



THE VALLEY CATHOLIC

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 2

SERVING MORE THAN A MILLION CATHOLICS IN THE DIOCESE OF BROWNSVILLE

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2020

Sister Norma makes Time's most influential people list

By PAUL BINZ
The Valley Catholic

SAN JUAN — Time magazine has named Sister Norma Pimentel to the 2020 TIME100, its annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

The full list and related tributes appear in the Oct. 5 issue of Time, which arrived at newsstands Sept. 25, and can be viewed online at time.com/time100.

Sister Pimentel, a Missionary of Jesus, is executive director of the Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley,

the parent agency of the Humanitarian Respite Center in downtown McAllen. The center gained international attention from 2014-2019 for its work with successive waves of immigrants seeking asylum in the United States.

The visitors, most of whom came from Central America, would find themselves adrift in the Valley with no resources after detention and release by federal officials; the respite center would come to their aid with basic necessities like meals, baths and overnight shelter before helping launch them on their way to other parts of the country

to await federal action on their cases. At one point in 2019 the center was welcoming as many as 1,200 people a day.

Since a change in immigration policy cut off entry into the U.S. and stranded the latest would-be immigrants across the Rio Grande in Mexico, the respite center has been bringing aid across the border to the refugee camps, as well as serving the homeless of the Valley at the center itself.

"I think this selection comes as a recognition for the work we do here

» Please see **Time100** p.2



United in Prayer



Paul Binz/The Valley Catholic

Sister Norma Pimentel interviews Emily Aguirre, founder of Emily's Meals, as Auxiliary Bishop Mario A. Avilés, far right, and Anamaria Trujillo, far left, look on. Emily and Anamaria served as guest hosts during one segment of the United in Faith telethon Sept. 8 from the Bishop Marx Conference Center in San Juan.

Telethon brings in prayer and support to parishes

By PAUL BINZ
The Valley Catholic

SAN JUAN — Catholics from all over the Rio Grande Valley responded generously with prayer and treasure to the United in Faith online telethon Sept. 8

to benefit the Diocese of Brownsville and its parishes.

Some \$47,441 was raised by the telethon, most of it during its five hours Tuesday afternoon and early evening. Those giving could designate the parish of their choice, many of which have been hit hard financially by closures, cancellations and other effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

Originating from the Bishop Marx Conference Center, the telethon opened

at 3 p.m. with a prayer and greeting from Bishop Daniel E. Flores. The first-ever of its kind for the diocese, Bishop Flores called the event "a creative way to express the unity of the Church here in the Rio Grande Valley."

"It's something new, but then the situation that we're living in the Church today is a new one, and we have to be creative," Bishop Flores said. "Pope Francis is constantly asking us as a people to be

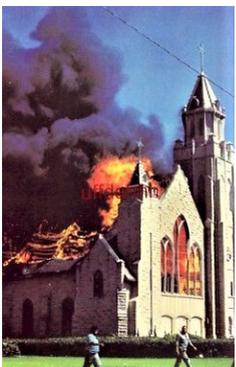
more innovative in terms of adapting to the circumstances, and certainly the circumstance of the virus is something that has affected us all profoundly."

"One of the effects of the virus has been that we aren't able to gather as we used to, we can't have our festivals because we have to protect one another, we wear masks. Those of us who can go to Mass, we do that very carefully; we encourage

» Please see **Telethon** p.2

50 years ago
Page 3, 18-19

The first shrine dedicated to Our Lady of San Juan del Valle was destroyed by plane crash and fire



How Catholics Vote
Page 10

Prepare yourself to vote. The U.S. bishops have a teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics

» EN ESPAÑOL
Páginas 18-23



For video and more Visit the Diocese of Brownsville on its social media pages.



» **Telethon**

continued from pg.1

those who are in any way vulnerable to stay home.

“But the communion of the Church is something that is deeper than any given moment, and so we want to express it, and this telethon is a way we can do that,” he said. “By listening, by sharing and sometimes by sending our prayer intentions, by uniting our prayers, by thinking of people that we need to think about and to pray for, and to unite ourselves to the work of Christ in his Church – this is the great work.”

“We have to get through this together, and we will. The work of the Church is really a work that is meant to extend itself for the good of all. So we ask you to participate, we ask you to spend some time with us, and most of all, we ask you to be united in prayer.”

When the telethon got under way, viewers were able to join in prayer for a Divine Mercy Chaplet and later a rosary, plus hear reports on stewardship, Catholic schools and several of the diocese’s eight deaneries. Sister Norma Pimentel spoke to viewers about Catholic Charities, and several other ministries including Family Life and Catechesis made presentations about their activities.

In addition to musical segments, the telethon also featured a cooking class by chef Megan Riojas of Harlingen. As the telethon neared its end, the diocesan offices for Vocations and Formation for Ministry made presentations. Bishop Flores closed out the evening with benediction and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by a closing prayer.

Throughout the telethon, shifts of volunteers in the Medeiros Building at the Pastoral Center fielded calls from viewers phoning in donations and prayer intentions. Another group of volunteers processed the offerings from a nearby conference room. And even though the telethon ended by 8, calls were still coming in afterward, and more donations showed up on the diocesan website, CDOB.org.

Many callers made known their prayer intentions, which were written down and collected. Bishop Flores carried the stack of sheets with the intentions to Brownsville for placement on the altar during his broadcast Sunday Mass at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral; afterward, the prayers were brought to the St. Joseph Adoration Chapel in Alamo where they remain in the sanctuary.



Time100

continued from pg.1

on the border, that of restoring human dignity to those in need.” Sister Pimentel said. “It is a recognition of the generosity of the people of the Rio Grande Valley and from throughout the United States. Together we recognize that we have a responsibility.

“We are a people of God, people driven by the presence of

God in ourselves and in others. When we see human suffering, we cannot turn our backs, we must respond,” she said. “It is my hope that this recognition will bring more understanding and help people see more clearly what we can each do to respect all human life, especially the most vulnerable.”

The list, now in its seventeenth year, recognizes the activism, innovation and achievement of the world’s most influential individuals.

<https://www.facebook.com/CatholicRGV/videos/324007072189326>



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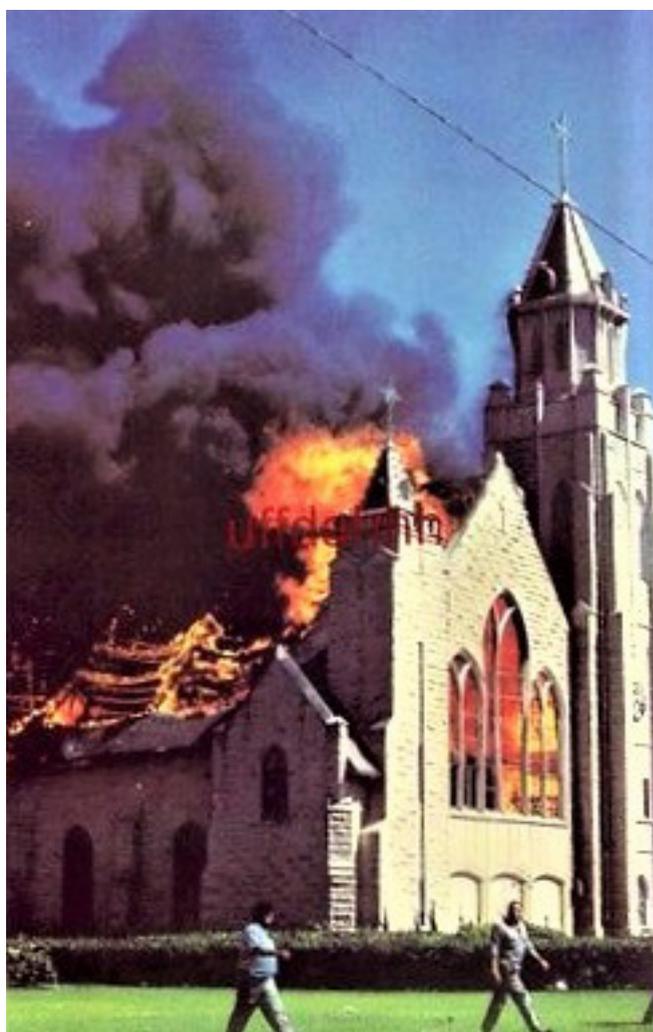
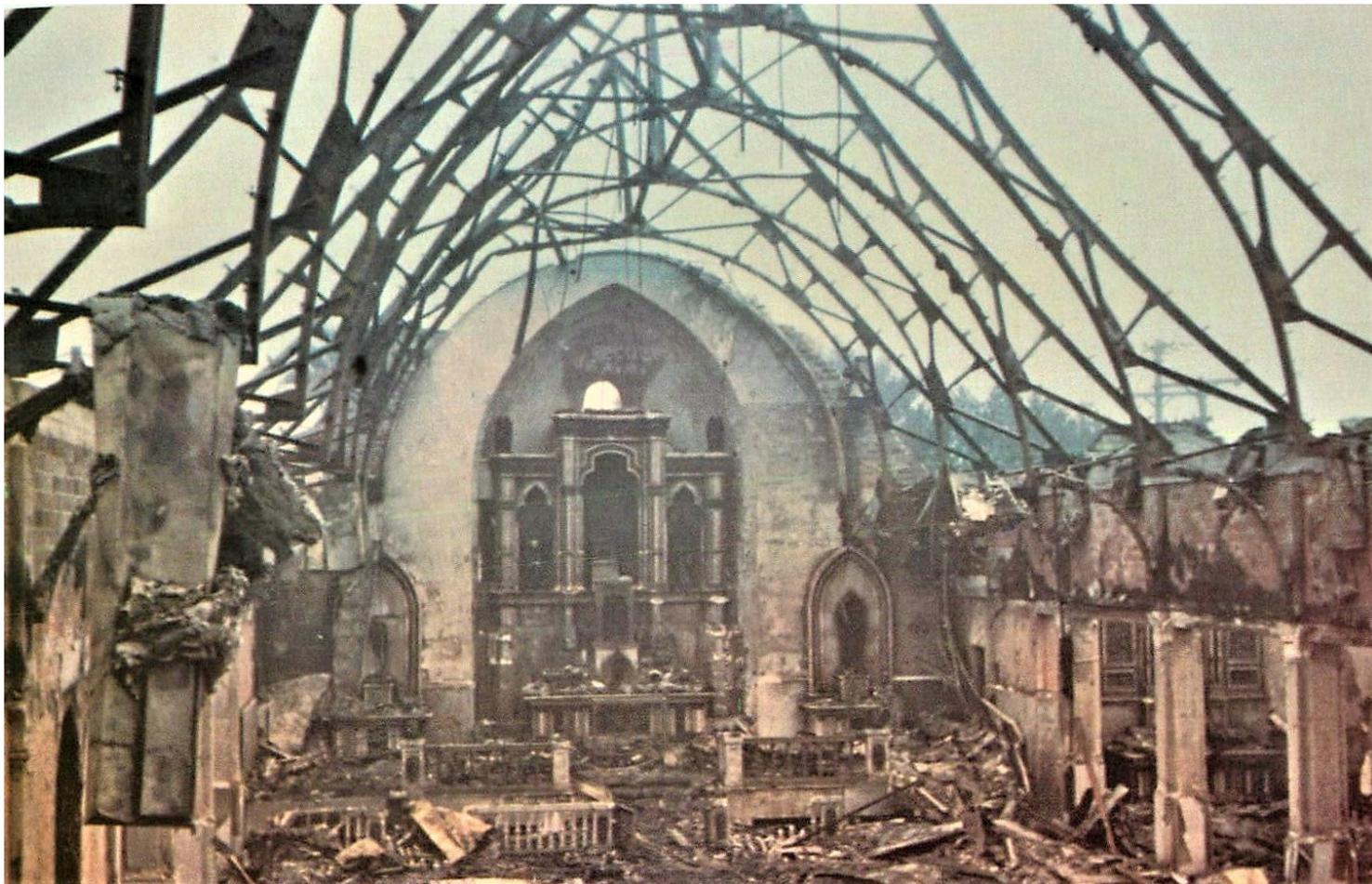
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A historic fire

Oct. 23, 1970 changed the course of the shrine forever



Courtesy Photos/Archives

On Oct. 23, 1970, a former teacher flew a small rented plane into the roof of the Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle in San Juan as Mass was being celebrated, and as 200 students ate lunch in the school cafeteria next door. Miraculously, everyone but the pilot escaped with their lives, and a trio of heroes rescued the Blessed Sacrament and the image of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle. The still unexplained incident resulted in years of renewal and construction: The parish church was rebuilt, and work started nearby on the shrine that we know today, which became the new destination for pilgrimages to Our Lady and was eventually designated a national basilica. These images from old postcards show the results of the crash and fire; the one at bottom right shows how the old shrine looked before the disaster. See full story on Page 18.

» Women en la Frontera



Brenda Nettles Riojas
Editor of
The Valley Catholic

In the direction of hope

Because it bears repeating, because sometimes forgetfulness overtakes us, because sometimes we find ourselves lost in the darkness of despair, we must find ways to readjust our bearings in the direction of hope.

Hope, one of the three theological virtues, “responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man,” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1818). “It takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of Heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude.”

On the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we united in prayer as a Catholic family here in the Rio Grande Valley, demonstrating how we can proceed in the direction of hope through 1. our trust in God; 2. prayer; and 3. our response.

During the five-hour telethon, we came together to pray for each other and support our parishes during these continuing days of the pandemic. In addition to music from local Catholic talent, priests and lay faithful shared suggestions on how to face these challenging times. “We want to give people hope and ideas on how to proceed during these uncertain times,” said Auxiliary Bishop Mario A. Avilés.

Hundreds shared their prayer petitions, which Bishop Daniel E. Flores placed at the altar at Mass on Sept. 13 before delivering them to the Capuchin Poor Clare Sisters who will pray for all these intentions in the Chapel of Perpetual Adoration.

Sister Ann Hayden of the Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, offered “audacious hope” as the theme for one of our evening prayer meetings. “I believe that what I call audacious hope is the underlying, understanding attitude that supports our ever — spiraling, forward movement in the evolving consciousness of who we are in relationship with God.”

She adds, “Hope is one of the most basic gifts of our humanity in experiences that demand endurance. Hope is wrapped in struggle, refined by commitment, and purified in repetition.”

It is worth pausing for a bit to think about hope. It is not always visible, but hope speaks of our trust in God. As people of the Resurrection, we know that light will find us and lead us through the darkness in our lives. And if we trust in the Lord, we have a responsibility to respond, to say “yes.” How we respond makes a difference.

Sister Norma Pimentel, named by Time magazine to the 2020 TIME100 list of most influential people in the world, gives witness globally to her “yes” in the countless ways that she cares for the most vulnerable. Daily we are called to respond as well.

Given that we have all been affected in one way or another by COVID-19 this year, we are all caught in a constant state of adjusting and adapting. Everywhere we turn, a new challenge finds us — at home, work, and our community. You can’t hide from it. As one friend said, “*Esta cabrito. Estos son tiempos duros.*” (These are tough times.)

In our own diocese, a fourth of our staff was furloughed in

March; and now this month, laid off. How we continue ministry in these changing times requires creativity. Rather than giving up or conceding defeat, we must find new ways to continue the mission. My colleagues inspire hope as they employ new ideas to reach the people they serve. Through virtual training sessions and online retreats, they continue to be present, to accompany the faithful who are looking for resources and guidance.

A dear friend reminded me, “Transformation happens when things are the most difficult.” So let us walk in the direction of hope, a hope that helps us to celebrate the joys brought into focus by God’s light.

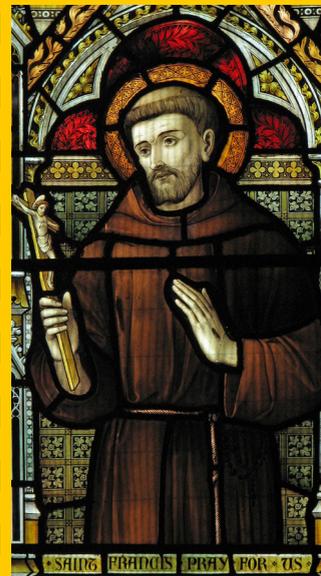
“Placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit,” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1817)

He didn’t say it was going to be easy. He just said he would get you through it. We can do this together, finding ways to sow hope, not a “sedentary” people, but rather people who, as the Holy Father says, “sow the oil of hope, sow the fragrance of hope, and not the vinegar of bitterness and hopelessness.”

