGV's Somos El Valle 5.3 and cable Channel 1241.
- All Masses at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral are livestreamed at ICCBROWNSVILLE on Facebook: 12 noon Monday through Friday, as well as 12 noon and 6:30 p.m. Saturday. On Sunday: 8 a.m., 11 a.m. (Bishop's Mass as noted above), 12:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- Daily Mass livestreamed from the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle-National Shrine at 11:30 a.m. Monday through Saturday, and archived: <https://www.youtube.com/user/olsjbasilica/featured>.
- Sunday Mass livestreamed from the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle-National Shrine at three different times: at 9 a.m. in English; 10:30 a.m. bilingual with Msgr. Juan Nicola; and at 1:30 p.m. in Spanish. Links to each will be provided on the diocesan website, <http://www.cdob.org>.

Check with your own parish for livestreamed Masses. Numerous parishes of the Diocese of Brownsville are livestreaming Masses.

How to help migrants, refugees newly arrived in the United States

SAN JUAN — Those in the community who would like to aid asylum seekers and refugees from Central America and other countries as they arrive in the United States may get information on how to do so by calling either of the following entities:

- Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in San Juan at (956) 702-4088;
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Mission at (956) 585-2623.

Bishop Flores, Rabbi Farb meet via Zoom, Facebook for interfaith dialogue about faith and hope

By PAUL BINZ
The Valley Catholic

SAN JUAN — Interfaith dialogue in the time of pandemic took a new technological turn when Bishop Daniel E. Flores and Rabbi Nathan Farb of Temple Emanuel in McAllen met via Zoom on March 2.

During the one-hour-plus meeting sponsored by All Faiths United and livestreamed on Facebook, Bishop Flores and Rabbi Farb discussed several commonalities. These included scripture, traditions and parallels starting with the Easter season and Passover. Rabbi Farb began by citing Psalm 27.

"Part of the shared scriptures of ... Jews and Christians, that we read," Rabbi Farb said. "Hope in the Word — be strong in courage and hope in the Lord."

"The words of our traditions tell us to continue to hope, to continue to pray, that God's power knows no bounds," he said, "and that we are able through our prayers, through our communion with God, through our work closeness with one another to continue to build a better and more sacred world, and that we are able together to continue to make good on that promise of hope even in the darkest of times."

The conversation then moved through Passover — the Jewish holiday that celebrates deliverance from slavery in Egypt — to comparison with today's troubles, particularly the disruption brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I can't help but think about the fact, especially during Lent, when the Church is preparing for Holy Week, and also at the same time that the synagogues are preparing for Passover and the celebrations, so much of the Church's liturgy right now — the readings because we read from Scripture every day — are taken from Exodus and Deuteronomy and readings from the Prophet Isaiah," Bishop Flores said. "And they are the orientation by which the Catholic Church



Screen Shots / The Valley Catholic

Unimpeded by masks, Bishop Daniel E. Flores, left, and Rabbi Nathan Farb of Temple Emanuel in McAllen were able to meet face-to-face virtually via Zoom on March 2 for an interfaith dialogue hosted by All Faiths United.

understands the events of the New Testament and events in the life of Jesus, and the way Jesus spoke about them."

Rabbi Farb responded, "The parallel that you draw to the season that we are in — for yourselves approaching Easter which is one of your most holy days — and for ourselves approaching Pesach in the Jewish faith, Passover, in which we celebrate our salvation from slavery to freedom, but also our transition ... into the wilderness."

"In Hebrew, the word *mitzrayem*, which we translate as Egypt and in modern Hebrew is the word for Egypt, literally means a narrow place," he said. "And it is often in life that we find ourselves penned in or feeling walled in, feeling as though we are metaphorically in a narrow place. When we find ourselves in these narrow places it is through great acts of salvation that God is able to save us."

"I appreciate that very much, especially that reflection about the movement from slavery to the wilderness, which I think is a very powerful analogy, image for the situations that we find ourselves in," Bishop Flores replied.

"One of the things that I think is particularly relevant

to us right now in not only the COVID crisis that continues worldwide, but also what we live through — hurricanes and electrical failures and lack of water, whatever can happen in a situation ... it was the learning of how to depend upon God when there was nowhere else to turn," he said.

Levity and profundity highlighted the Zoom meeting: "There's a phrase in Yiddish — one of the ways that we as Jews have historically coped with difficult circumstances is through humor, through wit," Rabbi Farb said. "... in Yiddish we say, *Mentshn tracht und Got lacht.*" Human beings plan, and God laughs. We have an idea in our mind about what is going to happen and what the next steps are going to be. And the reality is often quite different than what we envisioned."

"There's a similar phrase in Spanish — *El hombre propone y Dios dispone,*" Bishop Flores said. "Human beings put things on the table, so to speak, and then God disposes — he uses them in the way he will. And so you're right — it's deeply true of us — we really find ourselves even perhaps at times angry with God because he doesn't work things out the way we thought it ought to have worked out. I think that

part of what God asks of us is a certain openness that has eyes to see that he may be giving us beyond even what we need at a certain moment in our lives."

"There is a tendency in the world we're living in right now, especially in the more secularized cultures that are somewhat coincident with the economically successful west but not always, to disparage religion as not really relevant in the world. But I think there's a misreading there about what really moves people's hearts because religion remains an extremely powerful, very intimate sense at the core of one's being as to what is right and true, and what ultimately moves us."

The Zoom event wrapped up with a prayer by Dr. Saad Mohammed Dabbous of the Islamic Society of South Texas and Masjid Al-Farooq, who joined the meeting already under way.

