

**Inside this issue:**

- *An invitation to non-Catholics (Page 2)*
- *An anniversary in St. Lawrence (Page 5)*
- *An international pilgrimage (Page 6)*
- *A former 'death center' finds new life (Page 8)*
- *Plan your parish fall festival tour (Page 4)*

# WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



Serving Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas

Volume 43, No. 9

September 2023



**WEST TEXAS ANGELUS PHOTOS**

**Clockwise from top:** Members of the Jumano people led a procession to the Historic Beginnings of San Angelo park Aug. 12; Jumano majordomo Bill Acosta blessed everyone at the ceremony with crosses of corn meal on their shoulders; Bishop Michael Sis also blessed the park and all the people who were gathered.



## Blending cultures: New park receives Jumano, Catholic blessings

By Becca Nelson Sankey

Legend has it that everywhere Sor Maria's blue cloak grazed the ground, bluebonnets bloomed. Hundreds of times, the 17th century Franciscan nun is documented to have appeared to the Jumano tribes in the Southwest, including what is now San Angelo, evangelizing to them in their native tongue without ever physically leaving her convent thousands of miles away in Spain.

The Lady in Blue, as the Jumanos affectionately called her, is widely credited

with introducing Christianity to the natives. More than 400 years after she first visited Texas and New Mexico, the blue and white wildflowers still appear each spring, and Maria's legacy of evangelization continues.

Sor Maria converted the Jumano ancestors of Bill Acosta, of Las Cruces, New Mexico, who traveled to San Angelo to participate in the weekend's Lady in Blue celebration. Though this marked the first time Acosta had been involved in San Angelo's events commemorating Sor Maria, it was not his first time she brought

him to San Angelo.

"I found out about the statues (of the Jumanos and Sor Maria in San Angelo) and wanted to do a native blessing there because it should be done; it was appropriate," he said of his first visit to San Angelo. "It's a homecoming knowing every time I go to places like that, like the river (in San Angelo), what I'm seeing with my eyes, my ancestors saw with theirs. The ground I'm walking on is the same ground they walked on. It's home."

Acosta lives on a pueblo in New Mexico, which is different from a reservation because it is not federally recognized, he said. There, he serves as a majordomo, or religious leader. Acosta has served many roles at the pueblo, but he has always held on to his identity as Catholic and Jumano.

"I tell people, I'm not trying to be native, I am native. And I've been Catholic my whole life," Acosta said. "For me, (Catholicism and being Jumano) have always blended well, and (they do) for most of the pueblos."

He likens the marriage of his ancestry and his faith to people who speak two languages, specifically Spanish and English. "They go in and out of talking English and Spanish without even thinking about it," he said. "I was raised with both (Jumano heritage and Catholic faith) at the same time, with the sacred corn and the holy water. The water, it's sacred in both."

"When you grow up with both cultures

See BLESSINGS, Page 8



From the Bishop’s Desk

An invitation to learn about us

I write a column in this newspaper every month, and most of the people who read my articles are Catholics. However, this one is addressed to our brothers and sisters who are not Catholic. I encourage anyone reading this article to pass it along to someone who might be interested.

Are you exploring spiritually? Are you searching for meaning in life? God made you. God knows you better than you know yourself. He has placed in every human heart an inner desire for union with him. As St. Augustine said in *The Confessions*, our hearts are restless until they rest in God.

God makes himself known to human beings in a variety of ways. He has revealed himself most fully in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became a human being at a certain point in history, about 2,000 years ago. He spoke with wisdom unmatched by any human being. He worked miracles that showed the power of God uniquely at work in him. He lived, died, and rose from the dead.

Jesus did all this to draw close to us, to teach us, to be an example for us, to reveal what God is like, to love us, to save us from sin, to heal us, and to lead us through the struggles of this world to eternal life with God in heaven.

When Jesus Christ lived on this earth, he called together a group of followers and gave them special training as his apostles. After he rose from the dead, he endowed them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and commissioned them to lead others according to his teaching and example. Jesus established our church in A.D. 33, and he entrusted the leadership of his church to these apostles. As the church grew in numbers, the apostles trained and commissioned assistants and successors through prayer and the laying on of hands, thus sharing their spiritual leadership through the ordained ministries of deacons, priests, and bishops.

Through almost 2,000 years of history, the Holy Spirit has continued to guide people in the true Christian faith through the Catholic Church. Jesus continues to guide our church today. I have found the fullness of truth, beauty, and goodness in Jesus Christ through the active practice of the Catholic faith. I am happy to invite you to consider joining this same community of faith, so that you may be nourished and sustained by Jesus in the church that he founded.

God is all knowing, all powerful, and all loving. However, our church is filled with human beings. As human beings, we are not perfect. Therefore, our experience in the church includes our share of human limitations, imperfections, and sins. Nevertheless, we trust in the promises of Jesus that he will be with us until the end of time (Mt 28:20), and that he will guide us to all truth (Jn 16:13) through the action of the Holy Spirit.

If you would like to explore the beautiful spirituality, teachings, worship, and way of life of our Catholic faith community, I invite you to take part in a process that is called the Rite of Christian



Bishop Michael J. Sis

Diocese of San Angelo

Initiation of Adults, or RCIA. (Since a new edition of the official document for this process will be published soon, we can also call it the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, or OCIA. By either name, it is the same process.) This process is based upon the ancient method of faith instruction, discernment, and formation that was practiced in the early years of our church and now takes place in a local parish.