“We will be, in measure of our capacity, counselors in the image of the Paraclete,” Pope Francis said during one of his Wednesday audiences in 2017. “That is the Holy Spirit, and in all the senses that this word implies: advocates, helpers, comforters. Our words and our counsel, our way of acting, or voice, our gaze, will be gentle and peaceful.”

» Sunday Readings

The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church



OCT. 4

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

IS 5:1-7

Responsorial Psalm

PS 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20

Reading 2

PHIL 4:6-9

Alleluia

JN 15:16

Gospel

MT 21:33-43

OCT. 11

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

IS 25:6-10A

Responsorial Psalm

PS 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6

Reading 2

PHIL 4:12-14, 19-20

Alleluia

EPH 1:17-18

Gospel

MT 22:1-14 OR 22:1-10

OCT. 18

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

IS 45:1, 4-6

Responsorial Psalm

PS 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10

Reading 2

1 THES 1:1-5B

Alleluia

PHIL 2:15D, 16A

Gospel

MT 22:15-21

OCT. 25

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

EX 22:20-26

Responsorial Psalm

PS 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

Reading 2

1 THES 1:5C-10

Alleluia

JN 14:23

Gospel

MT 22:34-40

» Family Life

Living our Domestic Church more abundantly



Lydia Pesina
Director,
Family Life Office

In *Familiaris Consortio*, St. John Paul II spoke of the family “as a ‘Church in miniature’ (ecclesia domestica) in such a way that in its own way is a living image and historical representation of the mystery of the Church” (*Familiaris Consortio*, #49). He was reminding us that as a family, WE are the Church; and that the Church is a family of families.

It is in our family — our Domestic Church — where we learn to love and be loved, serve and be served, and forgive and be forgiven. It is within our family that we are formed, and hopefully it is also there that we can work at being transformed into the person that God has uniquely created us to be. In the best of circumstances, it is around our family altar, often our kitchen or dining table, that we gather to grow into ourselves and grow in our faith in God our Creator, in Jesus our Redeemer and Teacher, and be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Familiaris Consortio teaches us that the sacredness of life lies in the ordinary everyday tasks of living and loving: washing dishes, cooking meals, changing diapers, working to feed and clothe the family. Pope Francis tells us that “love is shown by little things, by attention to small daily signs which make us feel at home. Faith grows when it is lived and shaped by

love. That is why our families, our homes, are true domestic churches. They are the right place for faith to become life, and life to grow in faith.”

During these past several months when families have spent MORE time together due to being quarantined, sheltered in place, or social distancing, families have had an opportunity to do MORE cooking together; play MORE games; make funny videos; get on each other’s nerves MORE but hopefully forgive each other MORE. Many were or are praying together MORE as well as worrying MORE about jobs, food, and finances. Churches, institutions, and individuals are sharing MORE food and resources.

And as families we have been having MORE of an opportunity to pray MORE together and perhaps set up or augment a family altar or prayer space to participate in livestreamed or recorded Sunday and/or weekday Mass. Someone sent me a cartoon that depicted the devil telling God, “I closed all your churches,” and God responding, “On the contrary, I opened one in every home!” In essence, we have had MORE of an opportunity to reconstruct or work at transforming our Domestic Church/our family.

Pope Francis: “In families, there are difficulties. In families,

we argue; in families, sometimes the plates fly; in families, the children give us headaches ... But in families, there is always, 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. Because of this, the family is — forgive the term I’ll use — it is a factory of hope, of hope of life and of resurrection. God was the one who opened this path.

“... In families, there are difficulties, but these difficulties are overcome with love. Hate doesn’t overcome any difficulty. Division of hearts doesn’t overcome any difficulty. Only love is capable of overcoming difficulties. Love is a festival. Love is joy. Love is to keep moving forward.”

Perhaps one of our continuing tasks in life is to keep working on becoming the person God has uniquely created us to be, as well as to work on our family being transformed into that unique Domestic Church we are meant to be.

Perhaps we can ask our family members to answer the following question (written or verbal), and it might be interesting to hear what other family members would like MORE of — or perhaps there isn’t anything they would like different. I believe that families, especially

» Making Sense of Bioethics



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

COVID-19 vaccine myths

Several popular myths about COVID-19 vaccines have been gaining traction on social media in recent months, particularly in regard to messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines being developed by Moderna, Sanofi, Pfizer and a handful of other companies. I would like to consider five of these myths.

Myth 1: For vaccines that rely on injecting patients with mRNA, the possible incorporation of these genes into our genetic makeup will fundamentally alter who we are as humans, moving us into a project of Transhumanism, the production of a “Human 2.0,” etc.

Reply: Any incorporation of new genes into our chromosomes from a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine would be an exceedingly rare occurrence, if it were to occur at all. It is actually very difficult to get the genetic information of mRNA to integrate into our chromosomes, partly because this would mean a reverse directional flow of the so-called Central Dogma of Molecular Biology: our DNA or chromosomes are read (“transcribed”) to produce mRNA, which is then read (“translated”) to make proteins. Even if the accidental and unintentional incorporation of an mRNA message into our chromosomes were somehow to occur following vaccination, this would not mean that we were creating “Human 2.0,” since those genetic changes

would not be expected to affect our sex cells, and therefore would not be transmitted to the next generation. Vaccinating people with an mRNA vaccine for COVID-19, therefore, does not imply that we are “remaking man” or heading down the path of Transhumanism.

Myth 2: The rapid pace of clinical trials means that vaccines will be unsafe and/or ineffective.

Reply: This could be a legitimate concern, if proper testing were to be curtailed, or approval for public vaccination campaigns were to be granted ahead of conclusive safety and efficacy testing. Such approval, however, appears highly unlikely when it comes to any of the major national regulatory agencies like the US Food and Drug Administration, the European Medicines Agency, or Australia’s Therapeutic Goods Administration (with the possible exception of regulatory agencies in China and/or Russia).

Myth 3: Luciferase is the name of the bioluminescent enzyme contained in the vaccine, which seems connected to the “forces of evil.”

Reply: Luciferase, an enzyme involved in firefly illumination, is being used in various testing and development stages ahead of the production of a COVID-19 vaccine, but is not itself part of the injected material included in human vaccinations. Luciferase is a commonly

used biomedical research tool, and has been used, for example, in lab animals to study the most effective way to deliver mRNA vaccines, whether by an injection into the skin, muscle or a vein.

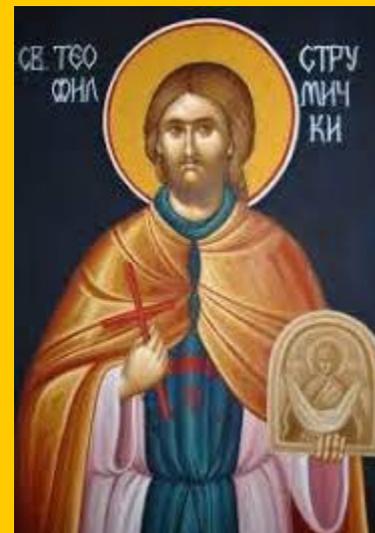
Myth 4: Vaccine manufacturers have no legal repercussions for any bad effects from their vaccines.

Reply: Dr. John Grabenstein, retired Global Executive Director of Medical Affairs for Merck Vaccines, offers the following corrective: “Manufacturers are indemnified for unforeseeable adverse events. They are not indemnified for negligence. This is standard practice.” With pharmaceutical companies’ getting ready to immunize hundreds of millions of people, the question of who will cover claims for damages in case of unanticipated future side effects is quite important. Ruud Dobber, a member of the senior executive team at the pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, recently argued: “This is a unique situation where we as a company simply cannot take the risk if in ... four years the vaccine is showing side effects ... In the contracts we have in place, we are asking for indemnification. For most countries it is acceptable to take that risk on their shoulders because it is in their national interest.” In the USA, for example, a 2005 law, known as the Public

» Please see **Bioethics** p. 13

» Feast Day
 Oct. 13

Spotlight on St. Theophilus of Antioch



St. Theophilus of Antioch was one of the Apostolic Fathers of the early Church who gave special witness to the faith, in this case through his extensive writings.

Little is known of his early life. He was born in what is now Iraq, between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. He converted to Christianity as an adult after a lengthy and intense study of the Scriptures, and eventually became the seventh Bishop of Antioch, an ancient city of Syria whose site is within modern day Turkey. He was bishop there between 185 and 190 or 191 A.D.

The only surviving work of St. Theophilus is an apologetic (defense of the faith) trilogy known as *Apologia ad Autolyicum* (*Apology to Autolyicus*) that he wrote for a pagan friend who had mocked Christianity and its tenets. History records that St. Jerome and Eusebius said that St. Theophilus wrote numerous works of apology against various heresies of his day. According to Catholic.org, St. Jerome said St. Theophilus “also wrote commentaries on the gospels ... and on the book of Proverbs. He had a considerable knowledge of inspired writings and showed their superiority over heathen philosophy and poetry. He also wrote a work against the heresies of Marcion and of Hermogenes.”

The Catholic Faith and Reason website describes *Apology to Autolyicus* as “an attempt to convince his heathen friend ... of the falseness and foolishness of paganism versus the truth of Christianity.”

In this excerpt from the *Apology to Autolyicus*, St. Theophilus offers a rationale for resurrection and eternal life:

“... Suppose I should show you a dead man raised and alive, even this you would disbelieve. God indeed exhibits to you many proofs that you may believe Him. For consider, if you please, the dying of seasons, and days, and nights, how these also die and rise again.”

He goes on to offer Autolyicus other examples from nature, including the dispersal and sprouting of seeds resulting in trees, and the waning and waxing of the moon.

“And all these things does the wisdom of God effect, in order to manifest even by these things, that God is able to effect the general resurrection of all men. ... Hear further, O man, of the work of resurrection going on in yourself, even though you are unaware of it. For perhaps you have sometimes fallen sick, and lost flesh, and strength, and beauty; but when you received again from God mercy and healing, you picked up again in flesh and appearance, and recovered also your strength.”

“This, too, is the work of God, who thus operates, and not of any other.”

The writing of St. Theophilus also makes mention of the Trinity in such a way as to provide evidence of this conception of God as a pillar of early Christianity.

St. Theophilus of Antioch died around 190 or 191 A.D. His feast day is Oct. 13.

» Formation for Ministry

Spirituality for the new normal

In these unprecedented times everyone in the world is struggling now more than ever and in one way or another with the uncertainty of tomorrow. Each of us in our own way is trying to handle the stresses of life under the shadow of Covid-19. The Catholic Church is no exception to being affected by the coronavirus pandemic raging all over the world as fewer are attending Holy Mass.

As I write this column, 200,768 individuals have lost their lives in our country. The number is sobering, stunning and heartbreaking: Every single one of them a human being, created in the image and likeness of God, now greatly missed by their loved ones. May each of them remain in our thoughts and daily prayers.

The last six months have proven beyond stressful, physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. Today many feel anxiety, fear, anger and sadness; not to mention feeling isolated; not being able to see their loved ones, especially the elderly. Others feel their dignity as human beings has been trampled upon due to lack of employment or struggling to make enough to make ends meet.

While some have been affected by illness and grieving the painful loss of a beloved friend or family member, others remain skeptical about the virus. It’s almost as if we are living in two dimensions. While some are struggling financially, others see no change.

We can either be sympa-

thetic or empathetic towards those who have lost a loved one or their employment; while some remain cynical, claiming that they can always apply for unemployment benefits or to wait for the next stimulus check. As Christian Catholics we must be reminded of the Gospel message and ask ourselves: Who is my neighbor?

During spiritual direction, many have expressed the great challenge to their faith all this has been. Some have mentioned that they feel “God’s absence,” while others have said with conviction that they feel “God’s presence” in their lives.

As we struggle even with our faith, it’s normal to question and ask, why is all this happening? Where is God in all of this? As people of faith, how do we respond? Is it OK to doubt and feel that God has abandoned us? Is it OK if we are angry at God for allowing this to happen?

Someone sent me a Facebook meme that read: “*No tengo miedo de que el mundo se acabe mas temo, que el mundo siga y nada cambie*,” which translates to: “I’m not afraid that the world will end but I’m afraid that the world goes on and nothing changes.”

It certainly would be tragic if we don’t take any lessons and learn from what the world is going through. This pandemic has given us more time for self-awareness (self-reflection) — and time with our families, eating and cooking more at home; indeed, we can see this as a blessing. It has in some ways

reduced the stress of the hustle and bustle of daily life, perhaps spending less on things we really don’t need.

Without a doubt this coronavirus pandemic has given us the opportunity to reflect and evaluate our life priorities and really focus on what is important each day we wake up, realizing that no one is promised tomorrow.

In such trying times, we need to be honest with ourselves as we feel vulnerable and seek help as we are all coping with stress. As we realize that we are not alone in this, we should all have someone we trust to share our own struggles.

While some are coping well in these challenging times due to their faith and their relationship with God, others are questioning their own faith and even their very existence.

As Catholics, we rely on our spirituality (life of prayer) knowing that God loves us in Christ Jesus his beloved Son, as we surrender ourselves to his divine providence, realizing that “we are not in control” and that God is always near and that ultimately we rely on his grace.

If I may recommend highly to meditate faithfully daily on the gospel reading for the day, practice lectio divina, pray the (divine office or work of God) liturgy of the hours (in particular the office of readings), pray the rosary (keeping in mind that while we hold the rosary on earth, the Blessed Mother holds it from heaven) as we meditate on the mysteries of the life of

» Please see **Spirituality** p. 14



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

Faith in the Valley



WE MUST BRING THESE POWERFUL WORDS TO LIFE IN THE DIOCESE OF BROWNSVILLE.

BUT BISHOP MARK WOULD NEVER HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT THE COUNCIL. HE DIED SUDDENLY OF A HEART ATTACK ON NOVEMBER 1, WHILE VISITING HIS MOTHER IN COLOGNE, GERMANY.

THE NEW DIOCESE WAS ALREADY WITHOUT A BISHOP.

BROWNSVILLE'S SECOND BISHOP CAME FROM FAR AWAY OF THE DIOCESE OF FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS. BUT HUMBERTO MEDEIROS WAS IMMEDIATELY WELCOMED.

BISHOP MEDEIROS WAS A WHIRLWIND OF ACTIVITY. HE LED THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO THE DEVASTATION OF HURRICANE BEULAH. HE REPLICATED DOZENS OF NEW BUILDINGS.

WE HAVE MORE CHALLENGES THAN MOST DIOCESES DO. NOT ONLY MUST WE IMPLEMENT THE TEACHINGS OF THE COUNCIL, WE NEED TO ORGANIZE OUR NEW DIOCESE!

BISHOP MEDEIROS GUIDED THE LOCAL CHURCH IN IMPLEMENTING THE LITURGICAL REFORMS OF THE COUNCIL, WHICH BROUGHT NEW LANGUAGES AND NEW KINDS OF MUSIC TO THE MASS.

HE ADVOCATED FOR MIGRANT WORKERS.

OUR WORKERS MUST HAVE BETTER PAY AND DECENT LIVING CONDITIONS. WITHOUT JUSTICE FOR WORKERS, WE WILL NEVER HAVE PEACE.

HE WAS KNOWN FOR HIS MEMORY FOR FACES AND NAMES.

HELLO, MRS. GARCIA! HOW NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN. HOW IS YOUR SON JUAN?

HE CONFIRMED MY SON JUAN TWO YEARS AGO. I AM AMAZED THAT HE REMEMBERS ME!

UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP, THE FIRST DIOCESAN NEWSPAPER WAS PUBLISHED.

HOW CAN WE PROVIDE PASTORAL CARE TO ALL THE MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR CHILDREN WHEN THEY LEAVE US IN SEARCH OF WORK?

HE CREATED THE MIGRANT APOSTOLATE - TEAMS OF PRIESTS, SISTERS, AND LAY PEOPLE WHO FOLLOWED THE MIGRANT WORKERS TO FARMS IN THE NORTH AND MINISTERED TO THEM.