"I really have enjoyed this conversation," Bishop Flores said at the end. "It was nice to see Rabbi's face, because when we met the last time in person ... we were both masked."

"I'm looking forward to the day, God willing, when we can continue this conversation — through Zoom if necessary, or other ways — because it was very engaging."

To view the entire dialogue on Facebook, go to <https://www.facebook.com/FaithsUnited/videos/1007085549818455>

Catholic Communication Campaign Collection May 16 helps local efforts

World Communications Day this year is Sunday, May 16. This is also the date of the national Catholic Communication Campaign (CCC) Collection in local parish churches.

Fifty years ago, the Second Vatican Council wrote in *Communio et Progressio* that "technical advances have the high purpose of bringing men into closer contact with one another" (6). In the past year, we have

seen how important the role of social communications is amid the COVID-19 pandemic as the faithful have relied upon this high purpose of technology to build community and share the Good News.

Through websites, social networks, television, radio, and print, the CCC helps the Church spread the Gospel message through the media locally and nationally.

Half of all donations to the CCC collected in your diocese stay in your diocese to support your local communications needs, such as diocesan publications and radio and television programming.

CCC was established in 1978 in response to the Vatican II document *Inter Mirifica* (1963) and Pope Paul VI's pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971).

»The Holy Father's Prayer Intentions for May

The World of Finance
Let us pray that those in charge of finance will work with governments to regulate the financial sphere and protect citizens from its dangers.



Monsignor Juan Nicolau named Rector Emeritus of Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle

By PAUL BINZ
The Valley Catholic

SAN JUAN — Msgr. Juan Nicolau has been named Rector Emeritus of the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle-National Shrine.

Bishop Daniel E. Flores and Auxiliary Bishop Mario A. Avilés gave special recognition to Msgr. Nicolau during a ceremony Feb. 12 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Brownsville in San Juan, as current Rector Father Jorge Gomez and others looked on. They noted that his work contributed to the Shrine being named a Minor Basilica and National Shrine.

Msgr. Nicolau was the first Diocesan Rector of the Basilica and served as rector for eight years until 2005; he then became pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in McAllen. Now at least nominally retired, he still celebrates Mass at 10:30 Sunday mornings at the basilica and holds a Night of Healing and Divine Mercy at 6:30 p.m. there on the last Saturday of every month.

After the Feb. 12 ceremony, Msgr. Nicolau noted how the pandemic reduced in-person attendance for the monthly event but moved it online to live-streaming on social media.

“A lot of people watching — one to three thousand on YouTube,” he said. “(But) it’s not the same. What can we do?”

“It’s very good to have the healing night, a lot of response and a lot of healing -- now mainly more than physical is the spiritual. They convert, they come back to the Church, they go to confession, they receive Jesus Christ.



Rick Treviño / The Valley Catholic

Msgr. Juan Nicolau shows off the framed document declaring his installation as Rector Emeritus of the Basilica after the Feb. 12 ceremony at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel in San Juan, as Bishop Daniel E. Flores, right, and Auxiliary Bishop Mario Aviles look on.

“It’s more spiritual now than physical. That’s what I wanted.”

He then reflected on his years of work at the basilica, and only briefly on his new honor.

“Since I left this place, now I’m finished. With this, I can go to heaven — it will be directly! Because my heart is in this place. Here I went through (Good) Friday, then Easter Sunday. It had been years and years of suffering — ¿verdad? — contradictions, envy, jealousy, but a lot of love.”

“The people who used to come over here — they were poor, they didn’t have voice. Nobody respected them. They didn’t know where to go. So they went to the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary has made a lot of

miracles — converted the water into wine, converted sadness into joy; sadness and sicknesses to healing, that’s the Virgin Mary.”

Msgr. Nicolau described starting each day with devotion to Our Lady.

“Every morning when I woke up, for many years — for 60 years — I used to say ‘Ave Maria.’ The first words. Always,” he said. “Then I used to kneel and say ‘I will serve you’ to Jesus. And the third was ‘One day at a time.’

“My psalm: ‘Today’s the day. And no more delays — today I’m going to be a priest.’ And It has helped me a lot. Sixty years — that’s a lot of time.”

Pro-Life Mass, Blessing for Expectant Mothers



Paul Binz / The Valley Catholic

On the Solemnity of the Annunciation on March 25, Bishop Daniel E. Flores celebrated Pro-Life Mass and Blessing at the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle-National Shrine for Expectant Mothers.

Father Derlis Garcia, director of the Pro-Life Office, said, “On this feast day we celebrate the conception of the Lord in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. This is why it is of special significance for all people who celebrate life, from conception to natural death.”

Bishop Flores offered a special blessing for all expectant mothers and for their child in the womb. In addition, each mother-to-be attending received a gift bag with their first onesie and special articles of devotion.