This process is more than just attending classes for intellectual learning. It is also a journey of personal growth and conversion, seeking to follow God’s will in all aspects of our lives. This includes exploring, searching, questioning, conversing with informed Catholics, praying, turning away from sin, seeking to live virtuously, joining with the community in Mass and other shared prayer, and attending group meetings, all in a process of formation for Christian discipleship in a journey of faith.

You do not have to make a decision to become Catholic in order to join the RCIA. You join the RCIA in order to discern whether you feel called to become a Catholic. I invite you to come and check it out. You will not be pressured into anything, and you are welcome to attend the instructional meetings even if you are not yet ready to embrace the Catholic faith. If you participate in the RCIA process and then decide not to become a Catholic, at least you will have learned something about the beliefs and practices of a growing faith community that encompasses more than a billion people around the world.

There are many different reasons why people look into the Catholic faith. Some become interested by the example of people that they know. Some are curious about something they heard on Catholic radio, television, podcasts, or social media. Some are attracted by the beauty of the liturgy. Some read their way into Catholicism, particularly when they encounter the writings of the early Christian Patristic writers of the first centuries. Some are drawn by our ethical teachings on the sanctity of life and the theology of the body. Some are intrigued by our understanding of the harmony between faith and science. Some are fascinated by a particular saint or Catholic writer. Some are invited by a relative, co-worker, or friend. No matter what might be the spark that gets you started, you will find that the mystery of Christ is an endless, overflowing treasure.

The church provides different stages for the RCIA journey into the Catholic faith. You begin with a stage of inquiry

for initial exploration. Then, after you are committed to discipleship and you believe you would like to enter the Catholic Church, there is a period of instruction called the “catechumenate.” You enter this stage either through a ceremony called the “rite of acceptance” for those who are not yet baptized Christians, or through the “rite of welcoming” for those who are already baptized but not yet Catholic. These rites take place at the Catholic parish where you are receiving instruction. From this point on, those seeking baptism are called “catechumens,” while those already baptized but not yet Catholic are called “candidates.”

Then, after the period of the catechumenate, there is a large ceremony called the “rite of election and call to continuing conversion.” This usually takes place in two locations in our diocese at the beginning of the season of Lent in the springtime. As the local bishop of the diocese, I preside at these ceremonies. All those in the RCIA throughout our Diocese of San Angelo are invited to gather for one of these ceremonies with me. Beginning with this rite, the catechumens are called the “elect.”

After the special time of purification and enlightenment during the season of Lent, those in the RCIA process have the opportunity to become Catholics on the night before Easter Sunday in an unforgettable Mass called the Easter Vigil. Those who are not yet baptized receive baptism, confirmation, and first communion. Those who are already validly baptized in other Christian churches make a profession of faith, are officially received into the Catholic Church, and receive confirmation and first Communion. In the weeks after the Easter Vigil, there is usually a further period of instruction called “mystagogy,” designed to help new Catholics get a good start as active

The Prayer Square

A prayer for evangelization

Mary, Virgin and Mother,  
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,  
welcomed the word of life  
in the depths of your humble faith:  
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,  
help us to say our own “yes”  
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,  
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Filled with Christ’s presence,  
you brought joy to John the Baptist,  
making him exult in the womb of his mother.  
Brimming over with joy,  
you sang of the great things done by God.  
Standing at the foot of the cross  
with unyielding faith,  
you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection,  
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit  
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.

Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection,  
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life  
which triumphs over death.  
Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,  
that the gift of unfading beauty  
may reach every man and woman.

Virgin of listening and contemplation,  
Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast,  
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,  
that she may never be closed in on herself  
or lose her passion for establishing God’s kingdom.

Star of the new evangelization,  
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,  
service, ardent and generous faith,  
justice and love of the poor,  
that the joy of the Gospel  
may reach to the ends of the earth,  
illuminating even the fringes of our world.

Mother of the living Gospel,  
wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones,  
pray for us.

Amen. Alleluia!

Pope Francis in Evangelii Gaudium

members of the local parish.

Those are the stages of the journey of the RCIA process. It is a period of formation and preparation designed to help someone decide whether to become a Catholic and to learn, grow, and flourish in their newfound Catholic faith for the rest of their life.

This is the time of year when many of our parishes are getting started with a new inquiry phase in the RCIA process. There are also some parishes that offer a year-round process that you can start at any time. I encourage you to contact any Catholic church in your area and give it a try. In our love for Jesus Christ, we are happy to share our faith with you.

Guadalupe shows how faith is shared simply, with respect, pope says

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Our Lady of Guadalupe and other recognized Marian apparitions show clearly how evangelization does not require complicated plans and elaborate theological explanations but sharing the faith in "a language suitable for all, a language that is comprehensible, like that of Jesus," Pope Francis said.

At Guadalupe, in fact, "Our Lady proclaims God in the most suitable language — the mother tongue" of St. Juan Diego and the Indigenous people of Mexico, the pope said Aug. 23 at his weekly general audience.

Speaking to several thousand people gathered in the air-conditioned Vatican audience hall as temperatures rose outside, the pope returned to his series of audience

talks about "apostolic zeal" and "passion for evangelization."