ON SEPTEMBER 8, 1970, POPE PAUL VI APPOINTED MEDEIROS THE ARCHBISHOP OF BOSTON. IT WAS A BITTERSWEET MOMENT FOR THE DIOCESE OF BROWNSVILLE.

TO BE CONTINUED
From Faith in the Valley: An Illustrated History of the Diocese of Brownsville

» From the desk of the Superintendent

Catholic schools set to begin face-to-face instruction

By **SISTER CINDY MELLO**
Catholic Schools Superintendent

Welcome back! The summer months have passed and it is time to move along in our new school year. I welcome you back to the 2020-2021 academic school year. Whether in parochial, private or public schools, may all students who have returned from their summer vacations bring open hearts and minds eager to learn.

Specifically, I welcome back students, families, teachers and staff members to our Catholic schools. We are reminded daily of the many blessings and resources available in our Catholic schools: talented students, supportive families, high-quality teachers, excellent administrators, support staff members, strong faith communities and dedicated clergy with a strong support of our bishops.

We are grateful for the financial support and sacrifices of the people of our diocese who generously contribute to make a Catholic education possible for our students.

The mission of our Catholic schools remains "to provide a quality Catholic education in an environment of spiritual, academic and moral formation in accordance with the teachings of the Church."

Our Catholic schools continue to reflect ongoing im-

provement efforts in all areas of curriculum; we are proud of our national achievement test results in grades K - 12 and our high school graduates who go on to higher education. Our Catholic identity is visible throughout our schools, especially in our religion program where our students are taught to form community through which the presence of God is experienced among faith-filled people and living the Gospel values by being of service to others.

At the same time, we are aware of our duties to be good stewards of the resources with which we have been blessed. With the assistance of our parents, pastors and school advisory councils, our schools remain, for the most part, financially viable. We continue to seek ways to benefit from strategic purchasing efforts and to access federal programs for our students and teachers.

Last spring, our Catholic schools faced many difficulties as COVID-19 took over our normal way of living. However, our Catholic schools came to the forefront and moved immediately into distance learning, not to miss a moment of instruction for their students. The Catholic schools in the Rio Grande Valley were challenged, and with limited materials and funding, they were able to keep up instruction by using different platforms that worked for their families.

Our Catholic schools survived the challenge, and on Aug. 31, when we opened our classrooms remotely, our



SISTER CYNTHIA A. MELLO, SSD

Catholic schools were ready to meet the needs of all their students and families. Principals, teachers and staff worked diligently on Professional Development days to prepare for remote learning. They trained and prepared to meet their students online until we were ready to open our doors for face-to-face instruction, which will be Monday, Sept. 28, 2020, if all goes well.

As that day arrives, our Catholic schools will have trained, planned and prepared all protocols for a safe and healthy environment for our students, parents, teachers and staff.

Our Catholic schools are anxious and ready to move to the next phase of this new year of dedicated service to teach our students that "Jesus is the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6)

I pray that this journey of a new school year, the challenges we will continue to face, will be a time for joy and celebration for all of our students and their families.

TEST YOUR CATECHISM KNOWLEDGE

This quiz can help you, your children, and your families review what you know about our Catholic faith.

- The head catechist in a parish is the _____.
 - high school principal
 - 2nd grade math teacher
 - pastor
 - Pope
- The current universal catechism is the first catechism ever written.
 - True
 - False
- The _____ is the head catechist in the diocese.
 - youth minister
 - local pastor
 - bishop
 - Pope
- The Catechism was written primarily for children.
 - True
 - False

Source: DAVID O'BRIEN
<http://www.Catechist.com>

Catholic Diocese of Brownsville

You're Invited!

White Mass

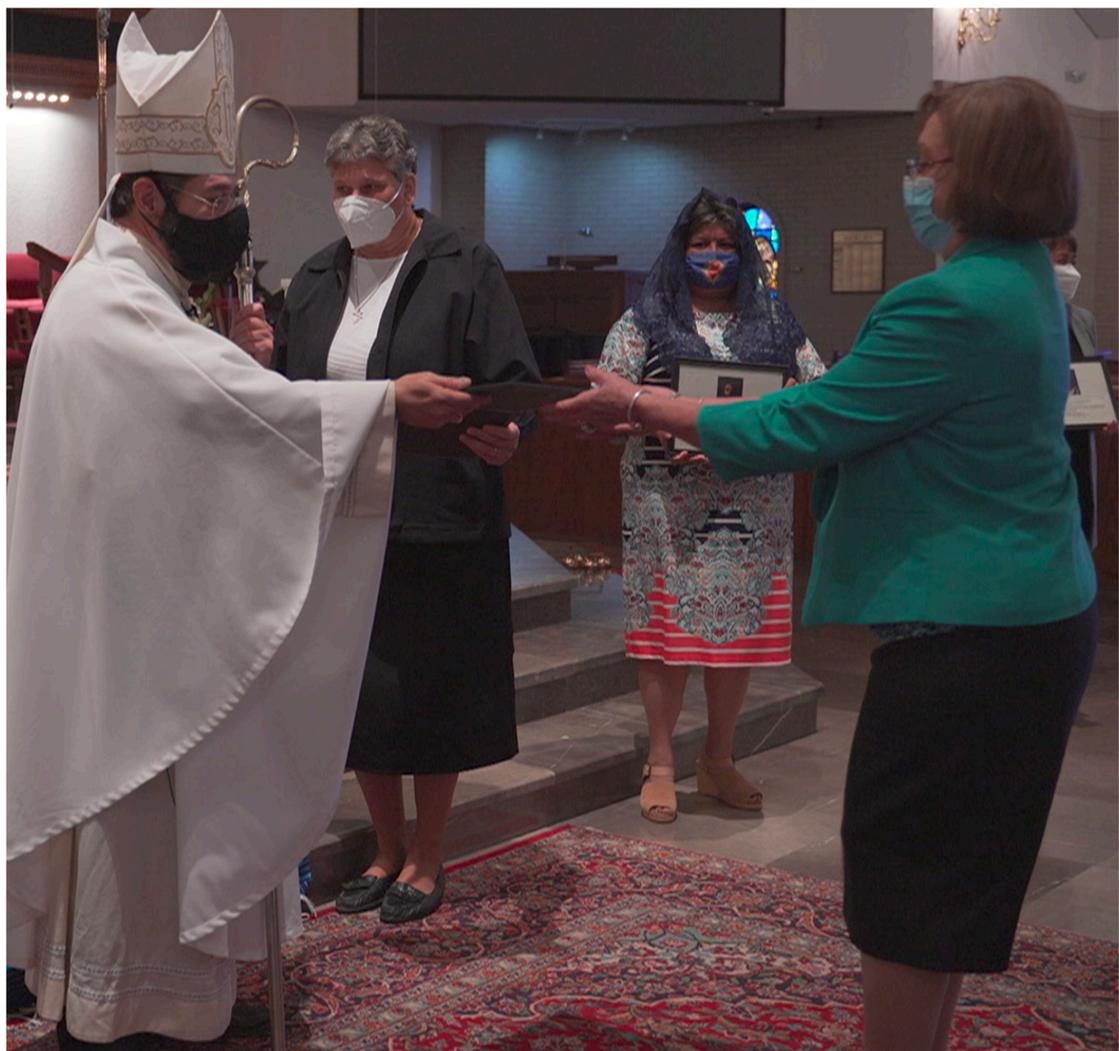
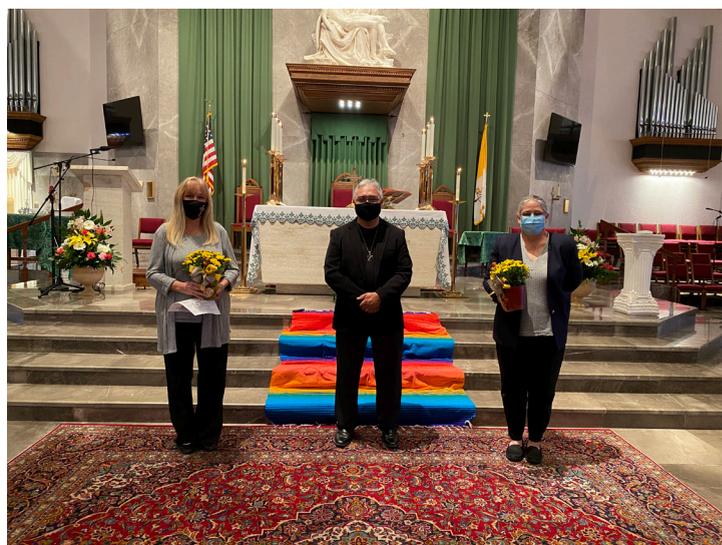
for Health Care Professionals

Main Celebrant: Bishop Daniel E. Flores

October 22, 2020 | 6:30 PM
Holy Spirit Church, McAllen

Live on

For additional information:
Health Ministries (956)784-5048

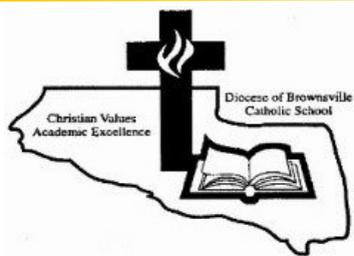


Rick Treviño/The Valley Catholic

Bishop Daniel E. Flores celebrated a Mass for Catholic Schools on Sept. 8 at Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in McAllen. Following the Mass, Superintendent of Schools Cynthia Mello presented service award pins to Catholic schools staff. The staff also renewed their commitment to the values and mission of Catholic school ministry.

THANK YOU

Catholic Schools Service Awards



For your years of service to Catholic Education in the Diocese of Brownsville

5 YEARS

- ALDO BERTINI - JDA
- CAROLINA CAZARES - SMS
- BRENDA CEPEDA - OLSS
- ESTELA LOPEZ - GRMS
- WILLIAM A. LOPEZ - IWA
- JOSE ROBERTO MORENO - SMS
- STEVEN NAJERA - SJA
- GILBERTO RAMIREZ - GRMS
- YVETTE REY - SMS
- LETICIA A. RODRIGUEZ - ICS
- ANA LISA SOLIS - ICS

10 YEARS

- ANGELICA CAMARILLO - SMS
- CARMINA GONZALEZ - SMS
- MATTHEW HOPPER - OA
- MARIA G. SCHLATER - SJA
- VILMA WOLF - SJA

15 YEARS

- PATRICIA R. BANDA - IWA
- FELIPA GAMEZ - SJA
- JANET GARCIA - SAS
- MICHAEL MOTYL - SJA
- ROBERTA PACHECO - SJA
- JOSE A. RODRIGUEZ - OA
- CONSUELO VELASCO - OA

20 YEARS

- BERNICE ALCOCER - SLS
- CATHERINE CASAS - OLSS
- MANUEL GAMEZ - SJA
- BRISA KOBAYASHI - SMS
- MARIA SOBERANO - OA
- MELISSA VALADEZ - SJA

25 YEARS

- ANNE GONZALEZ - SAS
- ROSA M. RODRIGUEZ - OA

30 YEARS

- YVETTE RODRIGUEZ - SJS

35 YEARS

- NORA SILVIA ALVARADO - OA
- BR. FRANCIS GARZA - SJA
- DIANA LYSSY - SJS

40 YEARS

- STELLA FILIZOLA - SJA



Caring for creation

'...We have the power to find solutions'



Rev. Greg Labus

Pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church and School

Pope Francis designated Sept. 1 as “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.” This initiated a monthlong “Season of Creation.” During this month of September, the Holy Father has invited us to reflect on the gift of creation for all of humanity. The pope noted that “the disintegration of biodiversity, spiraling climate disasters, and unjust impact of the current pandemic on the poor and vulnerable” are a “wake-up call in the face of our rampant greed and consumption.” Pope Francis, as a watchman for the people, has been highlighting this issue of climate change ever since he published his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. He has pointed out that the poor will suffer the most because of increased droughts and floods around the globe due to climate change.

Certainly, most people from around the world acknowledge that the climate is changing rapidly and affecting every aspect of life on earth from plants to animals to human beings. While there may not be consensus as to what is causing the climate to change, the pope observed that we must first be “at peace with the Creator who is the source and origin of all things” if we want to “live in harmony with creation.” God has made us stewards of creation to use it wisely and to protect it for future generations. If we are going to be good stewards, then we must seriously consider the impact we all have on the environment.

In considering our stewardship, we may feel daunted by hearing of wildfires that are occurring all over the western United States. We are hearing about stronger

storms and flooding in other parts of the world. Many are overwhelmed that pollution of our oceans and air is out of control and there does not seem to be any way to correct the situation. However, if we are “at peace with



Cenizo

the Creator,” we have the power to find solutions that respect the rights and dignity of every human being on the planet.

These solutions have to begin with each individual. We must do an examination of conscience of how we use the resources of the earth. If we are “at peace with the creator” then we must consider also the needs of our neighbor and not allow ourselves to give in to the temptation to “rampant greed and consumption.”

In considering what all of us can do to make a difference, may I suggest that we don't have to do extraordinary things but rather we can make small changes that can really help. Here are some suggestions that I propose for your consideration:

1. Find alternatives to bottled water. The amount of plastic that is put into landfills and ends up in the oceans is staggering. There are reverse osmosis systems you can

install in your home. If that is not economically feasible, there are other less expensive products that take tap water and purify it. These products can be found in most stores. Lastly, we may consider that tap water is deemed safe by the state for consumption.

2. Promote xeriscaping that utilizes native plants. The Rio Grande Valley is a unique subtropical region that hosts some plants that are found nowhere else. In the last 100 years much of this habitat has been lost to development. Our area hosts one of the largest number of bird and butterfly species in the country. They depend on the native plants for food. By landscaping our yards with native plants we can create micro-habitats for these creatures.

3. Strive to be energy efficient. As Americans, we do like our cars and the independence they afford us. With that in mind, buy a car that gets good gas mileage. Also, when buying appliances, check their efficiency. Many people are investigating tapping into solar energy for their homes, which can help reduce the use of coal and gas to generate electricity. Also, when possible, use public transportation or use bike power.

As part of the human family, disciples have an obligation to care for creation so that there is clean air and water and food for everyone. Can you imagine what a difference we all could make in helping the environment if we attempted to implement one or two of these ideas? As good stewards of what God has entrusted to us, let's commit ourselves to do our part to protect creation.

Native Plants

Father Greg Labus suggested some of these native plants for your home gardens.

1. Turks Cap
2. Manzanita, also known as Barbados Cherry
3. Salvia
4. Skeleton leaf goldeneye
5. Mountain laurel
6. Cenizo or Texas sage
7. Various species of mist flower

Some local vendors:

Valley Nature Center, Weslaco
(956) 969-2475

Mike Heep, Harlingen
(956) 457-6834

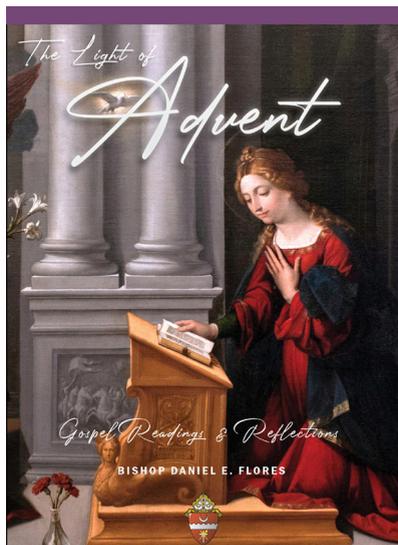
Betty Perez, Mission
(956) 587-2149



Yellow rain Lillie's

The Light of Advent

Gospel Readings & Reflections



» **Reserve your copy early**

» Order online: www.cdob.org
or by email: pbinz@cdob.org

ONLY \$6.95
Advance orders: \$5

In *The Light of Advent*, Bishop Daniel E. Flores invites us to enter into a dialogue with God, to respond to His daily Word. “Take time during Advent every day to meditate on the Gospel,” he says. “Read the readings of the day and just meditate on them. Let the words enter your mind.”