<https://fb.watch/5eFbwX8zeh/>



Soaring like an eagle



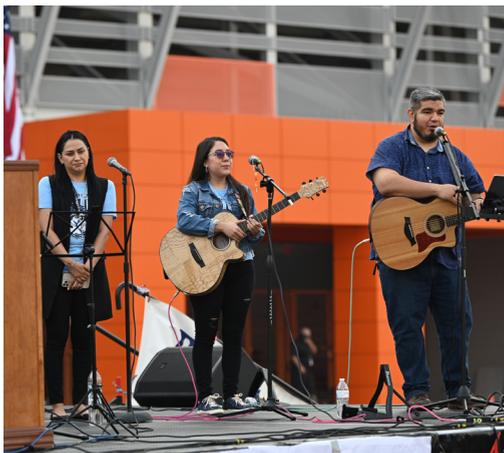
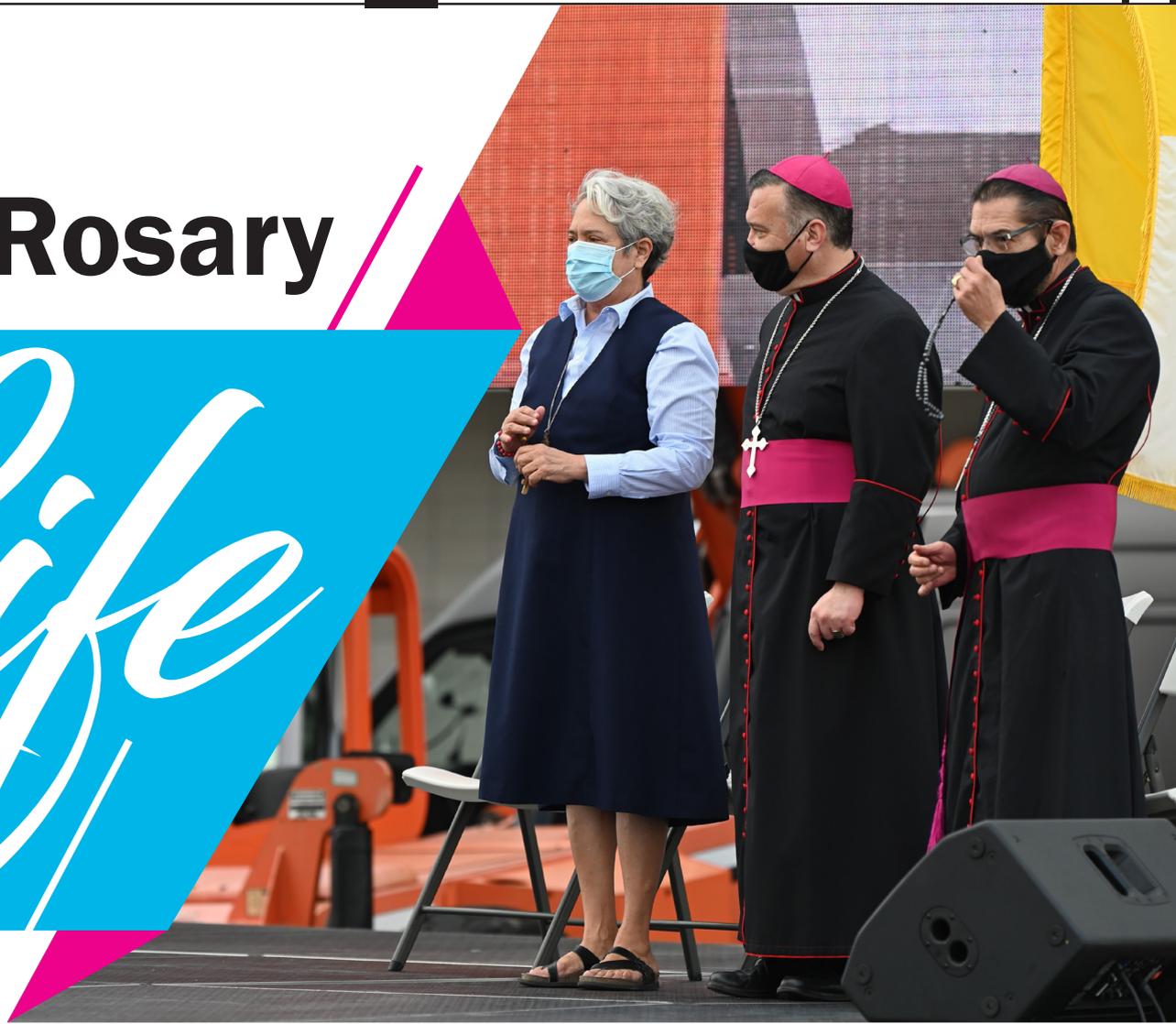
Brenda Nettles Riojas / The Valley Catholic

Father Alex Flores completed his 100-mile run for St. Anthony Catholic School today. He raised more than \$10,000 for the school from sponsorships for the run.

<https://www.facebook.com/128264227192252/videos/906276933457354>

Rally and Rosary

for Life



Paul Binz / The Valley Catholic

The Pro-Life Office of the Diocese of Brownsville put together a Rosary and Rally for Life March 27 on the parking lot of H-E-B Park in Edinburg, during which supporters of life could drive in, park in front of the stage and enjoy a program of music and prayer. Bishop Daniel E. Flores, Auxiliary Bishop Mario A. Avilés and Sister Norma Pimentel spoke and prayed at the rally, with Father Deris Garcia emceeing. At the end of the morning event, Bishop Flores and Bishop Avilés waded through the rows of cars and trucks, blessing those in attendance.

<https://www.facebook.com/300826577235968/videos/3512366925655457>

» **Women
en la
Frontera**

**Brenda
Nettles Riojas**
Editor of
The Valley Catholic

In time of transition, learning to pace ourselves

After a year of living in the midst of a pandemic, we are each finding our pace as we move forward out of a “collective grief.”

We don’t even know how to greet each other. Do we shake hands or bump fists? When can we hug one another? Are we safe yet?