In each talk in the series, the pope has highlighted a "witness" or witnesses that demonstrate important aspects of sharing the Gospel with others. His focus Aug. 23 was on "inculturation," and the "witnesses" he chose were St. Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe, who appeared to the Indigenous saint in 1531.

Christianity already was being preached in the Americas, the pope said, "but unfortunately it had also been accompanied by worldly interests. Instead of the path of inculturation, too often, the hasty approach of transplanting and imposing preconstituted models — European, for example — had been taken, lacking respect for the Indigenous peoples."

Mary, though, appearing to Juan

Diego, comes "dressed in the clothing of the native peoples, she speaks their language, she welcomes and loves the local culture," the pope said. "Mary is mother, and under her mantle every child finds a place. In Mary, God became flesh, and through Mary, he continues to incarnate himself in the lives of peoples."

Hearing the Gospel in one's "mother tongue" is effective, the pope said. "Mary speaks to us, too, in our mother tongue, that which we understand well."

The pope used the audience as an opportunity to thank "the many mothers and grandmothers who pass the faith on to their children and grandchildren," and he asked the people in the audience hall to give a round of applause to mothers and grandmothers.

"As Mary shows, the Gospel is com-

municated in simplicity," the pope said. "Our Lady always chooses those who are simple," whether appearing to St. Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico or to St. Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, France, or the three shepherd children in Fátima, Portugal.

All three apparitions also show that having zeal and passion for sharing the Gospel does not mean everything will go off without a hitch, the pope said. Our Lady of Guadalupe sent Juan Diego to the local bishop to ask him to build a church on Tepeyac Hill. The bishop dismissed him twice.

"Despite zeal, the unexpected arrives, sometimes from the church itself," the pope said.



# Una invitación a conocernos

Escribo una columna en este periódico todos los meses, y la mayoría de las personas que leen mis artículos son católicos. Sin embargo, éste está dirigido a nuestros hermanos y hermanas que no son católicos. Animo a cualquiera que lea este artículo a que lo comparta con alguien que pueda estar interesado.

¿Estás explorando espiritualmente? ¿Estás buscando sentido a la vida? Dios te hizo. Dios te conoce mejor que tú mismo. Ha puesto en cada corazón humano un deseo interior de unión con él. Como dijo San Agustín en *Confesiones*, nuestro corazón está inquieto hasta que descansa en Dios.

Dios se da a conocer a los seres humanos de diversas maneras. Se ha revelado más plenamente en Jesús de Nazaret. Jesús es el Hijo eterno de Dios que se hizo ser humano en un momento determinado de la historia, hace unos 2,000 años. Habló con una sabiduría inigualable por cualquier ser humano. Obró milagros que mostraron el poder de Dios obrando de manera única en él. Vivió, murió, y resucitó de entre los muertos.

Jesús hizo todo esto para acercarse a nosotros, enseñarnos, ser un ejemplo para nosotros, revelarnos cómo es Dios, amarnos, salvarnos del pecado, sanarnos, y guiarnos a través de las luchas de la vida en este mundo a la vida eterna con Dios en el cielo.

Cuando Jesucristo vivió en esta tierra, reunió a un grupo de seguidores y les dio capacitación especial como sus apóstoles. Después de resucitar de entre los muertos, los dotó de los dones del Espíritu Santo y les encargó que guiaran a otros según sus enseñanzas y ejemplo. Jesús estableció nuestra iglesia en el año 33 d.C. y confió el liderazgo de su iglesia a estos apóstoles. A medida que la iglesia crecía en número, los apóstoles capacitaron y comisionaron asistentes y sucesores mediante la oración y la imposición de manos, compartiendo así su liderazgo espiritual a través de los ministerios ordenados de diáconos, sacerdotes, y obispos.

A lo largo de casi 2,000 años de historia, el Espíritu Santo ha seguido guiando a las personas en la verdadera fe cristiana a través de la Iglesia Católica. Jesús continúa guiando nuestra iglesia hoy. He encontrado la plenitud de la verdad, la belleza, y la bondad en Jesucristo a través de la práctica activa de la fe católica. Me complace invitarte a considerar unirme a esta misma comunidad de fe, para que puedas ser nutrido y sostenido por Jesús en la iglesia que él fundó.

Dios es omnisciente, todopoderoso, y todo amoroso. Sin embargo, nuestra iglesia está llena de seres humanos. Como seres humanos, no somos perfectos. Por lo tanto, nuestra experiencia en la iglesia incluye nuestra parte de limitaciones, imperfecciones, y pecados humanos. Sin embargo, confiamos en las promesas de Jesús de que estará con nosotros hasta el fin de los tiempos (Mt 28:20), y que nos guiará a toda verdad (Jn 16:13) por la acción del Espíritu Santo.