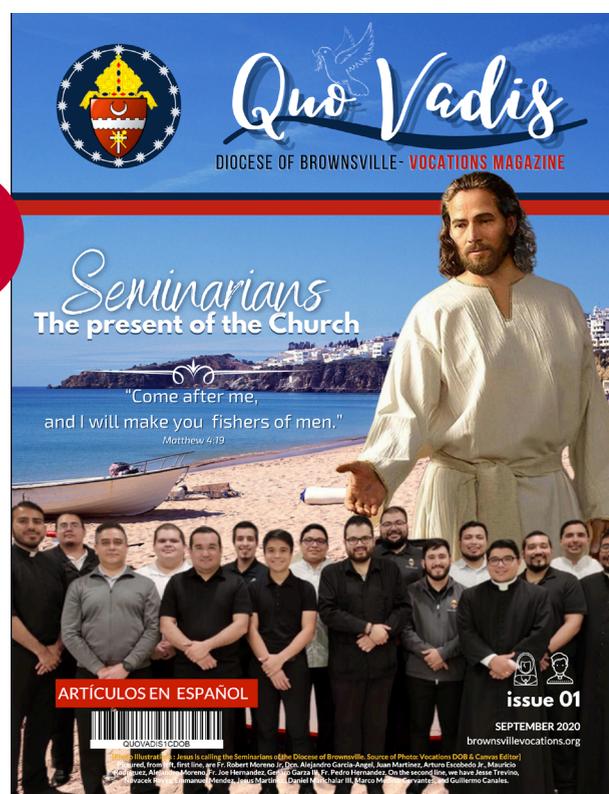
“Seek a quiet place each day where His Word can stir your thoughts and considerations.”

The Light of Advent includes a collection of Bishop Flores' essays and poems focused on this season of preparation and anticipation. It also includes space for your own reflections and response.

Bishop Flores' own response to the daily readings (as posted on his Twitter feed) are interspersed in the book.

“My deep desire is that Advent be for everyone a time of grace to prepare for our Lord Jesus Christ the welcoming that He desires and that He deserves.”

**CLICK
HERE**



Seminarians from the Diocese of Brownsville have released the first sample issue of their new magazine, *Quo Vadis*, an online publication designed to illuminate and promote priestly vocations with the real stories of seminarians, priests and bishops themselves and the divine sources of their faith. *Quo Vadis* is produced and published virtually from seminary, and aimed at a Rio Grande Valley readership. The magazine's art director, Marco Medina Cervantes, studying theology at St. Mary's Seminary in San Antonio, writes in the issue's introduction that he hopes to “carve out space online where young people can get inspired, raise awareness, and find their vocation according to God's will.” Joining him on staff are Arturo Escobedo Jr. of St. Joseph's Seminary College, the editor-in-chief; Alejandro Moreno of St. Mary's, managing editor; and Genaro Garza III, D.C., final editor and fact checker. The first issue of *Quo Vadis* can be viewed by clicking on the photo above.

Celebrate!

PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY

September 27, 2020

*From the Serra Clubs
of the Rio Grande Valley*



To our beloved priests of the Diocese of Brownsville,

As members of the Catholic faithful in the Rio Grande Valley, we want you to know that we appreciate your service and sacrifice in fulfilling your ministry.

Our mission as Serrans is to foster and affirm vocations to the priesthood, and vowed religious life in the Catholic Church. This is an opportunity for us to put these words into action by stating that we support you now, and will stand with you always. Without our priests, we could not receive the sacraments. We could not fully experience the love and unity of our Catholic community. For this we thank you. For this we appreciate you.

*We appreciate you
now, and always.
Thank you for
doing the Father's
will.*

A prayer for our priests

In your loving kindness, O good and gracious God,
you sent your Son to be our shepherd and guide.

The priests in the Diocese of Brownsville continue Christ's ministry
of working in the vineyard by sustaining and guiding your holy people.

Bless all our priests. Let your Spirit uphold them always
in his service to the people of the Rio Grande Valley.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE SERRA CLUBS OF THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Serra Club of Brownsville • Serra Club of Harlingen • Serra Club of McAllen

Serra Club of Rio Grande City • Serra Satellite of Weslaco

Catholics Care. Catholics Vote.

Our Call as Catholic Citizens

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship is the teaching document of the Catholic Bishops of the United States on the political responsibility of Catholics. It provides guidance for all who seek to exercise their rights and duties as citizens. As Catholics, we bring the richness of our faith to the public square. We draw from both faith and reason as we seek to affirm the dignity of the human person and the common good of all.

Everyone living in this country is called to participate in public life and contribute to the common good.[1] In *Rejoice and Be Glad (Gaudete et exsultate)*, Pope Francis writes:

“Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace.

“You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavor.”[2]

As Catholics, we are part of a community with profound teachings that help us consider challenges in public life, contribute to greater justice and peace for all people, and evaluate policy positions, party platforms, and candidates’ promises and actions in light of the Gospel in order to help build a better world.

Why Does the Church Teach About Issues Affecting Public Policy?

The Church’s obligation to participate in shaping the moral character of society is a requirement of our faith, a part of the mission given to us by Jesus Christ. As people of both faith and reason, Catholics are called to bring truth to political life and to practice Christ’s commandment to “love one another” (Jn 13:34).

The U.S. Constitution protects the right of individual believers and religious bodies to proclaim and live out their faith without government interference, favoritism, or discrimination. Civil law should recognize and protect the Church’s right and responsibility to participate in society without abandoning its moral convictions. Our nation’s tradition of pluralism is enhanced, not threatened, when religious groups and people of faith bring their convictions into public life. The Catholic community brings to political dialogue a consistent moral framework and broad experience serving those in need.

Who in the Church Should Participate in Political Life?

In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. As Catholics, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to any political party or interest group. In today’s environment, Catholics may feel politically disenfranchised, sensing that no party and few candidates fully share our comprehensive commitment to human life and dignity. This should not discourage us. On the contrary, it makes our obligation to act all the more urgent. Catholic lay women and men need to act on the Church’s moral principles and become more involved: running for office, working within political parties, and communicating concerns to elected officials. Even those who cannot vote should raise their voices on matters that affect their lives and the common good. Faithful citizenship is an ongoing responsibility, not just an election year duty.



CNS illustration/Mike Crupi, Catholic Courier

The USCCB wants Catholics to consider their choices carefully before casting their ballots — and to pray for guidance, as suggested in this photo illustration. Their document, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” on their website and excerpted on these pages, can serve as a guide.

How Can Catholic Social Teaching Help Guide Our Participation?

In the words of Pope Francis, “progress in building a people in peace, justice and fraternity depends on four principles related to constant tensions present in every social reality. These derive from the pillars of the Church’s social doctrine, which serve as ‘primary and fundamental parameters of reference for interpreting and evaluating social phenomena.’”[3] The four principles include the dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. Taken together, these principles provide a moral framework for Catholic engagement in advancing what we have called a “consistent ethic of life” (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 22).

Rightly understood, this ethic does not treat all issues as morally equivalent; nor does it reduce Catholic teaching to one or two issues. It anchors the Catholic commitment to defend human life and other human rights, from conception until natural death, in the fundamental obligation to respect the dignity of every human being as a child of God.

Catholic voters should use Catholic teaching to examine candidates’ positions on issues and should consider candidates’ integrity, philosophy, and performance. It is important for all citizens “to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose their political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or mere self-interest” (USCCB, *Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 33). The following summary of the four principles highlights several themes of Catholic social teaching for special consideration: these include human rights and responsibilities, respect for work and the rights of workers, care for God’s creation, and the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable.



The Dignity of the Human Person

Human life is sacred because every person is created in the image and likeness of God. There is a rich and multifaceted Catholic teaching on human dignity summarized in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Every human being “must always be understood in his unrepeatable and inviolable uniqueness . . . This entails above all the requirement not only of simple respect on the part of others, especially political and social institutions and their leaders with regard to every man and woman on the earth, but even more, this means that the primary commitment of each person towards others, and particularly of these same institutions, must be for the promotion and integral development of the person” (no. 131). The *Compendium* continues, “It is necessary to ‘consider every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 27).”

“Every political, economic, social, scientific and cultural program must be inspired by the awareness of the primacy of each human being over society.”

Subsidiarity

It is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, and local realities — in short, for those economic, social, cultural, recreational, professional, and political communities to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth.[6] The family, based on marriage between a man and a woman, is the fundamental unit of society. This sanctuary for the creation and nurturing of children must not be redefined, undermined, or neglected. Supporting families should be a priority for economic and social policies. How our society is organized — in economics and politics, in law and public policy — affects the well-being of individuals and of society. Every person and association has a right and a duty to participate in shaping society to promote the well-being of individuals and the common good.

The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that larger institutions in society should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions; yet larger institutions have essential responsibilities when the more local institutions cannot adequately protect human dignity, meet human needs, and advance the common good.

The Common Good

The common good is comprised of “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”[8]

Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met.

Every human being has a right to life, a right to religious freedom, and a right to have access to those things required for human decency — food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities — to ourselves, to our families, and to the larger society.

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. An economic sys-

Visit FaithfulCitizenship.org

True change requires input of everyone, not just the powerful, pope says

By CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service



Pope Francis greets people attending his general audience in the San Damaso courtyard at the Vatican Sept. 23.

VATICAN CITY — The world will not overcome the current crisis if only big businesses, financial institutions and the powerful have a voice, Pope Francis said.

“Everyone must be listened to. Everyone — those on the top, those on the bottom,” he said Sept. 23 during his weekly general audience.

“Getting out of this crisis does not mean brushing a coat of paint over the current situation,” he said.

“Overcoming a crisis means changing. And true change comes about with everyone, all the people,” who make up a community, he said to applause.

“Either together or it will not work,” he said at the audience, which was held in the San Damaso courtyard of the Apostolic Palace.

He continued his series of talks on “healing the world” by reflecting on the “principle of subsidiarity,” which emerged in church teaching in Pope Pius XI’s 1931 encyclical “Quadragesimo Anno” on the reconstruction of the social order.

Subsidiarity has been explained as balancing the many necessary levels of society — government, business, family, associations, etc. — and seeking the allocation of resources by higher levels of society to support engagement and decision-making by the lower levels.

Pope Francis said the principle works both ways: from top to bottom and from the bottom to the top, with all levels working in a cooperative, not competitive way, leading to greater unity and working for the common good.

Unfortunately, he said, not everyone has the possibility, the right, the resources or the courage to take on their responsibility in helping heal the world.

“Many people cannot participate in the reconstruction of the common good because they are marginalized, excluded or ignored; certain social groups do not succeed in making a contribution because they are economically or socially suffocated,” he said.

In some places, people are not free to express their own faith or values and could even go to prison if they did and, especially in Western nations, “many people repress their own ethical or religious convictions.”

“Unfortunately, this injustice happens often in those places where huge economic and geopolitical interests are concentrated, such as, for example, certain extractive activities in some areas



of the planet” and where the voices of indigenous peoples, their culture and worldviews are not taken into consideration.

“Today, this lack of respect for the principle of subsidiarity has spread like a virus,” the pope said.

“The largest financial companies are listened to rather than

the people or the ones who really move the economy,” he said. “Multinational businesses are listened to more than social movements.”

Also, when it comes to finding a vaccine for the coronavirus, he added, “the large pharmaceutical companies are listened to

more than the health care workers employed on the front lines in hospitals or in refugee camps.”

To sum it up, he said, “the powerful are listened to more than the weak. And this is not the way. It is not the human way; it is not the way Jesus taught.”

The pope recalled “the spontaneous gesture of applauding for doctors and nurses” during the lockdown in Italy and other countries, as a sign of encouragement and hope.

“Let’s extend this applause to every member of the social body for their precious contribution, no matter how small,” and make sure they are listened to, consulted and given a chance to do something, he said.

“Let’s applaud those this culture characterizes as the rejected: the elderly, children, persons with disability, workers, all those who dedicate themselves to service,” he said, and let them collaborate to overcome this crisis.

People should not be content just with applauding, though, he said. “Let’s encourage ourselves to dream big ... seeking the ideals of justice and social love that are born of hope” rather than trying to reconstruct a past that was “unjust and already ill.”

At the end of the audience, Pope Francis blessed a large bell that was commissioned by the “Yes to Life” Foundation in Poland.

The bell, called “The voice of the unborn,” was to be used at events recognizing the value of human life from its moment of conception to its natural end, the pope said in remarks to visitors from Poland.

May the tolling of the bell, “reawaken the consciences of lawmakers and all people of goodwill in Poland and the world,” he said.

» Citizenship

continued from pg.10

tem must serve the dignity of the human person and the common good by respecting the dignity of work and protecting the rights of workers. Economic justice calls for decent work at fair, living wages, a broad and fair legalization program with a path to citizenship for immigrant workers, and the opportunity for all people to work together for the common good through their work, ownership, enterprise, investment, participation in unions, and other forms of economic activity. Workers also have responsibilities — to provide a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay, to treat employers and coworkers with respect, and to carry out their work in ways that contribute to the common good. Workers, employers, and unions should not only advance their own interests but also work together to advance economic justice and the well-being of all.

We have a duty to care for God’s creation, which Pope Francis refers to in *Laudato Si’* as “our common home.”[9] We all are called to be careful stewards of God’s creation and to ensure a safe and hospitable environment for vulnerable human beings now and in the future. Pope Francis, consistent with St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI (*World Day of Peace Message*, 1990 and 2010), has lifted up pollution, climate change, lack of access to clean water, and the loss of biodiversity as particular challenges. Pope Francis speaks of an “ecological debt” (no. 51) owed by wealthier nations to developing nations. And he calls all of us to an “ecological conversion” (no. 219), by which “the effects of (our) encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in (our) relationship with the world around (us).”[10]

Indeed, this concern with “natural ecology” is an indispensable part of the broader “human ecology,” which encompasses not only material but moral and social dimensions as well.”

Solidarity

Solidarity is “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to . . . the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” It is found in “a commitment to the good of one’s neighbor with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to ‘lose oneself’ for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to ‘serve him’ instead of oppressing him for one’s own advantage.”[11]

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Our Catholic commitment to solidarity requires that we pursue justice, eliminate racism, end human trafficking, protect human rights, seek peace, and avoid the use of force except as a necessary last resort.

In a special way, our solidarity must find expression in the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. A moral test for society is how we treat the weakest among us — the unborn, those dealing with disabilities or terminal illness, the poor, and the marginalized.”

Conclusion

In light of Catholic teaching, the bishops vigorously repeat their call for a renewed politics that focuses on moral principles, the promotion of human life and dignity, and the pursuit of the common good. Political participation in this spirit reflects not only the social teaching of our Church but the best traditions of our nation.

Notes

- 1 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1913-15.
- 2 *Gaudete et Exsultate*, no. 25.
- 3 *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 221
- 4 These principles are drawn from a rich tradition more fully described in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 160. For more information on these principles, see *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 2016, nos. 40ff.
- 5 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 132. This summary represents only a few highlights from the fuller treatment of the human person in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. For the fuller treatment, see especially nos. 124-159 where many other important aspects of human dignity are treated.
- 6 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 185.
- 7 *Centesimus Annus*, no. 48; *Dignitatis Humanae*, nos. 4-6.
- 8 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 164
- 9 *Laudato Si’*, no. 77.
- 10 *Laudato Si’*, no. 217.
- 11 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 193. (See Mt 10:40-42, 20:25; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 22:25-27)“



United in Prayer

Thank you for your generosity. Together we raised \$47,441 for our parishes and ministries during the United in Prayer Telethon. Here is a full accounting of pledges and donations.