Yolanda Carrillo, director of Health Ministries for the Diocese of Brownsville, talked about this collective grief during a panel conversation April 17 on the topic of mental health care and the transitions we are living. She, along with Father Andy Gutierrez, pastor at Holy Spirit Parish in McAllen, and Leticia Nering, a licensed counselor from Edinburg, shared some valuable insights.

Nering reminds us to respect each other’s pace and comfort levels. While many are celebrating their vaccination status, she said it is important that we not be judgmental with how others are moving forward. “We need to step according to our own pace, according to what we feel comfortable.”

Conversation with Mental Health Care Panelists:

Father Gutierrez noted that it is about receiving and accepting someone where they are at the moment.

The panel’s consensus, as Nering articulated, is that now more than ever, we need to seek God for peace. We need to trust he is bringing us through this pandemic.

Nering shared the following passage from a book by Macrina Wiederkehr, *The*

Song of the Seed: A Monastic Way of Tending the Soul, which expresses this need.

“Jesus, press deeply into my soil a seed of trust, that like the birds of the air I may fly unfettered, a free child in love with life. Write on my heart the truth of your care for me and let me discover the truth that is written there. Today let there be more trust and less worry in my life. Be my partner in the dance of trust so that all my priorities may turn around right. Astonish me with your loving presence. Guide me and guard me under the shadow of your wings, and should some dark shadow cross my life, even then teach me trust. May it come to pass.”

Recognizing that people are still grieving, Carrillo said it is important that we have to walk in the spirit and we need to know our own needs and wants.

Each of the panelists offered some suggestions for finding peace. We must recognize, however, there is no quick fix, said Nering. We need to practice peace.

Peace, mental wellness, is like a bank account and we need to make deposits into it. We do this, she said by “learning how to be still and quieting our mind and being in God’s presence.”

We access peace by practicing peace and learning how to bring the relaxation response — quieting our mind, quieting our body and being able to be in the full presence of God.

She said we also need to tend to the actual problems that are present. Start by asking, why is there disquiet within me? Why am I upset? What steps can you take

towards fixing it? Nering emphasized that if we find we can’t fix that which disquiets us, we can ask someone to help.

Father Gutierrez noted, “We are hurting for different reasons. and within that hurt we don’t feel at peace. It is important to do something about it, beginning with being in the presence of the Lord.”

In tending to our mind, body and soul, he said we need to look at our relationship with the Lord and our relationships with loved ones and others. If there is something not right there, that will take our peace from us. We need to reconcile with one another, ask forgiveness, ask forgiveness from the Lord and make the sacrament of confession.

Spiritually, that is a baseline, said Nering, when we are discerning why something is disturbing us. First reconcile with God and then reconcile with others.

Nering said she was reminded of some words offered by a friend, “Stop trying to fix everything and just let God love you and fill you up with the spirit.” As Scripture says, “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46).

So that we may help bring peace to others, she said we must first receive God’s grace.

As Carrillo noted, we need to be caring with one another and respond with love, con una pandemia de amor.

We don’t know what tomorrow will bring, but we can be gentle with ourselves and with one another. We can also make sure to spend more quiet time with God.

» **Family
Life**

Lydia Pesina
Director,
Family Life Office

Amoris Laetitia Year: Year of the Family

March 19, 2021 (the Feast of St. Joseph) was designated by Pope Francis as the beginning of “The Year of the Family.” This date also marks the fifth anniversary of *Amoris Laetitia*.

Amoris laetitia (The Joy of Love) is a post-synodal apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis addressing the pastoral care of families.

The Holy Father shared four ideas for families during this Amoris Laetitia Year.

(1) **Caring for the Relationship.** Pope Francis suggests that before doing something for our family, that we ask, “May I? Can I do this? Do you agree with this? They are educated words, but even more, they are filled with love.”

(2) **Cultivating Values.** The Pope shares that he has a special place in his heart for young families because family values are cultivated in the home. He goes on to say that when he hears the confession of a father or mother of young children, he asks them if they play with their children. He believes that values are transmitted through playing and tells young parents, “Know how to spend time with your children. This language of love is able to transmit all the values of the faith.”

(3) **Families During the Pandemic.** The Pope admires all the many solutions families have found to overcome the problems caused by the Pandemic, “... with a lot of creativity with the children — with

everyone — to keep moving forward.” But he also notes, “Then there is another thing; there is domestic violence,” and he extends this invitation: “Let us pray for families, so they can persevere, in peace, with creativity and patience, during this quarantine.”

(4) **The cross before the Resurrection.** While families are founded on love, hope, and trust; they face serious challenges too. Rome Reports cites some of the points that Pope Francis mentioned in Philadelphia in 2015 during the World Meeting of Families: that in families sometimes plates fly, children bring headaches, and he said he wouldn’t even mention the mothers in law! But he stated that “in families there is always the Cross Always. Because the love of God, of the Son of God, also opened for us this path. But, in families as well, after the cross, there is the resurrection. Because the Son of God opened for us this path.”

Pope Francis’ ideas resonate with our family even in this boomerang stage (the stage where grown children come and go and sometimes with more people). At whatever stage of the Family Life cycle we find ourselves in (Single Adult, Establishment: Courtship/ Marriage, First Child, School Age Family, Adolescence, Letting Go (Boomerang), Empty Nest, Aging) caring for the relationships with our family members is of utmost importance.

Dr. Greg and Lisa Popcak in their book *Parenting with Grace*: “Don’t be shy about

saying “I love you” to your kids (and your mate for that matter). Say “I love you” and “I’m proud of you” at least one hundred times a day. ... Take your cue from the Heavenly Father, who publicly announced at Christ’s baptism, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17). In this parenting book, the Popcaks emphasize “attachment” as one of the most important things in family life.