Si deseas explorar la hermosa espiritualidad, enseñanzas, liturgia, y forma de vida de nuestra comunidad de fe católica, te invito a participar en un proceso lla-



Obispo Michael J. Sis

Diócesis de San Ángelo

mado Rito de Iniciación Cristiana para Adultos o RICA. (Dado que pronto se publicará una nueva edición del documento oficial para este proceso, también podemos llamarlo Orden de Iniciación Cristiana para Adultos u OICA. Con cualquier nombre, es el mismo proceso). Este proceso se basa en el antiguo método de instrucción de fe, discernimiento, y formación que se practicaba en los primeros años de nuestra iglesia y que ahora se lleva a cabo en una parroquia local.

ste proceso es más que simplemente asistir a clases para el aprendizaje intelectual. Es también un camino de crecimiento personal y conversión, buscando seguir la voluntad de Dios en todos los aspectos de nuestra vida. Esto incluye explorar, buscar, cuestionar, conversar con católicos informados, orar, alejarse del pecado, buscar vivir virtuosamente, unirse a la comunidad en la Misa y otras oraciones compartidas, y asistir a reuniones grupales, todo en un proceso de formación para el discipulado cristiano en un camino de fe.

No es necesario tomar la decisión de hacerse católico para poder unirse al RICA. Te unes a RICA para discernir si te sientes llamado a convertirte en católico. Te invito a venir y comprobarlo. No te presionarán para que hagas nada, y puedes asistir a las reuniones de instrucción incluso si aún no estás listo para abrazar la fe católica. Si participas en el proceso de RICA y luego decides no convertirte en católico, al menos habrás aprendido algo sobre las creencias y prácticas de una comunidad de fe en crecimiento que abarca a más de mil millones de personas en todo el mundo.

Hay muchas razones diferentes por las que la gente investiga la fe católica. Algunos se interesan por el ejemplo de personas que conocen. Algunos sienten curiosidad por algo que escucharon en la radio, la televisión, los podcasts, o las redes sociales católicas. Algunos se sienten atraídos por la belleza de la liturgia. Algunos se abren camino hacia el catolicismo, particularmente cuando encuentran los escritos de los primeros escritores patrísticos cristianos de los primeros siglos. Algunos se sienten atraídos por nuestras enseñanzas éticas sobre la santidad de la vida y la teología del cuerpo. Algunos están intrigados por nuestra comprensión de la armonía entre fe y ciencia. Algunos están fascinados por un santo o un escritor católico en particular. Algunos son invitados por un familiar, compañero de trabajo, o amigo. No importa cuál sea la chispa que te impulse a comenzar, encontrarás que el misterio de Cristo es un tesoro infinito y desbordante.

La iglesia ofrece diferentes etapas para el viaje de RICA hacia la fe católica. Comienzas con una etapa de indagación para la exploración inicial. Luego, después de

que estás comprometido con el discipulado y crees que te gustaría ingresar a la Iglesia Católica, hay un período de instrucción llamado “catecumenado”. Ingresas a esta etapa ya sea a través de una ceremonia llamada “rito de aceptación” para aquellos que aún no son cristianos bautizados, o mediante el “rito de bienvenida” para aquellos que ya están bautizados pero aún no son católicos. Estos ritos se llevan a cabo en la parroquia católica donde recibes instrucción. A partir de este momento, los que buscan el bautismo se llaman “catecúmenos”, mientras que los que ya están bautizados pero aún no son católicos se llaman “candidatos”.

Luego, después del período del catecumenado, hay una gran ceremonia llamada “rito de elección y llamado a la conversión continua”. Esto generalmente se lleva a cabo en dos lugares de nuestra diócesis al comienzo de la temporada de Cuaresma en la primavera. Como obispo local de la diócesis, presido estas ceremonias. Todos aquellos en el RICA en nuestra Diócesis de San Ángelo están invitados a reunirse conmigo para una de estas ceremonias. A partir de este rito, los catecúmenos son llamados “elegidos”.

Después del tiempo especial de purificación e iluminación durante la temporada de Cuaresma, aquellos en el proceso de RICA tienen la oportunidad de convertirse en católicos la noche anterior al Domingo de Pascua en una Misa inolvidable llamada Vigilia Pascual. Los que aún no están bautizados reciben el bautismo, la confirmación y la primera comunión. Aquellos que ya están válidamente bautizados en otras iglesias cristianas hacen profesión de fe, son recibidos oficialmente en la Iglesia Católica y reciben la confirmación y la primera comunión. En las semanas posteriores a la Vigilia Pascual, suele haber un período adicional de instrucción llamado “mistagogia”, diseñado para ayudar a los nuevos católicos a tener un buen comienzo como miembros activos

## Espacio de Oración

### Una oración por la evangelización

Virgen y Madre María, tú que, movida por el Espíritu, acogiste al Verbo de la vida en la profundidad de tu humilde fe, totalmente entregada al Eterno, ayúdanos a decir nuestro “sí” ante la urgencia, más imperiosa que nunca, de hacer resonar la Buena Noticia de Jesús.

Tú, llena de la presencia de Cristo, llevaste la alegría a Juan el Bautista, haciéndolo exultar en el seno de su madre. Tú, estremecida de gozo, cantaste las maravillas del Señor. Tú, que estuviste plantada ante la cruz con una fe inquebrantable y recibiste el alegre consuelo de la resurrección, recogiste a los discípulos en la espera del Espíritu para que naciera la Iglesia evangelizadora.

Consíguenos ahora un nuevo ardor de resucitados para llevar a todos el Evangelio de la vida que vence a la muerte. Danos la santa audacia de buscar nuevos caminos para que llegue a todos el don de la belleza que no se apaga.