Parish	City	Total Pledged/Donated
Immaculate Conception Cathedral	Brownsville	\$1,125.00
St Mary's Mother of the Church	Brownsville	\$1,063.00
St Mary's School	Brownsville	\$50.00
Our Lady of Good Counsel	Brownsville	\$250.00
St Luke	Brownsville	\$500.00
St Eugene de Mazenod	Brownsville	\$595.00
San Felipe de Jesus	Brownsville	\$100.00
Our Heavenly Father	Brownsville	\$100.00
Lord of the Divine Mercy	Brownsville	\$375.00
San Pedro	San Pedro	\$350.00
Our Lady Star of the Sea	Port Isabel	\$50.00
St Ignatius	El Ranchito	\$100.00
Our Lady Queen of the Universe	San Benito	\$115.00
St Benedict	San Benito	\$385.00
St Theresa	San Benito	\$150.00
St Cecilia	Los Fresnos	\$200.00
Our Lady Of Guadalupe	Raymondville	\$100.00
Immaculate Heart of Mary	Harlingen	\$25.00
Queen of Peace	Harlingen	\$225.00
St Anthony#52	Harlingen	\$828.00
St Francis Xavier	La Feria	\$600.00
Prince of Peace	Lyford	\$50.00
St Joan of Arc	Weslaco	\$1,175.00
San Martin de Porres	Weslaco	\$625.00
St Pius X	Weslaco	\$50.00
St Joseph the Worker	San Carlos	\$100.00
Holy Family	Edinburg	\$120.00
Sacred Heart	Edinburg	\$800.00
St Joseph	Edinburg	\$4,895.00
Our Lady of Perpetual Help	McAllen	\$115.00
Our Lady of Sorrows	McAllen	\$345.00
St Joseph the Worker	McAllen	\$690.00
San Juan Diego El Flaco	Penitas	\$25.00
Our Lady Of Guadalupe	Mission	\$200.00
Our Lady of the Holy Rosary	Mission	\$1,380.00
Our Lady St John of the Fields	Mission	\$120.00
San Martin de Porres	Alton	\$125.00
Immaculate Conception	Rio Grande City	\$75.00
Our Lady of the Refuge	Roma	\$25.00
St Isidore	San Isidro	\$40.00
Immaculate Conception	McCook	\$150.00
Catholic Charities	San Juan	\$750.00
Catholic Diocese of Brownsville		\$14,035.00
CDOB--Vocations Office		\$1,215.00
Holy Family	La Grulla	\$5,000.00
St Jude Thaddeus	Pharr	\$1,890.00
Holy Spirit	McAllen	\$2,565.00
Sacred Heart	Hidalgo	\$50.00
Poor Clares	Alamo	\$190.00
St John of the Baptist	San Juan	\$570.00
St Joseph	Brownsville	\$95.00
Resurrection	Alamo	\$80.00
St Margaret Mary	Pharr	\$500.00
San Juan Diego	McAllen	\$100.00
San Cristobal de Magallanes	Mission	\$1,550.00
St Anne Mother of Mary	Pharr	\$50.00
Basiica of Our Lady of San Juan	San Juan	\$360.00
Our Lady of Mercy	Mercedes	\$50.00
		\$47,441.00

Total \$47,441.00

World Day for Migrants and Refugees to be celebrated on Sept. 27

USCCB

WASHINGTON — The Vatican has designated Sunday, Sept. 27 as the World Day for Migrants and Refugees. The theme chosen by Pope Francis for the 106th observance of this day is “Forced like Jesus Christ to Flee” a focus on the plight of internally displaced persons. Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington, and chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Migration issued the following comment:

“The World Day for Migrants and Refugees is an opportunity to reflect on the global contributions of immigrants and refugees, and highlight the work of the Church to welcome, protect and integrate them. We are reminded that regardless of our background, we are all built in the image of God and should be treated as such. In his message

on the World Day for Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis has highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the forced displacement of people and the difficulties they encounter when seeking protection. This day is an opportunity to unite the world in addressing forced displacement and pray for the well-being of our immigrant and refugee brothers and sisters as we continue to work to bring solidarity, compassion and love throughout our human encounters.

“It is of vital importance for us to embrace love for our neighbor as we love ourselves and live out this commitment daily. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, also noted in his annual message, “To preserve our common home and make it conform more and more to God’s original plan, we must commit ourselves to ensuring international cooperation, global solidarity and local commitment, leaving no one excluded.”



Like Jesus Christ, forced to flee

PRAYER

Father, you entrusted to Saint Joseph what you held most precious: the child Jesus and his Mother, in order to protect them from the dangers and threats of the wicked.

Grant that we may experience his protection and help. May he, who shared in the sufferings of those who flee from the hatred of the powerful, console and protect all our brothers and sisters driven by war, poverty and necessity to leave their homes and their lands to set out as refugees for safer places.

Help them, through the intercession of Saint Joseph, to find the strength to persevere, give them comfort in sorrows and courage amid their trials. Grant to those who welcome them some of the tender love of this just and wise father, who loved Jesus as a true son and sustained Mary at every step of the way.

May he, who earned his bread by the work of his hands, watch over those who have seen everything in life taken away and obtain for them the dignity of a job and the serenity of a home.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, whom Saint Joseph saved by fleeing to Egypt, and trusting in the intercession of the Virgin Mary, whom he loved as a faithful husband in accordance with your will. Amen.

»Obituaries

Deacon Rodrigo (Rigo) Garza Jr.



Jan. 28, 1956 - Sept. 2, 2020

McALLEN — Deacon Rodrigo (Rigo) Garza Jr. passed away Sept. 2, 2020 at McAllen Medical Center.

Deacon Garza was born in Chicago on Jan. 28, 1956. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1979 to 1983, followed by several years in the Reserve. He worked in El Cid Auto Sales with his father and also operated Jr's Body Shop. He was a notary public and a legal assistant. Deacon Garza attended Pan American University and with much effort obtained his law degree with honors in 2005 from the Thurgood Marshal Law School in Houston.

He was a founding member of San Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin Catholic Church in McAllen, which was founded in 2002. He was a member of

the Movimiento de Cursillos de Cristiandad and ACTS. He was influential in starting and promoting Masses for Children with Special Needs in the Rio Grande Valley. Deacon Garza and his wife Elda were founding members of Parents for MASH (Medical Assistance and Support for the Handicapped), supporting parents of children with special needs.

He was ordained to the Diaconate Feb. 3, 2018 by Bishop Daniel E. Flores, and was a dedicated deacon at San Martin de Porres Parish in Alton.

Deacon Garza was a humble and joyful person who never said no to people. He was a gentle soul who loved his family, shared his love for God with others and always gave a word of encouragement to those weak in their faith. He was a loving husband and a dedicated father, always encouraging his boys to be faith-filled and to serve others. He left great memories with his sons from their hunting and fishing trips together. He loved to barbecue and to see his family together and happy. He was enrolled in Bible studies at the San Juan Diego Ministry Institute to continue his knowledge of the Word of God. His heartwarming smile always filled hearts with love and joy, and he will be forever missed.

Deacon Garza was preceded in death by his parents, Rodrigo Sr. and Gregoria Garza, and his twin sons, Roberto Garza and Rodrigo Garza III. He is survived by his wife of 38 years, Manuela Elda Garza, his two sons, Manuel Garza and Roe Garza, and his grandson, Emmanuel Garza.

Funeral services were Sept. 12 at San Martin de Porres Church in Alton, followed by interment at Valley Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Mission.

Bioethics

continued from pg.5

Readiness and Emergency Preparedness, or PREP Act, provides immunity from liability, apart from any willful misconduct, for products like vaccines that are developed to address a public-health emergency.

Myth 5: Using hydrogel nanotechnology to deliver an mRNA vaccine means there will be "big brother" monitoring and the introduction of microchips into the human body.

Reply: No microchips are present in vaccines. Hydrogel nanotechnology refers to the "lipid nanoparticles" which encase the mRNA. This is a glorified way of saying "very small oil droplet."

Lipids are what our cell membranes are composed of, so when the mRNA vaccine is injected, the lipid of the vaccine particle merges with the lipid of the cell (like two oil droplets merging) and the piece of mRNA is delivered to the inside of the cell ("transfection"). These "lipid nanoparticles" could theoretically be misused to deliver other controversial substances into the body like microchips, but this does not mean they should not be used for valid purposes, like delivering life-saving mRNA vaccines during a pandemic.

Debunking these various myths does not mean that there aren't still questions and concerns about proposed COVID-19 vaccines. But we shouldn't argue against vaccines in ways that make neither ethical nor scientific sense.

Spirituality

continued from pg.5

Christ.

I find journaling very helpful as a way of praying (I find it beneficial expressing what is in my heart), and most of all listen to the stories of the saints as they struggled to understand their relationship with God, perhaps many times not realizing that their strong faith or lack of it is how they earned heaven.

St. José Maria Escriva, founder of Opus Dei, said, "The struggle is the sign of holiness. A saint is a sinner that keeps trying." That is all we can do, is to try to live our best for the love of Christ and love of neighbor, and if we fall we get up and try again, and again and again.

Every time I have the awesome and humble privilege of serving Holy Mass at the Cathedral in downtown Brownsville and as I hear the ringing of the bells, I get emotional.

It is as if heaven is calling and reminding us that we are all on our way there, and that we all have a chance to get there. Then I see the Blessed Mother with

her arms opened to those approaching her at the sanctuary above her Son Jesus present in the tabernacle below. It is as if I can hear her sweet and assuring voice saying, "Come, be not afraid."

For that time during Holy Mass, all worries go away as we join all the angels and saints, and most especially all of our dear loved ones who are now enjoying beatific vision, that "holy joy of being with God," the very author of life, the one who out of love has called us into existence.

As we try to live in the "new normal," may we take comfort in the words of St. Francis de Sales: "Do not look forward in fear to the changes in life; rather, look to them with full hope that as they arise. God, whose very own you are, will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will carry you in His arms. Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same understanding Father who cares for you today will take care of you then and every day. He will either shield you from suffering or will give you unflinching strength to bear it. Be at peace, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations."

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Catholic Diocese of Brownsville

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Please help keep our parishes operational with your electronic donations. Scan the QR code to give.

Parishioners may continue to support their parish by mailing checks to the parish office. Another option is to link to the CDOB online giving platform by scanning this QR code and donating online. You can make a one-time gift or set up a recurring donation to your parish of choice.

<https://www.osvonlinegiving.com/432>

<p>TEXT-TO-GIVE</p> <p>Another easy way to manage your electronic giving is with Text-to-Give function that is fully integrated with our Online Giving platform. You can text an amount to (956) 625-9385 and your transaction will be processed through the account associated with your phone number. If your phone number is not recognized, you can continue without an account or you can create a new account and associate your parish specifically as the recipient.</p>	<p>TIMELY PROCESSING</p> <p>Gifts clearing the bank by Monday at noon will be passed through to parishes by Friday of the same week, as circumstances allow. Each donor's information will be provided to their parish for record keeping and end-of-year receipts for income tax filing.</p> <p>FEES COVERED BY DIOCESE</p> <p>To assist our parishes, the Diocese of Brownsville will cover the processing fees for the online giving service so that the full amount donated will go to the church.</p>	<p>PAYING THE BILLS</p> <p>Whether paying last month's utilities or this month's salary, our parishes need money in the bank to operate. Online giving is the quickest and safest way to fund our parishes with the necessary resources to operate during this crisis and beyond.</p> <p>For more information call (956) 784-5095</p>
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El reto de formar la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles

Lo que sigue es un breve documento que es la Primera parte de un resumen de la reflexión de los obispos de los Estados Unidos, *Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles*, que complementa la enseñanza de los obispos en las diócesis y las conferencias estatales de obispos católicos.

FNosotros, los obispos, buscamos ayudar a los católicos a formar su conciencia de acuerdo con la verdad, de manera que puedan tomar decisiones morales sólidas cuando respondan a estos retos. No decimos a los católicos cómo deben votar. La responsabilidad de tomar decisiones políticas recae en cada persona y en su conciencia correctamente formada.

¿Por qué enseña la Iglesia sobre cuestiones que afectan a la política pública?

La obligación de la Iglesia de participar en la formación del carácter moral de la sociedad es un requisito de nuestra fe, una parte de la misión que hemos recibido de Jesucristo. Como personas de fe y como seres racionales, los católicos estamos llamados a llevar la verdad a la vida política y practicar el mandamiento de Cristo de “que se amen los unos a los otros” (Jn 13:34).

La Constitución de los Estados Unidos protege el derecho de cada creyente y de cada institución religiosa a anunciar y vivir su fe sin interferencias gubernamentales, favoritismos o discriminación. La ley civil debería reconocer y proteger el derecho y la responsabilidad de la Iglesia de participar en la sociedad sin abandonar sus convicciones morales. La tradición pluralista de nuestra nación se ve reforzada, y no amenazada, cuando los grupos religiosos y las personas de fe llevan sus convicciones a la vida pública. La comunidad católica aporta al diálogo político un marco moral coherente y amplia experiencia de servicio a los necesitados.

¿Quién en la Iglesia debería participar en la vida política?

En la tradición católica, ser ciudadanos responsables es una virtud, y la participación en la vida política es una obligación moral. Como ciudadanos deberíamos ser guiados más por nuestras convicciones morales que por nuestro apego a un partido político o grupo con intereses especiales. En el ambiente de hoy en día, los católicos pueden sentirse desamparados políticamente, percibiendo que ningún partido político y muy pocos candidatos comparten plenamente nuestro compromiso integral con la vida y dignidad humanas. Esto no debe desanimarnos. Los laicos católicos necesitan actuar según los principios morales de la Iglesia e involucrarse más: presentándose como candidatos, trabajando dentro de los partidos políticos y transmitiendo sus preocupaciones a quienes ocupan funciones públicas. Incluso quienes no pueden votar deben hacer oír sus voces respecto a cuestiones que afectan su vida y el bien común. Ser ciudadanos fieles es una responsabilidad permanente, no un deber sólo durante los años de elecciones.

¿Cómo puede la doctrina social católica ayudar a guiar nuestra participación?

En palabras del papa Francisco, “para avanzar en esta construcción de un pueblo en paz, justicia y fraternidad, hay cuatro principios relacionados con tensiones bipolares propias de toda realidad social. Brotan de los grandes postulados de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia, los cuales constituyen ‘el primer y fundamental parámetro de referencia para la interpretación y la valoración



CNS illustration/Mike Crupi, Catholic Courier

Un hombre sosteniendo un rosario con la bandera de USA al fondo es la silueta que muestra esta foto. El documento de los obispos “Formando conciencias para ciudadanos con fe,” busca proveer un modelo sobre cómo las enseñanzas sociales Católicas deben afectar la participación política por los Católicos.

de los fenómenos sociales”.³ Los cuatro principios son la dignidad de la persona humana, el bien común, la subsidiariedad y la solidaridad. Tomados en conjunto, estos principios proporcionan un marco moral para la participación católica en el fomento de lo que hemos denominado una “ética uniforme hacia la vida” (Vivir el Evangelio de la Vida, no. 23).

Entendida correctamente, esta ética ni trata todas las cuestiones como equivalentes moralmente ni reduce la doctrina católica a una o dos cuestiones. Ancla el compromiso católico de defender la vida humana y otros derechos humanos, desde la concepción hasta la muerte natural, a la obligación moral fundamental de respetar la dignidad de cada persona como hijo o hija de Dios.

Los votantes católicos deberían usar la doctrina católica para examinar las posiciones de los candidatos respecto a las cuestiones, y deberían considerar la integridad, filosofía y desempeño de los candidatos. Es importante que todos los ciudadanos “vayan más allá de la política partidista, que analicen las promesas de la campañas con un ojo crítico y que escojan sus dirigentes políticos según su principio, no su afiliación política o el interés propio” (Vivir el Evangelio de la Vida, no. 34). El siguiente resumen de los cuatro principios resalta varios temas de la doctrina social católica para una consideración especial: derechos humanos y responsabilidades, respeto por el trabajo y los derechos de los trabajadores, cuidado de la creación de Dios y la opción preferencial por los pobres y vulnerables.⁴

La dignidad de la persona humana La vida humana es sagrada porque cada persona es creada a imagen y semejanza de Dios. Hay una rica y multifacética doctrina católica sobre la dignidad humana que se resume en el Compendio de la doctrina social de la Iglesia. Cada persona “debe ser comprendida siempre en su irrepetible e insuprimible singularidad. . . . Esto impone, ante todo, no sólo la exigencia del simple respeto por parte de todos, y especialmente de las instituciones políticas y sociales y de sus responsables, en relación a cada hombre de este mundo, sino que además, y en mayor medida, comporta que el primer compromiso de cada uno hacia el otro, y sobre todo de estas mismas instituciones, se debe situar en la promoción del desarrollo integral de la persona” (no. 131). Continúa el Compendio, “El respeto de la dignidad humana no puede absolutamente prescindir de la obediencia al principio de ‘considerar al prójimo como otro yo, cuidando en primer lugar de su vida y de los medios necesarios para vivirla dignamente’ (Gaudium et Spes, no. 27). Es preciso que todos los programas sociales, científicos y culturales, estén presididos por la conciencia del primado de cada ser humano”.⁵

El siguiente resumen de los cuatro principios resalta varios temas de la doctrina social católica para una consideración especial: derechos humanos y responsabilidades, respeto por el trabajo y los derechos de los trabajadores, cuidado de la creación de Dios y la opción preferencial por los pobres y vulnerables.⁴

Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles

Subsidiariedad

Es imposible promover la dignidad de la persona si no se cuidan la familia, los grupos, las asociaciones, las realidades territoriales locales, en suma, aquellas comunidades de tipo económico, social, cultural, recreativo, profesional, político a las que las personas dan vida espontáneamente y que hacen posible su efectivo crecimiento social.⁶ La familia, fundada en el matrimonio entre un hombre y una mujer, es la unidad fundamental de la sociedad. Este santuario para la creación y crianza de los niños no debe ser redefinido, socavado o descuidado. Apoyar a las familias debe ser una prioridad de las políticas económicas y sociales. La forma en que nuestra sociedad se organiza —en la economía y la política, en la legislación y en las políticas públicas— afecta el bienestar de los individuos y de la sociedad. Cada persona y cada asociación tienen el derecho y el deber de participar en la formación de la sociedad para promover el bienestar de los individuos y el bien común.