One of my greatest joys is seeing my daughter play (sometimes wrestling) with her eight-year-old son who laughs with delight! I agree with Pope Francis that cultivating values in a family not only includes playing but playing is a major way to transmit the values of the faith.

Families during the pandemic have been challenged, stressed, blessed, stretched, and changed. Some have grown and bonded in special ways that they might not have experienced if they had not spent this time together. However, families in fragile circumstances have often been further wounded and as Pope Francis invites us; let us remember to lift them up in prayer.

During this Easter Season, as we rejoice in the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, may we take heed of the Holy Father’s reminder: The Cross before the Resurrection. As family, in times of difficulty (the cross) may we rely on the Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and protect us.



WEDNESDAY JUNE 9, 2021 - 11:30 A.M.

BLUE MASS

FOR ALL FIRST RESPONDERS

Basilica Of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle

»Making Sense of Bioethics

Should we take whatever vaccine is offered?



Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk

Priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass. Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org

On March 1, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker told residents in the town of Mattapan that when it comes to the various COVID-19 vaccines, “These are all very effective. People don’t need to pick one from another. People should get vaccinated. If you have a chance to get a vaccine, you should take it, whatever it is.”

The governor’s sweeping statement seems to imply, first, that everybody should get a COVID-19 shot, and second, that it’s not necessary to distinguish among the different vaccines currently on the market, like Moderna, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and eventually others.

Such a perspective fails to acknowledge the important factors that are part of deciding whether to receive a particular COVID-19 vaccine or any other vaccine.

When new or experimental treatments become available, including novel vaccines, and we have limited knowledge of their side effects, adverse events, efficacy, and long-term consequences, it’s important to realize that such treatments are never morally obligatory for an individual, nor for a whole population. Achieving herd immunity, while clearly an important goal, in no way demands that everyone must be immunized.

For those individuals who are young and in good health, for example, and with no comorbidities, the risk of adverse outcomes from a COVID-19 infection, statistically speaking, are very low, on a par with the generally low risks of being vaccinated. They may reasonably, therefore, decide to decline receiving an inoculation.

For those, meanwhile, who are more vulnerable to the coronavirus and its potentially damaging effects, like those who are obese, elderly, diabetic, or facing other comorbidities, it makes sense for them to consider the

potentially safer path of vaccination, rather than risking a harmful (or deadly) encounter with the virus itself. Each person must make a careful determination about whether a COVID-19 vaccination is appropriate for his or her set of circumstances.

This is no different from making decisions about other vaccines like the shingles vaccine or the annual flu shot. When people get older, their chance of getting shingles, for example, increases and the CDC recommends the shingles vaccine for those over 50. Similar to COVID-19, the older you are, the greater the risk, and the greater the need to consider the possibility of vaccination to avoid the painful effects of shingles.

But it is not mandatory that everyone should take the shingles vaccine — or the flu shot or the COVID-19 vaccine — because not everyone faces the same risks or would benefit from it to the same degree.

When deciding which vaccine to receive from among the FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccines, some may be considerably more effective than others, and some may incur side effects for certain individuals.

For example, a compound called polyethylene glycol (PEG) has been identified as a possible trigger for rare allergic or anaphylactic reactions in some vaccine recipients, even in trace amounts. According to FDA documents, both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines contain PEG, while the Johnson and Johnson vaccine does not. Thus, individuals with a PEG allergy effectively have only a single choice among the three emergency-use authorized vaccines in the U.S.

Another distinction among vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson is their association with cell lines that were originally derived from human abortions. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines

are not directly produced or manufactured by relying on these abortion-related cell lines while the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is directly grown in such cells. All three vaccine manufacturers, however, have carried out ancillary or side-testing procedures using these cell lines.

Using abortion-derived cell lines in scientific research and industrial development raises significant ethical concerns.

When several vaccine candidates are available that are equally safe and effective, Catholics may discern in conscience the need to receive a candidate that is not associated at all, or more distantly associated, with abortion-derived cell lines. People at relatively low risk may also decide to wait for a vaccine with no connection to abortion if one is not yet available.

They can make these choices as matters of conscience to avoid entanglements with the morally unacceptable practice of abortion. All of us have a right to vaccines with no connection to these cell lines. Nonetheless, the Church also reminds us that we are permitted to take, under protest, any of the currently available vaccines, even those most directly associated with cell lines from abortions, if we discern in conscience that there is a serious or proportionate reason to do so. We need to give each of these options real prayerful and thoughtful discernment.

Taken together, these considerations show us how it is important not to gloss over the distinctions among various COVID-19 vaccines and imply, as Governor Baker does, that everybody should get the first version that is available.

Rather, each of us needs to make careful decisions about our own health while also making conscientious choices in the light of legitimate moral concerns.

»Formation for Ministry

A year later: How are you?



Deacon Luis Zuniga

Director, Office for Pastoral Life & San Juan Diego Ministry Institute

Recently someone sent me a Facebook meme that mentioned, “I’m not afraid the world will end one day. Because I know that it will end one day. However, I am most afraid that the pandemic will end and no lessons will have been learned.”

The past year has been, no doubt, extremely difficult for everyone, to say the least. We may have experienced the same storm (physically, emotionally and spiritually) but not everyone has been on the same boat due to individual circumstance.

Many who have reached out through spiritual direction have expressed their struggles. While some are grieving the loss of a loved one, others are dealing with the side effects of the virus, and many more have conveyed how they have been left devastated financially.