Tú, Virgen de la escucha y la contemplación, madre del amor, esposa de las bodas eternas, intercede por la Iglesia, de la cual eres el icono purísimo, para que ella nunca se encierre ni se detenga en su pasión por instaurar el Reino.

Estrella de la nueva evangelización, ayúdanos a resplandecer en el testimonio de la comunión, del servicio, de la fe ardiente y generosa, de la justicia y el amor a los pobres, para que la alegría del Evangelio llegue hasta los confines de la tierra y ninguna periferia se prive de su luz.

Madre del Evangelio viviente, manantial de alegría para los pequeños, ruega por nosotros.

Amén. Aleluya.

Papa Francisco en Evangelii Gaudium

de la parroquia local.

Esas son las etapas del recorrido del proceso RICA. Es un período de formación y preparación diseñado para ayudar a alguien a decidir si quiere convertirse en católico y aprender, crecer, y florecer en su recién descubierta fe católica por el resto de su vida.

Este es el tiempo del año en la que muchas de nuestras parroquias están comenzando con una nueva fase de indagación en el proceso de RICA. También hay algunas parroquias que ofrecen un proceso durante todo el año que puedes iniciar en cualquier momento. Te animo a que te pongas en contacto con cualquier iglesia católica de tu zona y lo pruebes. En nuestro amor por Jesucristo, estamos felices de compartir nuestra fe contigo.

## Papa: Guadalupe nos muestra cómo compartir la fe con sencillez y respeto

Por Cindy Wooden

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y otras apariciones marianas reconocidas muestran claramente cómo la evangelización no requiere planes complicados y explicaciones teológicas elaboradas, sino compartir la fe en "un lenguaje apropiado para todos, comprensible, como el de Jesús", dijo el Papa Francisco.

En Guadalupe, de hecho, "la Virgen proclama a Dios en el lenguaje más apropiado, la lengua materna" de San Juan Diego y de los pueblos indígenas de México, dijo el Papa el 23 de agosto en su audiencia general semanal.

Hablando ante varios miles de personas reunidas en la sala de audiencias climatizada

del Vaticano mientras las temperaturas subían fuera, el Papa retomó su serie de discursos en la audiencia sobre el "celo apostólico" y la "pasión por la evangelización".

En cada discurso de la serie, el Papa ha destacado un "testigo" o testigos que demuestran aspectos importantes de compartir el Evangelio con los demás. El 23 de agosto se centró en la "inculturación", y los "testigos" que eligió fueron San Juan Diego y Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, que se apareció al santo indígena en 1531.

El cristianismo ya se predicaba en las Américas, dijo el Papa, "pero desgraciadamente también había sido acompañado por intereses mundanos. En lugar del camino de la inculturación, se había tomado con demasiada frecuencia el camino presuroso de im-

plantar e imponer modelos preestablecidos — europeos, por ejemplo —, faltando el respeto a los pueblos indígenas."

María, sin embargo, al aparecerse a Juan Diego, viene "vestida con las prendas de los indígenas, habla su lengua, acoge y ama la cultura local", dijo el Papa. "María es madre, y bajo su manto todo niño encuentra un lugar. En María, Dios se hizo carne, y a través de María, continúa encarnándose en la vida de los pueblos".

Escuchar el Evangelio en la propia "lengua materna" es eficaz, dijo el Papa. "María nos habla también a nosotros en nuestra lengua materna, la que entendemos bien".

El Papa aprovechó la audiencia para dar las gracias "a las muchas madres y abuelas que transmiten la fe a sus hijos y nietos", y pidió a los presentes en la sala de audiencias

un aplauso para las madres y abuelas.

"El Evangelio se comunica, como nos muestra María, con sencillez", dijo el Papa. "La Virgen siempre elige a los sencillos", ya sea apareciéndose a San Juan Diego en la colina del Tepeyac, en México, o a Santa Bernadette Soubirous en Lourdes, Francia, o a los tres niños pastores en Fátima, Portugal.

Las tres apariciones muestran también que tener celo y pasión por compartir el Evangelio no significa que todo vaya a salir bien, dijo el Papa. Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe envió a Juan Diego al obispo local para pedirle que construyera una iglesia en el cerro del Tepeyac. El obispo lo despidió dos veces.



CALENDARS

Please pray for our clergy



September

- 1

Rev. James Delaney, OMI (D — 2007)
- 2

Rev. Albert Ezeanya (O — 2005)
- 2

Rev. Hilarin Lapinski (D — 1994)
- 4

Rev. John Busch, OMI (D — 2003)
- 5

Deacon Jesus Mercado (D — 2009)
- 6

Rev. Vincent Daugintis (D — 1990)
- 6

Rev. Reggie Odima (B)
- 10

Rev. James Franchi (D — 1969)
- 10

Rev. Leo St. John, OMI (D — 1976)
- 10

Rev. Ryan Rojo (B)
- 12

Rev. Robert Baden (D — 2018)
- 14

Rev. Kizito Okhuoya (O — 1996)
- 15

Rev. Peter Vergauwen (D — 2003)
- 20

Rev. Timothy Hayter (B)
- 21

Rev. Kumar Jujjuvarapu (B)
- 21

Rev. Felix Archibong (B)
- 23

Rev. Herman Valladares (D — 1997)
- 25

Rev. William Lensing (D — 1978)
- 25

Deacon Felix Segura (B)
- 26

Rev. William Cadigan, MSC (D — 1971)
- 26

Rev. Joey Faylona (B)
- 26

Deacon David Workman (B)
- 26

Deacon Leonard Hendon (B)
- 28

Deacon Paul Ramos (D — 1990)
- 29

Rev. Richard Regan (B)
- 30

Rev. Nilo Nalugon (B)
- 30

Rev. Johnrita Adegboyega (B)
- 30

Deacon Ray Ramirez (D — 2017)