El principio de subsidiariedad nos recuerda que las instituciones más grandes de la sociedad no deberían abrumar o interferir con las instituciones más pequeñas o de carácter local; sin embargo, las instituciones más grandes tienen responsabilidades esenciales cuando las instituciones más locales no pueden adecuadamente proteger la dignidad humana, responder a las necesidades humanas y promover el bien común.⁷

El bien común

El bien común está compuesto por “el conjunto de condiciones de la vida social que hacen posible a las asociaciones y a cada uno de sus miembros el logro más pleno y más fácil de la propia perfección”.⁸ La dignidad humana es respetada y el bien común promovido sólo si se protegen los derechos humanos y se cumplen las responsabilidades básicas. Cada ser humano tiene el derecho a la vida, el derecho a la libertad religiosa y el derecho a tener acceso a aquellas cosas que requiere la decencia humana: alimento y albergue, educación y trabajo, cuidado médico y vivienda. A estos derechos les corresponden obligaciones y responsabilidades, para con los demás, nuestras familias y la sociedad en general.

La economía debe estar al servicio de la gente y no al contrario.

Un sistema económico debe servir a la dignidad de la persona humana y al bien común mediante el respeto de la dignidad del trabajo y la protección de los derechos de los trabajadores. La justicia económica exige un trabajo decente con salarios justos y dignos, un programa de legalización amplio y justo que ofrezca un camino a la ciudadanía a los trabajadores inmigrantes, y la oportunidad para que todas las personas trabajen juntas por el bien común a través de su trabajo, propiedad, iniciativa, inversión, participación en sindicatos y otras formas de actividad económica. Los trabajadores también tienen responsabilidades: realizar el trabajo que corresponde a un salario justo, tratar con respeto a los empleadores y compañeros de trabajo y llevar a cabo su trabajo de tal manera que contribuya al bien común. Los trabajadores, los empleadores y los sindicatos deberían no sólo promover sus propios intereses, sino también trabajar juntos para promover la justicia económica y el bienestar de todos.

Tenemos el deber de cuidar la creación de Dios, o como el papa Francisco se refiere a ella en *Laudato Si'*, “nuestra casa común”.⁹ Todos estamos llamados a cuidar responsablemente de la creación de Dios y asegurar un ambiente seguro y hospitalario para los seres humanos vulnerables ahora y en el futuro. El papa Francisco, en coherencia con San Juan Pablo II y con el papa Benedicto XVI (Mensajes para la Jornada Mundial de la Paz en 1990 y 2010), ha destacado la contaminación, el cambio climático, la falta de acceso al agua potable y la pérdida de biodiversidad como retos particulares. El papa Francisco habla de una “deuda ecológica” (no. 51) contraída por los países más ricos con las naciones en desarrollo. Y nos llama a todos a una “conversión ecológica” (no. 219), “que implica dejar brotar todas las consecuencias de [nuestro] encuentro con Jesucristo en las relaciones con el mundo que [nos] rodea”.¹⁰ De hecho, esta preocupación por la “ecología natural” es una parte indispensable de la “ecología humana” más amplia, que abarca no sólo las dimensiones materiales, sino también las morales y sociales.

Solidaridad

La solidaridad es “la determinación firme y perseverante de empeñarse por el bien común; es decir, por el bien de todos y cada uno, para que todos seamos verdaderamente responsables de todos”. Se encuentra en “la entrega por el bien del prójimo, que está dispuesto a ‘perderse’, en sentido evangélico, por el otro en lugar de explotarlo, y a ‘servirlo’ en lugar de oprimirlo para el propio provecho”.¹¹

Somos una sola familia humana, independientemente de nuestras diferencias nacionales, raciales, étnicas, económicas e ideológicas. Nuestro compromiso católico con la solidaridad requiere de nosotros buscar la justicia, eliminar el racismo, poner fin a la trata de personas, proteger los derechos humanos, buscar la paz y evitar el uso de la fuerza excepto como un último recurso necesario.

De manera especial nuestra solidaridad debe expresarse en la opción preferencial por los pobres y vulnerables. Una prueba moral para la sociedad es la forma en que tratamos a los más débiles entre nosotros: los no nacidos, los que lidian con discapacidades o enfermedades terminales, los pobres y los marginados.

CONCLUSIÓN

A la luz de la doctrina católica, los obispos repiten vigorosamente su llamado a un tipo renovado de

ORACION PARA ANTES DE UNAS ELECCIONES

Señor Dios, a medida que se acercan las elecciones, buscamos entender mejor los temas y preocupaciones que afronta nuestra ciudad/nuestro estado/nuestro país, y cómo el Evangelio nos apremia a responder a estos retos como ciudadanos fieles de nuestra comunidad.

Te pedimos que nuestros ojos no sufran de ceguera para que así podamos ver a los demás como hermanos y hermanas nuestros, quienes gozan de una dignidad que nos une y nos hace iguales. De manera especial te pedimos que reconozcamos como hermanos y hermanas a quienes son víctimas de abusos y de la violencia, de los engaños y de la pobreza.

Te pedimos que nuestros oídos escuchen el llanto de los niños aún no nacidos y de quienes han sido abandonados, que escuchemos el llanto de los hombres y mujeres que son oprimidos a causa de su raza o credo, religión o género.

Te pedimos para que nuestra mente y nuestro corazón estén abiertos a escuchar la voz de los líderes que nos acercan cada vez más a tu Reino.

Te pedimos por el don del discernimiento para que elijamos líderes que escuchan tu Palabra, viven en tu amor y caminan por la senda de tu verdad, a medida que siguen el camino de Jesús y sus Apóstoles y nos guían hacia tu Reino de paz y justicia.

Te lo pedimos por tu Hijo Jesucristo, a través del poder del Espíritu Santo, *Amén.*

política que se enfoque en los principios morales, la promoción de la vida y dignidad humanas y la búsqueda del bien común. La participación política en este espíritu refleja no sólo la doctrina social de nuestra Iglesia, sino las mejores tradiciones de nuestra nación.

Notas

1. Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica, nos. 1913-15.
2. Gaudete et Exsultate, no. 25.
3. Evangelii Gaudium, no. 221
4. Estos principios se han extraído de una rica tradición descrita en mayor profundidad en el Compendio de la doctrina social de la Iglesia, del Consejo Pontificio “Justicia y Paz” (Bogotá, Colombia: CELAM, 2006), no. 160. Para obtener más información sobre estos principios, véase *Formando la conciencia para ser ciudadanos fieles*, 2016, nos. 40ss.
5. Compendio de la doctrina social de la Iglesia, no. 132. Este resumen representa solamente algunos aspectos destacados de la exposición más completa sobre la persona humana en el Compendio de la doctrina social de la Iglesia. Para una exposición más completa, véanse especialmente los nos. 124-159, donde se tratan muchos otros aspectos importantes de la dignidad humana.
6. Compendio de la doctrina social de la Iglesia, no. 185.
7. Centesimus Annus, no. 48; Dignitatis Humanae, nos. 4-6.
8. Compendio de la doctrina social de la Iglesia, no. 164.
9. *Laudato Si'*, no. 77.
10. *Laudato Si'*, no. 217.
11. Compendio de la doctrina social de la Iglesia, no. 193 (Véase Mt 10:40-42, 20:25; Mc 10:42-45; Lc 22:25-27).

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»Formación para el ministerio

Espiritualidad para la nueva normalidad

En estos tiempos sin precedentes, todos en el mundo estamos luchando ahora más que nunca y de una forma u otra con la incertidumbre del mañana. Cada uno de nosotros, a su manera, está tratando de manejar el estrés de una vida bajo la sombra de Covid-19. La Iglesia Católica no es una excepción al verse afectada por la pandemia del coronavirus que azota en todo el mundo, ya que menos feligreses asisten a la Santa Misa.

Mientras escribo esta columna, 200,768 personas han perdido la vida en nuestro país. El número es aterrador, asombrante y lamentable: cada uno de ellos un ser humano, creado a imagen y semejanza de Dios, ahora muy extraño por sus seres queridos. Que cada uno de ellos permanezca en nuestros pensamientos y oraciones diarias.

Los últimos seis meses han demostrado ser más que estresantes, física, psicológica, emocional y espiritualmente. Hoy en día muchos sienten ansiedad, miedo, rabia y tristeza; el sentirse aislado; y no poder ver o hablar con nuestros seres queridos, especialmente los ancianos. Otros sienten que su dignidad como seres humanos ha sido pisoteada debido a la falta de empleo o la lucha de no poder ganar lo suficiente para los gastos del fin de mes.

Muchos han sido afectados por la enfermedad de un ser querido y o sienten el duelo por la dolorosa pérdida de un amigo o familiar, mientras otros siguen siendo indiferentes e insensibles sobre el virus. Es casi como si viviéramos en dos dimensiones. Mientras que algunos están luchando económicamente, otros no ven ningún cambio alguno.

Podemos ser comprensivos o empáticos con aquellos que han perdido a un ser querido o su empleo; mientras que algunos siguen siendo cínicos, reclamando que se puede solicitar beneficios de desempleo o esperar el próximo cheque de estímulo del gobierno. Como católicos cristianos debemos recordar el mensaje del Evangelio y preguntarnos: ¿Quién es mi prójimo?

Durante dirección espiritual, muchos me han expresado el gran desafío a su fe de lo que ha sido todo esto de la pandemia. Algunos han mencionado que sienten "la ausencia de Dios", mientras que otros han dicho con convicción que sienten "la presencia de Dios" en sus vidas.

Mientras luchamos incluso con nuestra fe, es normal cuestionar y preguntar, ¿Por qué está sucediendo todo esto? ¿Dónde está Dios en todo esto? Como personas de fe, ¿Cómo respondemos? ¿Está bien dudar y sentir que Dios nos ha abandonado? ¿Está bien si estamos enojados con Dios por permitir que esto suceda?

Hace poco alguien me envió un meme de Facebook que decía: "No tengo miedo de que el mundo se acabe más temo, que el mundo siga y nada cambie". Ciertamente sería muy trágico si no tomamos ninguna lección y no aprendemos de lo que está pasando el mundo hoy.

Esta pandemia nos ha dado más tiempo para reflexionar y más tiempo con nuestras familias, comiendo y cocinando más en casa; de hecho, podemos ver esto como una bendición. De alguna manera ha reducido el estrés del ajetreo de la vida diaria, quizás gastando menos en cosas que realmente no necesitamos.

Sin duda esta pandemia del coronavirus nos ha dado la oportu-

nidad de mejor evaluar nuestras prioridades en la vida y realmente enfocarnos en lo que es importante cada día que nos despertamos, dándonos cuenta de que mañana no se le es prometido a nadie.

En tiempos tan difíciles, debemos ser honestos con nosotros mismos, ya que nos sentimos vulnerables y de buscar ayuda mientras todos enfrentamos el estrés. Al darnos cuenta de que no estamos solos en esto, todos deberíamos tener a alguien en quien confiar para poder compartir nuestras propias luchas.

Mientras que algunos están afrontando bien estos tiempos difíciles debido a su fe y su relación con Dios, otros están cuestionando su propia fe e incluso su propia existencia.

Como católicos, confiamos en nuestra espiritualidad (vida de oración) sabiendo que Dios nos ama en Cristo Jesús su amado Hijo, y nos entregamos a su divina providencia, dándonos cuenta de que "no estamos en control" y que Dios está siempre cerca de nosotros y de que confiamos en su gracia.

Les quisiera recomendar sumamente meditar fielmente todos los días sobre la lectura del Evangelio del día, practicar la lectio divina, rezar el (oficio divino) liturgia de las horas (en particular las lecturas del oficio), el rezar el santo rosario (y darnos cuenta que mientras sostenemos el rosario en la tierra, la Santísima Madre lo sostiene desde el cielo) mientras meditamos en los misterios de la vida de Cristo.

En lo personal me ha sido muy útil mantener un diario como una forma de orar (me resulta beneficioso expresar lo que hay en mi corazón) y, sobre todo, reflexionar sobre las historias de los santos y el darme cuenta como luchaban por comprender su relación con Dios. Tal vez muchas veces sin darse cuenta de que su gran fe o la falta de ella es cómo ellos se ganaron el cielo.

San José María Escrivá, fundador del Opus Dei, dijo que: "La lucha es signo de santidad. Un santo es un pecador que sigue intentando". Eso es todo lo que podemos hacer, es intentar de vivir lo mejor posible por el amor a Cristo y el amor al prójimo, y si nos caemos nos levantamos y lo intentamos una y otra vez.

Cada vez que tengo el hermoso y humilde privilegio de servir la Santa Misa en la Catedral en el centro de Brownsville y al escuchar el sonido de las campanas, se me salen las lágrimas.

Es como si el cielo nos llamara y nos recordara que todos vamos camino al cielo y que todos tenemos la oportunidad de llegar allí. Entonces veo a la Santísima Madre con los brazos abiertos al acércanos a ella en el santuario sobre su Hijo Jesús presente en el tabernáculo. Es como si pudiera escuchar su dulce voz y nos asegura diciendo: "Ven, no temas".

Por ese momento durante la Santa Misa, todas las preocupaciones desaparecen al unirnos a todos los ángeles y santos, y muy en especial a todos nuestros seres queridos que ahora disfrutan de la visión beatífica, ese "gozo santo de estar con Dios", el mismo autor de la vida, el que por amor nos ha llamado a la existencia.

Mientras intentamos de vivir en la "nueva normalidad", espero que nos consuelen las palabras de San Francisco de Sales: "No mires hacia adelante en temor a los cambios de la vida; en vez, recíbelos con plena

» Por favor lea Nueva Normalidad p.17



Diácono Luis Zuniga

Director, Oficina de Vida Pastoral e Instituto del Ministerio de San Juan Diego

Fe en el Valle

TENEMOS QUE DAR VIDA A ESTAS PALABRAS PODEROSAS EN LA DIOCESIS DE BROWNSVILLE.

PERO EL OBISPO MARK NUNCA TENDRIA LA OPORTUNIDAD DE PONER LA PRACTICA DEL CONCILIO. MURO REPTENTINAMENTE DE UN ATAQUE AL CORAZON EL 1 DE NOVIEMBRE MIENTRAS VISITABA A SU MADRE EN COLONIA, ALEMANIA.

LA NUEVA DIOCESIS YA ESTABA SIN UN OBISPO.

EL SEÑALADO OBISPO DE BROWNSVILLE VINO DE MUY LEJOS-LA DIOCESIS DE FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS. PERO HUMBERTO MEDEROS FUE BIENVENIDO INMEDIATAMENTE.

TENEMOS MÁS DESAFIOS QUE LA MAYORÍA DE LAS OTRAS DIOCESIS TIENEN. NO SOLAMENTE TENEMOS QUE IMPLEMENTAR LAS ENSEÑANZAS DE CONCILIO, TENEMOS QUE ORGANIZAR NUESTRA NUEVA DIOCESIS

EL OBISPO MEDEROS ERA UN TORRELLINO DE ACTIVIDADES. DIRIGIO LA RESPUESTA CATOLICA A LA DEVASTACION DEL HURACAN BEULAH. PEDICO DECENAS DE NUEVOS EDIFICIOS.