Let’s be realistic. Not everyone is able to work from home. Not everyone has been affected the same. Many left unemployed feel their self-worth and dignity trampled upon, not to mention feeling severely depressed. Spiritually, many feel God’s absence, while others feel his presence in moments of grace by slowly, reluctantly returning to Holy Mass on Sundays.

This past year I’ve seen the best of humanity, and I’ve seen the worst of humanity. While we may claim to be Christian, the world suffers greatly from indifference and a tremendous lack of compassion.

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, in a homily given on Divine Mercy Sunday, says, “Now, while we are looking forward to a slow and arduous recovery from the pandemic, there is a danger that we will forget those who are left behind. The risk is that we may then be struck by an even worse virus, that of selfish indifference. A virus spread by the thought that life is better if it is better for me, and that everything will be fine if it is fine for me.”

The COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted billions of lives, leaving more than a million

dead in the world so far. We are also left with many questions of what all this means. Many have asked if this is all part of God’s plan? What can this world experience teach us about humanity?

In a recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center conducted this past July, people were asked: Do you believe there is a lesson or a set of lessons for humankind to learn from the coronavirus outbreak? And if so, do you think these lessons were sent by God, or not?

Eighty-six percent responded that yes, they believe there is a lesson for humankind to learn from the coronavirus outbreak; 13 percent said no, they don’t believe there is a lesson from the outbreak; of those, 35 percent said yes, they believe a lesson was sent by God, while 37 percent said no, they do not believe a lesson was sent by God; 13 percent said they do not believe in God. (Source: “What Lessons Do Americans See for Humanity in the Pandemic?” October 2020, pewforum.org)

I was very moved in reading last month an article regarding Bishop James Conley of Lincoln, Nebraska, who took a year-long sabbatical to deal with mental health after he was diagnosed with major depression disorder.

Bishop Conley explained in a January 2021 interview with Dr. James Link, a Catholic clinical psychologist based in Bismarck, North Dakota, via Zoom how he had requested time away in order to seek assistance in dealing with stress, anxiety and depression. He shared that he decided to do the interview in the hope that he would encourage others to seek help when struggling with mental illness.

During the interview, Dr. James Link affirmed Bishop Conley. “I want to start by saying that I’m excited to be a part of this conversation,” Link said. “I think your insights and experience are going to be so helpful for people, especially given your role of leadership in the Church.”

Bishop Conley explained in the interview that prayer is what kept him strong, even though it was a struggle.

“Negative thoughts, anxiety, and depression can make it really difficult to pray,” he said. “My spiritual life has been the anchor that keeps me linked to God, but when you kneel down to pray, the psychological side of things is always a factor. I clung to the Breviary — along with Mass and the Rosary — to keep hanging on to God, so to speak. But there were times where I would ask myself, ‘Am I losing my mind, or am I losing my faith?’”

After much prayer, Bishop Conley remembers: “During the Second Vatican Council, when things were really uncertain in the Church and in the world, Pope St. John XXIII at night would pray, ‘Lord, it’s your Church, I’m going to bed!’ After many nights of not sleeping, it was then that Bishop Conley decided he needed help and requested a year sabbatical.

As human beings, we are fragile and sometimes we are afraid of admitting and seeking help when we are not well because we are afraid to be labeled. It’s humbling to ask for help, but it’s the right thing to do.

I highly encourage anyone who is struggling with mental illness and or questioning their faith to read the compelling testimony of Bishop Conley in the complete article “There will be light” at www.primematters.com.

Indeed, many lessons to be learned from this past year. Let’s begin by taking the time to ask one another, “How are you?” following the teaching of the Good Samaritan found in the Gospel of Luke (10:25-37) “Who is my neighbor?” Let’s mend the wounds left behind by this pandemic and not forget that the one robbed, stripped, beaten and left for dead in the parable is actually Jesus.

May the good and gentle Jesus, the Divine Doctor and Healer of our souls, restore our world to good health. Amen.



Courtesy Photo

Sisters Ana Bertha Ortega, Sindi Bardales and Sister Marina Carrascal of the Dominican Sisters of the Presentation were among the 20 sisters in the diocese who received grants from Catholic Extension.

'Sisters on the Front Lines' awarded grants to help others

By JESSE SALINAS
The Valley Catholic

BROWNSVILLE

— Twenty religious sisters from throughout the diocese serving at parishes, departments and non-profit organizations were given \$1,000 each from Catholic Extension to help individuals or families, with emergency needs.

The Stewardship and Grants Office of the Diocese of Brownsville submitted the 20 applications for funding in response to Catholic Extension's Sisters on the Front Lines initiative which sought to raise \$1,000,000 in order to give one thousand women religious \$1,000 each to help those afflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each Sister was given the grant with no restrictions on the

type of assistance to be given. The only condition placed by the benefactors at Catholic Extension was that the assistance provided relief for those most impacted either by illness or other adversity as a consequence of COVID.

The recipients of these grants are the following:

- Sisters Marina Carrascal, Sindi Bardales and Ana Bertha Ortega, Dominican Sisters of the Presentation
- Sisters Therese Cunningham and Dymna Clarke, Sisters of the Holy Spirit & Mary Immaculate
- Sisters Elizabeth Ann Sjoberg, Sharon Horace and Jean Maher, Daughters of Charity
- Sister Estela Cantu, Congregation of the Oratory
- Sisters Rose C. Garay, and

Maria Sanchez, Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence

- Sisters Nancy Boushey, Luella Walsh and Frances Solum., Benedictine Sisters
- Sister Rose Weidenbenner & Sister Anne Connolly, Sisters of Mercy
- Sisters Cindy Mello, Colleen Matarese, Maureen Crosby and Helena Nunes, Sisters of Saint Dorothy

Some of these women religious purchased gift cards to local grocery or department stores and distributed to families and individuals known by them to be in need. Others supported the infirmed with medical supplies and treatments. Still others helped families who lost a loved one to COVID with emergency living expenses in the aftermath of income loss.