October

- 1

Rev. Hilary Ihedioha (B)
- 3

Rev. Nilo Nalugon (O — 1994)
- 3

Deacon Alan Pelzel (B)
- 4

Deacon Thomas Lambdin (D — 1982)
- 5

Rev. Hilary Ihedioha (O — 1985)
- 5

Rev. William Meagher, OMI (D — 1970)
- 6

Deacon Jesse Ortiz (B)
- 7

Rev. Francis Schoutteten, OMI (D — 2002)
- 8

Deacon Simon Franco (D — 2008)
- 12

Deacon Peter Ballaro (D — 2013)
- 12

Deacon Erick Morgado (B)
- 15

Rev. James Norman, OMI (D — 1987)
- 16

Rev. Hugh Wade (D — 2020)
- 20

Deacon Rogelio Ibarra (B)
- 20

Rev. Michael Udegbumam (B)
- 21

Deacon Richard Blake (D — 1989)
- 21

Deacon David Mendez (B)
- 23

Rev. Msgr. Maurice Voity (B)
- 24

Deacon Gary Brooks (B)
- 24

Deacon Ernie Sanchez (D — 2021)
- 25

Deacon Reuben Reyes (B)
- 27

Deacon Thomas Collier (B)
- 28

Rev. Rodney White (B)

**B = Birthday | O = Date of Ordination**  
**D = Date of Death**  
(Dates of birth and ordination given for living clergy; date of death for deceased.)

Sept. 23–24:

Special collection

benefitting

seminarian education

Thanks to an abundance of vocations, the diocese anticipates 13 seminarians discerning a call to the priesthood in the coming school year. Your donations to this collection help pay the cost of tuition for these young men answering God’s call.



Please contact the bishop’s assistant, Lupe Castillo, for information about the bishop’s calendar.  
325-651-7500 | lcastillo@sanangelodiocese.org

Bishop’s Calendar

September 2023

- 1-3

JUAREZ, MEXICO, Tex-Mex Border Bishops meeting
- 7

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Diocesan Liturgical Commission meeting at 1:00 p.m.
- 9

SAN ANGELO, McNease Convention Center, Women’s Conference Mass at 10:00 a.m.
- 9

COYANOSA, St. Isidore, Mass at 5:00 p.m.
- 9

IMPERIAL, Our Lady of Lourdes, Mass at 6:30 p.m.
- 10

McCAMEY, Sacred Heart, Confirmation Mass at 11:00 a.m.
- 10

CRANE, Good Shepherd, Confirmation Mass at 3:00 p.m.
- 14

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Presbyteral Council meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 14

SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass at 6:30 p.m. with veneration of relic of the True Cross
- 16

ODESSA, St. Mary’s Central Catholic School, Diocesan Schools Commission meeting at 9:30 am.
- 18–21

CHICAGO, Extension Bishops’ Conference
- 25

SAN ANGELO, St. Mary, Healing Mass and Confessions at 6:00 p.m.
- 26

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Mass for Region X youth ministry leaders at 9:00 a.m.
- 29

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Finance Council meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 30

MENARD, Spanish Colonial Heritage Day at the Presidio

- 30

ROBERT LEE, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mass at 6:00 p.m. with blessing of outdoor crucifix

October 2023

- 1

SAN ANGELO, St. Joseph, Pro-Life Mass at 9:00 a.m.
- 3–4

SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Priests’ Fall Convocation
- 4

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Deans’ meeting at 1:00 p.m.
- 7

ODESSA, Marriott, Guadalupe Radio Network Fishers of Men Dinner at 7:00 p.m.
- 10–12

DENVER, Bishops’ Conference for Evangelizing Dioceses
- 13–14

BIG SPRING, Holy Trinity, Deacons’ Fall Convocation
- 14

SWEETWATER, Holy Spirit, Confirmation Mass at 5:00 p.m.
- 18–19

BIRMINGHAM, AL, EWTN events
- 21–22

OKLAHOMA CITY, Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre annual meeting
- 25

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priestly Life and Formation Committee meeting at 1:30 p.m.
- 26

SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Presbyteral Council meeting at 11:00 a.m.
- 27

MIDLAND, Richland Hills Golf Course, Crusader Classic Tournament at 8:00 a.m.



Christ the King Retreat Center

September 2023

- 4

CKRC Offices Closed in Observance of Labor Day
- 6

DOSA Staff Meeting Mass & Lunch
- 8–10

Deacon Formation
- 11

Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 14–17

Lubbock Deacons’ Retreat #1
- 25–27

Region 10 Youth Ministry
- 29–Oct 1

Engaged Encounter/Natural Family Planning

October 2023

- 3–4

DOSA Priests’ Fall Convocation
- 6–8

Deacon Formation
- 9

Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 13

Worldwide Marriage Encounter
- 19–22

Lubbock Deacons’ Retreat #2
- 23

Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
- 25–29

Women’s Walk to Emmaus

CLERGY UPDATES

Father David Herrera is now the dean of the Midland/Odessa Deanery, effective Aug. 25. Msgr. Fred Nawarskas and Father Joseph Choutapalli remain the deans of the Abilene and San Angelo Deanery, respectively.