EL OBISPO MEDEROS GUIO A LA IGLESIA LOCAL EN PONER EN PRACTICA LAS REFORMAS LITURGICAS DEL CONCILIO, CUAL TRAZO NUEVOS IDIOMAS Y NUEVOS TIPOS DE MUSICA A LA MISA.

EL ABOGABA POR LOS TRABAJADORES INMIGRANTES.

NUESTROS TRABAJADORES DEBEN TENER MEJORES SALARIOS Y CONDICIONES DE VIDA. DECENTES. NUNCA TENDREMOS PAZ SIN JUSTICIA PARA LOS TRABAJADORES.

LO CONCILIO POR SU MEMORIA DE PODER RECORDAR CARAS Y NOMBRES.

¡HOLA, SEÑORA GARCIA! ¿QUE GUSTO VOLVER A VERLA. ¿CÓMO ESTÁ SU HIJO JUAN?

EL CONFIRMO A MI HIJO JUAN HACE DOS AÑOS. ¡ME SORPRENDE QUE SE ACUERDE DE MI!

BAJO SU LIDERAZGO, EL PRIMER PERIODICO DIOCESANO FUE PUBLICADO.

¿CÓMO PODEMOS OFRECER CUIDADO PASTORAL A LOS TRABAJADORES INMIGRANTES Y SUS HIJOS CUANDO NOS DEJEN EN BUSQUEDA DE TRABAJO?

CREO AL APOSTOLADO PARA LOS INMIGRANTES-EQUIPOS DE SACERDOTES, HERMANAS RELIGIOSAS Y LAICOS QUE SIGUIAN A LOS TRABAJADORES INMIGRANTES A LOS RANCHOS DEL NORTE PARA MINISTRALOS.

EL 8 SEPTIEMBRE DE 1970, EL PAPA PABLO VI NOMBRÓ A MEDEROS EL ARZOBISPO DE BOSTON. FUE UN MOVIMIENTO AGUILAS PARA LA DIOCESIS DE BROWNSVILLE.

Del libro, Fe en el Valle: Una historia ilustrada de la Diócesis de Brownsville

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»Mujeres
en la
Frontera



Brenda Nettles Riojas
Editor of The Valley Catholic

En la dirección de la esperanza

Porque vale la pena repetirlo; porque a veces nos sobreviene el olvido; porque a veces nos encontramos perdidos en la oscuridad de la desesperación, debemos encontrar formas de reajustar nuestro rumbo en la dirección de la esperanza.

Reconozco una variedad de factores que la esperanza, una de las tres virtudes teologales, “corresponde al anhelo de felicidad puesto por Dios en el corazón de todo hombre” (*Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* # 1818). “asume las esperanzas que inspiran las actividades de los hombres; las purifica para ordenarlas al Reino de los cielos; protege del desaliento; sostiene en todo desfallecimiento; dilata el corazón en la espera de la bienaventuranza eterna”.

En la fiesta de la Natividad de la Santísima Virgen María, nos unimos en oración como familia católica aquí en el Valle del Río Grande, demostrando cómo podemos avanzar en la dirección de la esperanza a través de 1. nuestra confianza en Dios; 2. oración; y 3. nuestra respuesta.

Durante el teletón de cinco horas, nos reunimos para orar el uno por el otro y apoyar a nuestras parroquias durante estos días continuos de la pandemia. Además de la música del talento local, sacerdotes y fieles laicos compartieron sugerencias sobre cómo afrontar estos tiempos difíciles. “Queremos dar esperanza e ideas a la gente sobre cómo proceder en estos tiempos de incertidumbre”, dijo el Obispo Auxiliar Mario A. Avilés.

Cientos de personas compartieron sus peticiones de oración, y el Obispo Daniel E. Flores las colocó en el altar en la Misa el 13 de septiembre antes de entregarlas a las Hermanas Clarisas Capuchinas que orarán por todas estas intenciones en la Capilla de la

Adoración Perpetua.

Sister Ann Hayden of the Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, offered “audacious hope” as the theme for one of our evening prayer meetings. “I believe that what I call audacious hope is the underlying, understanding attitude that supports our ever – spiraling, forward movement in the evolving consciousness of who we are in relationship with God.”

Agrega: “La esperanza es uno de los dones más básicos de nuestra humanidad en experiencias que exigen perseverancia. La esperanza está envuelta en la lucha, refinada por el compromiso y purificada en la repetición”.

Vale la pena hacer una pausa para pensar en la esperanza. No siempre es visible, pero la esperanza habla de nuestra confianza en Dios. Como personas de la Resurrección, sabemos que la luz nos encontrará y nos guiará a través de la oscuridad en nuestras vidas. Y si confiamos en el Señor, tenemos la responsabilidad de responder, de decir “sí”. La forma en que respondemos marca la diferencia.

La hermana Norma Pimentel, nombrada por Time en la lista 2020 TIME100 de las personas más influyentes del mundo, da testimonio a nivel mundial de su “sí” en las innumerables formas en que se preocupa por los más vulnerables. Diariamente también estamos llamados a responder.

Dado que todos hemos estado afectados de una forma u otra por COVID-19 este año, todos estamos atrapados en un estado constante de ajuste y adaptación. Dondequiera que miremos, nos encontrará un nuevo desafío: en casa, en el trabajo y en nuestra comunidad. No puedes esconderte de eso. Como dijo una amiga, “Esta cabrito. Estos son tiempos duros”.

En nuestra propia diócesis, una cuarta

parte de nuestro personal fue suspendido en marzo; y ahora este mes, despedido. Cómo continuamos el ministerio en estos tiempos cambiantes requiere creatividad. En lugar de ceder o admitir la derrota, debemos encontrar nuevas formas de continuar la misión. Mis colegas inspiran esperanza al emplear nuevas ideas para llegar a las personas a las que sirven. A través de sesiones de formación virtual y retiros online, siguen estando presentes, para acompañar a los fieles que buscan recursos y orientación.

Una querida amiga me recordó: “La transformación ocurre cuando las cosas son más difíciles”. Así que caminemos en la dirección de la esperanza, una esperanza que nos ayuda a celebrar las alegrías puestas en evidencia por la luz de Dios.

“Poniendo nuestra confianza en las promesas de Cristo y apoyándonos no en nuestras fuerzas, sino en los auxilios de la gracia del Espíritu Santo”. (*Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*, 1817)

No dijo que iba a ser fácil. Solo dijo que te ayudaría a superarlo. Podemos hacer esto juntos, encontrando formas de sembrar esperanza, no un pueblo “sedentario”, sino un pueblo que, como dice el Santo Padre, “siembra el aceite de la esperanza, siembra la fragancia de la esperanza, y no el vinagre de amargura y desesperación.”

“Seremos, en la medida de nuestra capacidad, consejeros a imagen del Paráclito”, dijo el Papa Francisco durante una de sus audiencias del miércoles de 2017. “Ese es el Espíritu Santo, y en todos los sentidos que esta palabra implica: defensores, ayudantes, consoladores. Nuestras palabras y nuestros consejos, nuestra forma de actuar, o nuestra voz, nuestra mirada, serán apacibles y apacibles”.

»Vida
Familiar

Viviendo nuestra iglesia domestica mas abundantemente



Lydia Pesina
Directora, Oficina de Vida Familiar

En la Encíclica *Familiaris Consortio* San Juan Pablo II habló sobre la familia “como una ‘Iglesia en miniatura’ (iglesia domestica) en tal modo que es una imagen viva y una representación histórica del misterio de la Iglesia en su propia manera” (*Familiaris Consortio*, #49). Él nos estaba recordando que como familias NOSOTROS somos la Iglesia; y que la Iglesia es una Familia de familias.

Es en nuestra familia/ nuestra Iglesia Domestica, donde aprendemos a amar y ser amados, servir y ser servidos, y perdonar y ser perdonados. Es dentro de nuestra familia que somos formados y ojalá sea en ella también que podamos trabajar para ser transformados en la persona única que Dios nos creó para ser. En las mejores circunstancias, es alrededor de nuestro altar familiar, con frecuencia nuestra mesa en la cocina o comedor, que nos reunimos para crecer como personas y crecer en nuestra fe en Dios nuestro creador, en Jesús nuestro Redentor y Maestro y ser guiados por el Espíritu Santo.

Familiaris Consortio nos enseña que lo sagrado de la vida radica en las tareas ordinarias de vivir y amar en la vida cotidiana: lavar los platos, preparar comidas, cambiar pañales, trabajar para alimentar y vestir a la familia. El Papa Francisco nos dice que “el amor se muestra en las cosas pequeñas, prestando atención a los pequeños signos diarios que nos hacen sentir en casa. La Fe crece cuando es vivida y formada por amor. Es por esto que nuestras familias, nuestros hogares, son verdaderas iglesias domésticas. Son el lugar correcto para que la Fe se haga vida, y la vida crezca en Fe.”

Durante estos últimos meses en que las

familias han pasado MAS tiempo juntos por estar en cuarentena, refugiados en casa, y la distancia social, las familias han tenido la oportunidad de cocinar MAS juntos; jugar MAS juegos; hacer videos cómicos; sacarse de quicio MAS el uno al otro pero ojalá también perdonándose MAS el uno al otro. Muchos están orando MAS juntos al igual que preocupándose MAS por los trabajos, comida y las finanzas. Las iglesias, instituciones, e individuos están compartiendo MÁS comida y recursos. Y como familias hemos estado teniendo MÁS oportunidad de orar MÁS juntos y quizás preparar o aumentar un Altar Familiar o Espacio de Oración para participar en misas dominicales o de días de semana transmitidas en vivo o pre-grabadas. Alguien me envió una “caricatura” que representaba al diablo diciéndole a Dios “Cerré todas tus iglesias” y Dios respondiéndole: “¡Al contrario, yo abrí una en cada Hogar!”. En esencia, hemos tenido MAS de una oportunidad para reconstruir o trabajar en la transformación de nuestra Iglesia Domestica/ nuestra familia.

Nos dice el Papa Francisco: “En las familias, hay dificultades. En las familias, discutimos; en las familias, algunas veces vuelan los platos; en las familias, los hijos nos dan dolores de cabeza... Pero en las familias siempre, siempre, esta la Cruz. Siempre. Porque el amor de Dios, del Hijo de Dios, también abrió para nosotros este camino. Pero, en las familias también, después de la Cruz, esta la Resurrección. Porque el Hijo de Dios abrió este camino para nosotros. Es por esto que la familia — perdonen el término que usaré — es una fábrica de esperanza, esperanza de vida y de resurrección. Dios

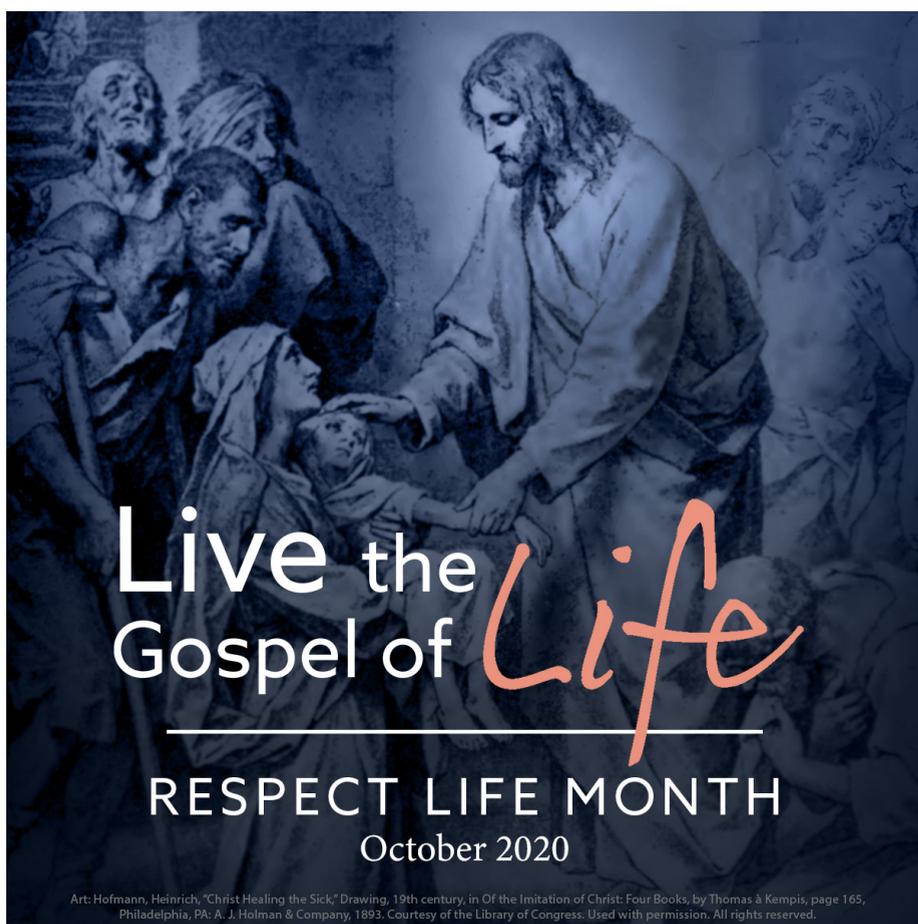
fue quien abrió este camino... En las familias hay dificultades, pero estas dificultades se superan con amor. El odio no supera ninguna dificultad. La división de corazones no supera ninguna dificultad. Solo el Amor es capaz de superar las dificultades. El Amor es un festival. El Amor es alegría. Amar es seguir hacia adelante.”

Quizas una de nuestras tareas continuas de vida es seguir trabajando para llegar a ser la persona única que Dios nos creó para ser así como trabajar para que nuestra familia sea transformada en esa Iglesia Domestica única que esta llamada a ser.

Quizas podemos pedirle a los miembros de nuestra familia que respondan la siguiente pregunta (escrita ó verbalmente) y sería interesante escuchar de que los miembros de otras familias les gustaria tener MAS ó quizas no hay nada que les gustaria fuera diferente. Yo creo que las familias, especialmente padres y abuelos se enriquecen al escuchar/ leer como los niños, jóvenes y adultos jóvenes perciben nuestra vida familiar.

Posible pregunta: Cuales de las siguientes opciones les gustaria tener MAS para vivir MAS ABUNDANTEMENTE nuestra vida familiar? (1) MAS tiempo uno a uno con alguien de la familia? (2) MAS tiempo de cocinar juntos? (3) MAS noches de juegos de mesa? (4) MAS servir/ayudar a otros juntos? (5) MAS comidas juntos sin electronicos (celulares, tabletas,etc.) (6) MAS tiempo de oracion juntos? (7) MAS videos comicos?

Jesús nos dice en Juan 10:10; “El ladrón entra solamente a robar, a matar y a destruir; Yo, en cambio vine para que tengan vida y la tengan en abundancia”

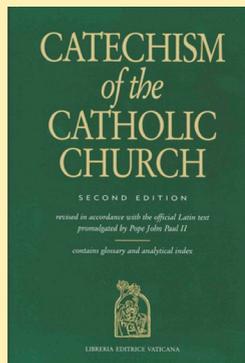


Art: Hofmann, Heinrich, "Christ Healing the Sick," Drawing, 19th century, in Of the Imitation of Christ: Four Books, by Thomas à Kempis, page 165, Philadelphia, PA: A. J. Holman & Company, 1893. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Answers to Test Your Catechism Knowledge

from page 6

1. C) The pastor is chosen by the bishop to teach, sanctify, and govern a local church.
2. FALSE. Many local versions of a catechism were used throughout Church history. The Council of Trent commissioned the first universal catechism.
3. C) As the earthly representative of Christ and the successor to the apostles, a bishop is responsible for the spiritual education and faith formation of his diocese (see CCC, 1560).
4. FALSE. Local textbooks and resources based on the Catechism are written for children.



Nueva Normalidad

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esperanza mientras suceden. Dios, a quien Tú le perteneces, te llevará seguro a través de todo; y, cuando ya no lo puedas soportar, Dios te llevará en Sus brazos. No temas lo que pueda

pasar mañana; el mismo Padre comprensivo quien te cuida y vela hoy; Te cuidará entonces y en cada día. O te protegerá de sufrimiento, O te dará la fuerza infalible para soportarlo. Estad en paz, y deja de lado todo pensamiento e imaginaciones ansiosas. Amén”

Domestic Church

continued from pg.4

parents and grandparents, are enriched by listening and reading how children, youth, and young adults view our family life.