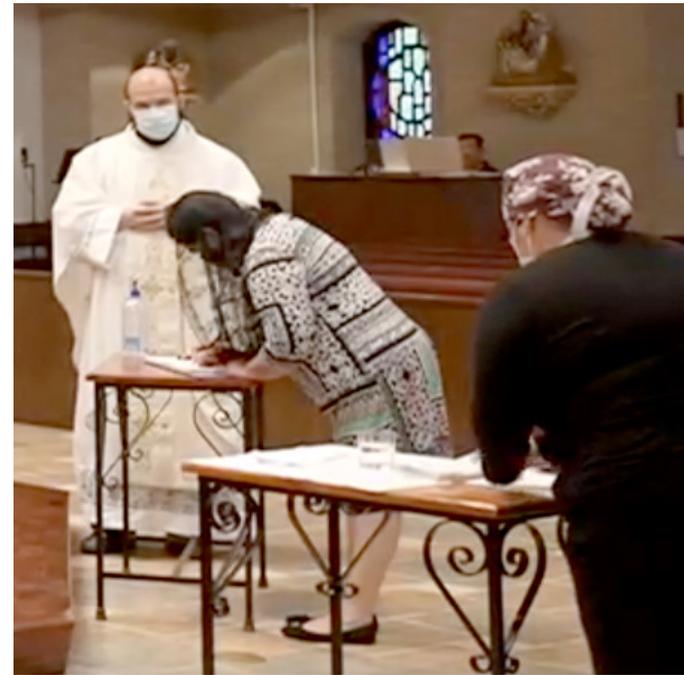
Vocations Day Mass



Paul Binz/The Valley Catholic

With attendance limited due to coronavirus pandemic precautions, the Diocese of Brownsville Catholic Schools' Vocations Day Mass was celebrated by Bishop Daniel E. Flores in Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel at the Pastoral Center in San Juan. Two of the students attending were readers for the Liturgy of the Word.

Mass of the Holy Innocents



The Valley Catholic

During a special Mass of the Holy Innocents on April 27 at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Harlingen, Bishop Daniel E. Flores invited those who have suffered the pain of miscarriage or losing a child shortly before or after birth, to inscribe the names of the children who have died in a book of remembrance, "that it may serve as a witness of our hope in the Resurrection and a sign of our constant prayer."

<https://www.facebook.com/CatholicRGV/videos/3024849637747829>

St. Joseph

continued from pg. 4

with difficulties." "The carpenter of Nazareth," explains the Pope, was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting in divine providence." He had to deal with "the concrete problems" his Family faced, problems faced by other families in the world, and especially those of migrants.

In this sense, St. Joseph is "the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty." As the guardian of Jesus and Mary, Joseph cannot "be other than the guardian of the Church," of her motherhood, and of the Body of Christ. "Consequently, every poor, needy, suffering or dying person, every stranger, every prisoner, every infirm person is 'the child' whom Joseph continues to protect." From St. Joseph, writes Pope Francis, "we must learn... to love the Church and the poor."

A father who teaches the value, dignity and joy of work

"A carpenter who earned an honest living to provide for his family," St. Joseph also teaches us "the value, the dignity and the joy of what it means to eat bread that is the fruit of one's own labor." This aspect of Joseph's character provides Pope Francis the opportunity to launch an appeal in favor of work, which has become "a burning social issue" even in countries with a certain level of well-being. "there is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which St. Joseph is an exemplary patron," the Pope writes.

Work, he says, "is a means of partici-

pating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, to develop our talents and abilities, and to put them at the service of society and fraternal communion."

Those who work, he explains, "are cooperating with God himself, and in some way become creators of the world around us." Pope Francis encourages everyone "to rediscover the value, the importance and the necessity of work for bringing about a new 'normal' from which no one is excluded." Especially in light of rising unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pope calls everyone to "review our priorities" and to express our firm conviction that no young person, no person at all, no family should be without work!"

A father 'in the shadows,' centered on Mary and Jesus

Taking a cue from *The Shadow of the Father* — a book by Polish writer Jan Dobraczyński — Pope Francis describes Joseph's fatherhood of Jesus as "the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father."

"Fathers are not born, but made," says Pope Francis. "A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child." Unfortunately, in today's society, children "often seem orphans, lacking fathers" who are able to introduce them "to life and reality." Children, the Pope says, need fathers who will not try to dominate them, but instead raise them to be "capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities."

This is the sense in which St. Joseph is described as a "most chaste" father, which

is the opposite of domineering possessiveness. Joseph, says Pope Francis, "knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the center of things. He did not think of himself, but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus."

Happiness for Joseph involved a true gift of self: "In him, we never see frustration, but only trust," writes Pope Francis. "His patient silence was the prelude to concrete expressions of trust." Joseph stands out, therefore, as an exemplary figure for our time, in a world that "needs fathers," and not "tyrants"; a society that "rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, power with destruction."