Msgr. Robert Bush has moved from Odessa to the Lyndale Memory Care assisted living facility in Abilene. Mail for Msgr. Bush should be sent to his sister: c/o Patricia Vandecapella, 205 Avon St., Breaux Bridge, LA 70517.

Father Paul Kodakarakaran will begin ministry Sept. 2 as the Catholic hospital chaplain assigned to Shannon Medical Center in San Angelo.

Parish festivals



<https://sanangelodiocese.org/parish-fall-festivals>

- Sept. 10

St. Mary, Ballinger
- Sept. 24

Sacred Heart, Coleman
- Sept. 24


St. Theresa, Junction
- Sept. 24

Immaculate Conception, Knickerbocker
- Sept. 24–25

Holy Redeemer, Odessa
- Sept. 28–Oct. 1

St. Ann, Midland

See FESTIVALS, Page 7



Deacon Robert Ozuna Selvera

May 4, 1963 ~ August 22, 2023

Eternal rest grant unto him, Oh Lord.

And let perpetual light shine upon him.

The Diocese of San Angelo



# 75 years of St. Lawrence Church



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Deacon Joel Gutierrez incenses the faithful gathered for the 75th anniversary Mass at St. Lawrence Parish near Garden City Aug. 10, 2023.

## West Texas Angelus

“We thank God for this moment today,” Father Prem Thumma said at the conclusion of Mass at St. Lawrence Parish on Aug. 10, 2023. Held on the feast day of the church’s patron, the Mass was a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of St. Lawrence Church.

At a reception after Mass, the community shared a meal and stories about the history of this rural parish near Garden City.

The land where the community sits was first cleared in 1947, bought by men who returned to the area after World War II using funds made available through the G.I. Bill. The very first church building was an Army barracks purchased by the members of the community for \$300, which the local Catholic men spent one day a week working on until it was ready for use.

The Mass of dedication was held July 5, 1948, followed by a barbecue. Father Fidelis Albrecht, OFM, drove from San Angelo each weekend to serve as the pastor. St. Lawrence was the first mission church of the Diocese of Amarillo (the Diocese of San Angelo was established in 1961).

The church was named in honor of the patron of the then-shepherd of Amarillo, Bishop Laurence FitzSimon. A clerical error on the paperwork establishing the community, however, swapped a “u” for a “w” and the town of St. Lawrence was born.

At the time of the establishment of the mission church in St. Lawrence, there were no paved roads to the town. Churchgoers traveling from Garden City had to drive through dusty fields, exiting the vehicle to open 18 different gates along the way.

The original barracks church was replaced with a larger barracks in 1956. The parish community again outgrew its building’s capacity in 1969. A 450-seat brick church building was dedicated on March 8, 1970, which has been renovated again recently.

In addition to current pastor Father Prem Thumma, four former pastors of St. Lawrence Parish concelebrated the Mass: Father Charles Greenwell, Father Tom Barley, Father Bernardito Getigan, and Father Francis Njoku.



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

Msgr. Bernard Gully, Father Patrick Akpanobong, Father Tom Barley, Father Prem Thumma, Bishop Michael Sis, Father Francis Njoku, Father Bernardito Getigan, Father Charles Greenwell, and Father John Kuehner joined the people of St. Lawrence Parish for the parish’s 75th anniversary Mass and reception.

## 'Miraculous' survival of Maui Catholic church seen as sign of hope amid wildfire destruction

HONOLULU (OSV News) — "For us, it's like a miracle," Msgr. Terrence Watanabe, the Honolulu Diocese's vicar of Maui and Lanai, said about Maria Lanakila Catholic Church in the town of Lahaina being seemingly untouched by the fierce Maui wildfires Aug. 8-9. The blaze burned Lahaina to the ground in the deadliest natural disaster in Hawaii's history and the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century. "When we saw the news and saw the church steeple rise above the town, it was a great sight to see," the priest said in an interview with the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* Aug. 10, after photos and some video footage posted on the parish's Facebook page clearly showed the church had survived. There were conflicting news reports on the fate of the church — whose name translates as "Our Lady of Victory" — and its parish school,

Sacred Heart School, which had lost half of its roof to heavy winds Aug. 7. The *Star-Advertiser* had reported that the church had burned down, while another news source reported the church was still standing. The *Star-Advertiser* corrected its report Aug. 11 with a story that the church had indeed survived. Honolulu Bishop Larry Silva echoed the vicar, saying Maria Lanakila Church "was miraculously spared, as was the rectory." Bishop Silva flew to Maui late Aug. 12, touring the Lahaina area Aug. 13 and celebrating Mass that Sunday for 200 people about nine miles away in Kapalua at Sacred Heart, the other church that belongs to Maria Lanakila Parish. Lahaina "was shockingly devastated," said the bishop, who called for the faithful to give "unwavering support" for the fire victims and to remember "the power of prayer."