Possible question: Which of the following would you like MORE of to live MORE ABUNDANTLY in our family?

- (1) MORE one-on-one with someone in the family?
- (2) MORE cooking together?
- (3) MORE game nights?
- (4) MORE serving/helping others together?
- (5) MORE dinner together without electronics
- (6) MORE praying together?
- (7) MORE funny videos?

Jesus tells us in John 10:10, “A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Brownsville exist primarily to form community of faith, in which students, faculty and parents experience community, worship and a deep concern for the needs of the total Church.

The Catholic schools in the Diocese admit students of any sex, race, color, nationality and ethnic origin.

This announcement is called “Notice of Non-Discriminatory Policy as to Students” and is in compliance with Revenue Procedure 75-50, which established Guidelines and Record Keeping Requirements for determining whether private schools have racially non-discriminatory policies with respect to students and faculty members.

The following schools in the Diocese of Brownsville endorse this non-discriminatory policy: Incarnate Word Academy, Brownsville, Texas; St. Mary’s School, Brownsville, Texas; St. Luke School, Brownsville, Texas; St. Joseph Academy, Brownsville, Texas; Guadalupe Regional Middle School, Brownsville, Texas; St. Anthony’s School, Harlingen, Texas; San Martin De Porres School, Weslaco, Texas; St Joseph School, Edinburg, Texas; Our Lady of Sorrows School, McAllen, Texas; Immaculate Conception School, Rio Grande City, Texas; Oratory Academy and Athenaeum, Pharr, Texas; and Juan Diego Academy, Mission, Texas.



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From disaster came miracles

Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle only grew larger after devastating fire



Paul Binz/The Valley Catholic

Basilica official Pablo Villescas shows a heavy solid-brass angel rescued from the sanctuary of the old Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle. The basilica keeps the angel and hundreds of other catalogued artifacts from the disaster of Oct. 23, 1970 safely warehoused under lock and key.

By **PAUL BINZ**
The Valley Catholic

SAN JUAN — Fifty years ago, a man flying a small rented plane over the Rio Grande Valley suddenly crashed the aircraft into the roof of the Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle as hundreds attended Mass or school. The pilot's still-unexplained action set in motion a series of events that resulted in the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle-National Shrine as we know it today.

"I was nine years old when it happened and living in Corpus Christi," Bishop Daniel E. Flores said. "Because we got most of our news on the radio, I remember my mom talking about it."

"I had never been to the shrine – but my mom and dad had, because when they got married they made a special pilgrimage there to visit the image of Our Lady," he said. "And so it impacted them when we heard about the plane."

"As I grew older and learned more ... it was a wondrous thing that other than the man who had the airplane, may he rest in some way in peace, that no one else was killed because of how devastating the destruction was, and how there were so many people on the campus."

Father Jorge Gomez, rector of today's basilica, said, "I see this as a miracle and as a manifestation that Our Lady was protecting the people and the priests with her mantle. The fire destroyed the old shrine, but the faith and devotion of our people stayed intact – and indeed, grew stronger."

A thriving shrine

In 1970, the Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan boasted an imposing church and matching buildings housing a rectory, a cafeteria and a retreat house. Faced with white stone, the complex was fairly new, dating to the mid-1950s. More importantly, the church was home to the image of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle, the object of local veneration as well as a magnet for pilgrims from all over the United States and Mexico. The parish's first pastor, Father José Maria Azpiazu, had commissioned the image in the late 1940s in homage to the original Nuestra

Señora de San Juan de los Lagos in Jalisco, Mexico. He wanted to ensure that Valley residents originally from Mexico would not have to make long and expensive journeys back to Jalisco to venerate the Blessed Mother.

As more and more pilgrims came to San Juan, the shrine had outgrown the modest wood-frame building where it began. After the new larger shrine was built in 1954, the original wood structure was somehow moved a few miles north to Lopezville. It still serves there today as the Immaculate Conception Church, a mission of St. John the Baptist Parish.

Its replacement was in that era the largest Catholic church in the Valley. With a capacity of 800, the shrine also became a repository for religious art, mementos and relics donated or collected during its years as a popular destination for pilgrims.

Around lunchtime on Friday, Oct. 23, 1970, the church was in use; a special midday Mass was being celebrated by Father Emanuel Ballard, then chancellor of the Diocese of Brownsville, with most of the priests of the diocese concelebrating. A short distance outside the church were about 200 students of St. John Catholic School, most of whom were on lunch break. As many as 350 people in all may have been inside the church and the other buildings or on the grounds at the time.

Meanwhile, a bolt was about to strike from above.

The fateful hour

As air traffic controller Charles Wardroup worked the control tower at Miller International Airport, he received an all-points call on an emergency radio frequency. The call was from a pilot named Francis B. (Frank) Alexander, who had rented and taken off in a small plane just an hour before. Known to people around the McAllen airport as a flying instructor, Alexander was a World War II veteran who had been a teacher until resigning a few months earlier at the end of the previous school year.

The Associated Press story of Oct. 24, 1970 recounted what happened next. "The flier ordered fire departments

to evacuate all Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches between Hidalgo and Edinburg and Weslaco and McAllen, all in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (sic).

"Asked the reason for his strange order, the pilot replied: 'Because of a serious plot.'

"Moments later the four-place plane smashed into the church and fell at the point where the cafeteria and church proper joined, setting both afire."

The crash occurred before authorities could even react to the warning and send out warnings of their own.

Parts of the rented, single-engine Piper Cherokee 180 lodged in the steel girders of the church's attic as fire spread over the roof; more pieces of the plane landed on the cafeteria or the ground below. All hell broke loose as the inferno erupted.

During the Liturgy of the Word, the Mass came to a quick halt as debris began raining down, and nearly everyone fled the church.

However, three remained inside. They were about to become the instruments of what many would call a miracle.

Beneath a canopy of flames, Oblate Father Patricio Dominguez and the sacristan, Pedro Rodriguez, ran to rescue the statue of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle. And Father Ron Anderson, a diocesan priest, rushed to the altar to save the Blessed Sacrament from the fire.

Next door, the school cafeteria was full of children eating lunch as fiery debris set that building's roof ablaze.

The Associated Press crash story included several eyewitness accounts, among them the principal of St. John Catholic School, Sister Margaret Martinez, describing the plane striking the church.

"I saw the plane coming,' Sister Margaret said. 'It was making all sorts of noise and shaking ...'

"Suddenly it turned and hit the top of the church. I saw the fire burst out and I thought, 'Oh, the children.' I ran to the cafeteria to get them out."

"Mrs. Romelia de la Rosa, a teacher's aide who was in the cafeteria with about 200 children, said: 'We only heard a noise. A father came in and said the

church was on fire and we got the children out of there.'

"The children left their lunch half-finished. Classes were immediately dismissed for the day and they were sent home."

"Mario Reyna, 11, a sixth grader who was in school cafeteria, said: 'We heard the plane, then the explosion. I looked over to the church and saw a lot of smoke.'"

In yet another miracle, the children, teachers and all the rest got out safely.

As smoke and flame billowed up from the conflagration, firefighters, reporters and spectators began converging on San Juan from all over the area. Battling the blaze proved futile, though, and the church was utterly ruined.

After the disaster

Father Ballard, the chancellor, afterward declared the church and cafeteria a total loss, with damage estimated at \$1.5 million – more than \$10 million in today's dollars.

The ruins presented a stunning sight – above the walls, only twisted steel remained aloft, leaving the burned-out sanctuary open to the sky. The tower was the only part of the church left intact. It would be incorporated into a new structure once rebuilding as a parish church began.

Pablo Villescas, director of personnel for the shrine, has worked there in various capacities for 50 years. At the moment of the crash, he was in class at a nearby junior high; he had only recently taken a job in the shrine kitchen as a dishwasher. The fire occurred on a Friday, so the next day he was called in to help as cleanup started.

He recalled what diocesan officials discovered was happening in the ruins of the church.

"They hired some people to clean the area," Villescas said. "Several *nacos* were inside the shrine. They were stealing all the copper and all the brass and gold that was in there. ... Some of it we had to go and buy back from the people in the scrapyard."

Some time later at a garage sale, Villescas said he even found a set of ce-

Pandemic forces cancellation of this year's migrant festival

By PAUL BINZ
The Valley Catholic

SAN JUAN – The Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle-National Shrine's Migrant Welcoming Festival has been cancelled this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Father Jorge Gomez, rector of the basilica, made the announcement at Mass on Oct. 4, which was livestreamed on Facebook.

The basilica also had plans to mark the 50th anniversary of the plane crash and fire that destroyed the old shrine on Oct. 23, 1970, but those plans are gone as well.

"This 2020 was a year with a lot of events that we were going to celebrate," Father Gomez told *The Valley Catholic*. "This Oct. 23 marks the 50th anniversary of the plane crashing and destroying the old shrine. The Migrant Welcoming Festival that we sponsor every year was going to have that theme.

"April 19 was the 40th anniversary of the dedication/blessing of the new shrine. We had planned a celebration with food booths, music

and a display of enlarged pictures as reminiscence of the process from the groundbreaking to the dedication four years later," Father Gomez said. "In September, Cardinal Tagle, the prefect for the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples from the Vatican, was going to come and meet the Filipino community in the Basilica, and he was going to bless statue of the Santo Niño de Cebu (popular in the Philippines).

"All these events were sadly cancelled, along with the Holy Week and Easter celebrations."

Father Gomez had praise for the what the basilica has accomplished despite the coronavirus threat and the shutdown it brought, and he expressed his appreciation for all the support of the faithful.

"I am proud to say that the Basilica was probably the only church in the Diocese that the Mass was celebrated every day even in the midst of the pandemic," he said. "We were already livestreaming the Mass when the virus forced the churches to close. Thank God for the technology that we had already acquired,

we were able to share the Mass daily and twice on Sundays via Facebook and YouTube.

"There is a saying in French that roughly translates as 'The need is the mother of invention.' This crisis made us more creative to transmit our faith. A lot, if not all, of the parishes were livestreaming the Mass for their faithful. Here at the Basilica we began to use more of the social media and written literature; the online sales went up.

"The lighting of candles to Our Lady of San Juan is important for our pilgrims, and since they could not come in person, they would email me asking me to light the candles for them and they would mail their donations to the shrine. Thanks to the online donations and the charity of people who are still mailing us their contributions, we were able to open the shrine on May 25 and keep the operations going throughout the past months.

"A big thank you to all the pilgrims who come or send their contributions and donate online."

The 1970 crash: Who was the pilot, and why did he do it?

By PAUL BINZ
The Valley Catholic

The tragedy of Oct. 23, 1970 was an eerie precursor of 9-11, occurring some 30 years before Sept. 11, 2001 when terrorists dove hijacked jet passenger liners into U.S. landmarks and killed almost 3,000 people. The only precedents for using airplanes as suicide weapons were the kamikaze attacks on Allied naval forces by Japanese pilots near the end of World War II.

The motive of pilot Frank Alexander in targeting the shrine will probably never be known, but a brief review of his background reveals that he was originally from Pennsylvania. He was a World War II veteran who had been a major in the U.S. Army Air Force, the predecessor of USAF. Alexander had been stationed in Ohio during the war, where in 1944-45 he was in charge of training B-29 Superfortress pilots. Among his students were the pilots of the *Enola Gay*, the plane that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

After the war, Alexander found work in the Valley as a teacher and a flight instructor. He apparently was married and had two children. By some accounts, he taught math and science, but he made his reputation as a teacher of migrant students. His last teaching position was with the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo school district, which ended with his resignation just a few months before his suicide flight. He had also dabbled in religion and at one point opened a small non-denominational church in San Juan, just a few blocks from the shrine.

Many peculiar and unsubstantiated claims about Alexander have persisted, showing up in recent years on the internet. Some alleged he was prejudiced against Mexican-Americans, which his work as a teacher seems to contradict. Some said he had issues stemming from people insulting or mistreating his wife; still others said he was a critic and opponent of organized religion. As a math teacher, he was even said to have developed an equation delineating the requirements for world peace! And because his body, still strapped to the pilot's seat, was found in an upstairs restroom of the cafeteria, some people afterward reported feeling a strange presence in that building, while others told of seeing a mysterious figure in an upstairs window.

One thing fairly certain about Alexander is that his action was deliberate; his radio call demanding evacuations just before the crash made clear he had advance knowledge of what was about to happen. The Associated Press report of Oct. 24, 1970 had this to say:

"A spokesman for the Upper Valley Aviation Co. in McAllen said Alexander rented the Piper Cherokee 180, a single-engine, four-place plane.

"The aviation firm's spokesman said Alexander, about 50, was well known to employees of the company. He was an instructor-pilot and often rented the company's planes.

"The spokesman for the aviation company said the crash was no accident – that it definitely was a deliberate crash. The spokesman said he also heard the radio orders from Alexander."

Shrine

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ramic chalices that previously had been used during Mass at the shrine. He bought back the chalices, and today they are shelved with hundreds of brass statues and fixtures from the old shrine in storage at a warehouse at the basilica's offices. The motor and several other pieces of the plane itself are there as well. Now catalogued, these artifacts await a future date when they can be placed in a museum.

After the fire, the diocese had to decide what to do about the shrine, as it was an established destination for thousands every year. The first move was to place the rescued image of Our Lady in an undamaged building nearby, where pilgrims could continue to visit. Then the diocese was faced with the problem of how – and even whether – to rebuild the shrine.

"Bishop Fitzpatrick was the one who was tasked with that. After the plane wreck, some people approached the bishop and said, 'Don't make another shrine; it's too expensive to build,'" Villescas said. "And he said, you know what? We're going to rebuild the shrine and also give you a parish."

That decision was the beginning of St. John the Baptist Parish – and also of today's basilica.

"Back in 1970, the shrine and the parish were one entity; the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMIs) were the priests in charge of the shrine-parish," Father Gomez said. "After the 'terrorist attack' of 1970,

the people began to contribute towards a new building.

"The migrant farmworkers who would go up north every year contributed a lot of money. Before they would leave *a los trabajos*, as they would say, they came to get a blessing and to pray to Our Lady. In October when they came back, they would come to thank her for a successful job – and would donate money."

"For us, out of that tragedy – and it was a terrible thing to happen – I look back and think about what Bishop Fitzpatrick had to do to rebuild something there," Bishop Flores said. "I imagine it took a lot of planning, a lot of work and a lot of fundraising to make possible the building of the church we have now. That was a major effort.

"I remind people that first the church that housed the image of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle and then the basilica itself was literally built by the dimes of the people. I mean, the people made it possible."

St. John the Baptist Parish's new church was completed on the site of the old shrine in 1975. A quarter mile to the north, groundbreaking for the new, much larger shrine was made in 1976, and after four years of construction it was completed and dedicated on April 19, 1980.

Uninterrupted devotion

Decades after the plane crash and fire, long ago but not forgotten, the shrine remains a special place. Even when it was closed for two months because of the coronavirus pandemic, pilgrims were undeterred.

"We had a couple come in; their whole family had COVID in San Antonio. They wanted to light a candle at the shrine," Villescas said. "That was right about two weeks after we had shut down everything. And I talked to Father Jorge and we opened the church for them.

"They drove down that day, lit their candle and went back, and all their family survived the COVID. They even had an older brother who had a lot of underlying (health) issues, but he finally made it. ... So there's a lot of miracles going on – the people don't realize because we don't document it. We don't take it as seriously as maybe we should: There's a miracle going on every day."

Bishop Flores sees the shrine as a powerful symbol of both the temporal and the divine.

"As a bishop, I look at it now that the basilica and the effort to rebuild it was ... really kind of a unifying presence in the whole Valley," Bishop Flores said. "It really is a great sign in the Valley for Catholics and non-Catholics alike of the devotion of the people. ... It has been and continues to be a powerful sign of the people of the Valley because it really is the people's shrine.

"It was a gift to the Blessed Mother, it was a gift to God, and I think that's a powerful expression of faith, and a powerful expression of the Blessed Mother's care. And that's how I appreciate what it means to be here, and what the presence of the Virgin here is.

"It is a presence, and it does hold us together."