True fathers, instead, "refuse to live the lives of their children for them," and instead respect their freedom. In this sense, says Pope Francis, a father realizes that "he is most a father and an educator at the point when he becomes 'useless,' when he sees that his child has become independent and can walk the paths of life unaccompanied." Being a father, the Pope emphasizes, "has nothing to do with possession, but is rather a 'sign' pointing to a greater fatherhood": that of the "heavenly Father."

A daily prayer to St. Joseph ... and a challenge

In his letter, Pope Francis notes how, "Every day, for over forty years, following Lauds (Morning Prayer)" he has "recited a prayer to St. Joseph taken from a nineteenth-century French prayer book of the Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus

and Mary." This prayer, he says, expresses devotion and trust, and even poses a certain challenge to St. Joseph," on account of its closing words: "My beloved father, all my trust is in you. Let it not be said that I invoked you in vain, and since you can do everything with Jesus and Mary, show me that your goodness is as great as your power."

At the conclusion of his Letter, Pope Francis adds another prayer to St. Joseph, which he encourages all of us to pray together:

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy,
and courage,
and defend us from every evil.
Amen.

The Holy Father wrote *Patris corde* against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, which, he says, has helped us see more clearly the importance of "ordinary" people who, though far from the limelight, exercise patience and offer hope every day. In this, they resemble St. Joseph, "the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence," who nonetheless played "an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

The Year of St. Joseph continued May 1 with celebration of the annual feast day of St. Joseph the Worker.

»Obituaries

SISTER TELLIE LAPE, ICM

Sept. 6, 1950 - Feb. 17, 2021



NEW YORK CITY — Sister Tellie Lape, ICM, who belonged to the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, passed away from complications of COVID-19 on Feb. 17 at the Presbyterian Hospital in Bronx, New

York. Sister Lape ministered in the Brownsville Diocese for 16 years, having served as Youth Minister at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in McAllen, and then at Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish in La Joya. In 2004, Sister Lape was one of the founding ICM Sisters at Proyecto Desarrollo Humano and St. Anne Parish in Peñitas.

In 2010, she was called to serve in Rome as a member of her congregation's general leadership team for six years. She then was assigned to serve as leader of the Sisters' retirement community in Bronx, New York.

Sister Lape touched many lives in the Rio Grande Valley and is remembered as a dynamic, joyful missionary.

A Mass and Memorial Service were held on Feb. 28 in St. Anne's Church in Peñitas.

"The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God."
Wisdom 3:1

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CONNECT WITH CHRIST

Children's safety top priority for Victim Assistance coordinator

Special to The Valley Catholic

Since 2002, when Bishop Peña selected Walter Lukaszek as the Victim Assistance coordinator for the Diocese of Brownsville, he has had the role to listen and respond to reports of clergy sexual abuse with minors. It has proven important that those who report this have a listening ear to help them on their healing journey back to the Church. Many have carried this secret for 20, 30, 40, even 50 years before they reached out for healing of the abuse they suffered. As the recent popes, St. John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis have said, "... Everything possible must be done to rid the Church of the scourge of the sexual

abuse of minors and to open pathways of reconciliation and healing for those who were abused."

In 2019, the diocese published the names of 14 credibly accused clergy. That provided an opportunity and brought a number of new reports from victims who have sought healing. There is an ongoing need to deal with this human weakness that exists in our church. Lukaszek has a master's degree in social work and 27 years of Child Protective Service. He is skilled at listening and then supporting victims. Bishop Flores continues to respond to these reports that are investigated and reviewed by the Diocesan Review Board.

The diocese has a number of avenues

to provide information about child sexual abuse and to encourage timely reporting. All volunteers who minister to or work with minors, all clergy, and all paid staff must receive "Protecting God's Children" training, sign a code of ethics, and submit to a background check initially and then every five years. Children in Religious Education or the Catholic schools receive two "Empowering God's Children" lessons each year with the basic message, "if anyone touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your mom or dad or an adult you trust." This results in about a dozen reports each year about family or others touching them in a way that felt uncomfortable.

The final program is offering to par-

ents, who have their children enrolled in classes for First Communion or confirmation, the same child safety information so that they can listen to their children and protect them. This is the age group that children and youth are most at risk of being misused in a sexual manner. This training encourages parents to routinely talk about this safety issue with their children so that each child knows that they can talk to their parents about anything.

Bishop Flores encourages anyone, child or adult, who has been a victim of clergy sexual abuse to reach out to Lukaszek and begin the healing journey. Contact him at wlukaszek@cdob.org and (956) 457-0010 cell.

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United in Prayer

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The second United in Prayer Telethon benefitting the parishes of the Diocese of Brownsville featured a full eight hours of fundraising through entertainment and prayer, all livestreamed on Facebook. One of the highlights was a Children's Hour at lunchtime featuring Steward the Caterpillar, the stewardship mascot, with 10-year-old Anamaria Trujillo of McAllen emceeing. Later in the afternoon, Giovanna Milano of the Milano family of restaurateurs in Weslaco put on a cooking class for home-made pizza. Music was provided during the telethon by Luis Reynoso, EmmaJo, Lolis Flores, the Roma High School Mariachi Nuevo Santander and the Rio Grande Valley Children's Chorus. Bishop Daniel E. Flores, Auxiliary Bishop Mario A. Avilés and Sister Norma Pimentel all appeared, and Bishop Flores concluded the event via a livestreamed Holy Hour from the Sacred Heart Church in Brownsville. The telethon raised some \$31,100, and prayer intentions collected were brought to Mass at the Cathedral before placement before the Blessed Sacrament at the St. Joseph Chapel of Perpetual Adoration in Alamo.