## Assistance to Maui

If you would like to offer a personal gift to assist the relief efforts after the devastating wildfires on the island of Maui, Hawaii, the Bishop of Honolulu has directed us to a dedicated webpage to accept online donations through the Hawaii Catholic Community Foundation.

You can make a tax-deductible contribution by visiting the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/MauiCatholic>. Also, please offer your prayers for strength, resilience, and healing for the fire victims and their families.

## Reporting Sexual Abuse

The Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is firmly committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for our children and vulnerable adults. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by anyone who serves the Church, and you need a place to talk with someone about your feelings of betrayal or hurt by the Church, we are here to help you. To report incidents, call Lori Hines, Victim Assistance Coordinator, 325-374-7609 (cell), or write Diocese of San Angelo, Victim Assistance Mini-

stry, PO Box 1829, San Angelo, TX 76902. If the incident occurred outside this diocese, our Victim Assistance Coordinator will assist in bringing your concern to the attention of the appropriate diocese. Please keep in mind that one always has the right to report abuse to civil authorities, and civil law requires that any abuse of a minor must be reported. To report about a bishop, the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service can be accessed by visiting [ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://ReportBishopAbuse.org) or by calling 800-276-1562 (national hotline).

## Reportar Abuso Sexual

La Diócesis Católica de San Ángelo está firmemente comprometida a crear y mantener el ambiente más seguro posible para nuestros niños y adultos vulnerables. Si usted o alguien que usted conoce ha sido víctima de abuso sexual por cualquier persona que sirve a la Iglesia, y necesita un lugar para hablar con alguien sobre sus sentimientos de traición o herido por la Iglesia, estamos aquí para ayudarle. Para reportar incidentes, llame a Lori Hines, Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas, 325-374-7609 (celular), o escriba a la Diócesis de San Ángelo, Ministerio de Asistencia a Víctimas, PO Box 1829, San

Ángelo, TX 76902. Un intérprete de español está disponible. Si el incidente ocurrió fuera de esta diócesis, nuestra Coordinadora de Asistencia a Víctimas le ayudará a traer su preocupación a la atención de la diócesis correspondiente. Por favor, tenga en cuenta que uno siempre tiene el derecho de reportar el abuso a las autoridades civiles, y la ley civil requiere que cualquier abuso de un menor de edad debe ser reportado. Para reportar sobre un obispo, se puede acceder al Servicio de Reportes de Abuso de Obispos Católicos visitando [ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://ReportBishopAbuse.org) o llamando al 800-276-1562 (línea directa nacional).



# World Youth Day — Lisbon, Portugal



The World Youth Day pilgrims from the Diocese of San Angelo at Fatima, Portugal.

COURTESY

## Heaven on Earth

By Mary Sokolowski

With every pilgrimage I've taken, the common thread I have found is to expect the unexpected. Even if I start the journey with a certain intention or aim, the Lord usually redirects it towards something that surprises me. This pilgrimage to Portugal for World Youth Day was very much the same.

The last thing I expected from this pilgrimage was to fall in love. Yet every day I was there — every person I encountered, every church I entered, every place I visited — the Lord invited me to love more deeply.

In Santarem, I encountered my first ever eucharistic miracle. In Fatima (the small village of three shepherd children), Our Lady's gentle but firm hand guided me to sincere repentance, conversion, and a holy life.

In the midst of pilgrimage crowds, I found the undeniable universality of the church. The Apostles had been sent out by Christ to make disciples of all nations. They had done just that.

In my neighbors, I found people on fire with a pure, deep, and abiding love toward God. In the sacraments, the humility of our Lord in his divine condescension. He not only became man, but his love draws us to further intimacy through his taking the form of bread and wine in the Most Blessed Sacrament. How can our hearts not be moved by this great reality? May we all learn such humility and charity.

In the ordinariness of holy sites, I am always struck. God loves the ordinary. Our Lady loves the ordinary. And in the day-to-day of our recent pilgrimage, I found holiness in the ordinary. Holiness in the look of love between friends. Holiness in the laughter. Holiness in it all.

We are called to live holy lives no matter where we are, who we are, or our states in life. We are all called to be saints. One of the great joys of World Youth Day is being surrounded by thousands of people who — knowing we are all sinners — burn with a longing to be saints. To be saints together. To fill the courts of heaven. To fall in love. A genuine sincere love of God and neighbor.

Amidst the chaos of the crowds and many distractions during an event like World Youth Day, if you stop, if you listen, you can allow the Lord to show you that the veil between heaven and earth becomes so thin. You get a foretaste of heaven.

We can live the life of heaven now. That is what I experienced during my pilgrimage to World Youth Day: heaven. Heaven on earth.

## Totus tuus: I am totally yours

By Kaleb Chacon

World Youth Day 2023 was an unforgettable adventure. From the very beginning, when all 32 San Angelo pilgrims and 5 Bryan, Texas, pilgrims were gathered around Bishop Sis in the DFW airport preparing to board a flight to Madrid, Spain, in transit to Lisbon, Portugal, he advised us: "Remember that this is not just a vacation in a European country. No, this is a pilgrimage." We stood in a circle, and Bishop Sis invited us to introduce ourselves to the whole group. After we dispersed, we quickly connected in one-on-one conversations and small group discussions over food. Tragically, this was the last time we could have Whataburger in a while.

All of us pilgrims were making connections from the get-go. I felt excited knowing that over the nine days of pilgrimage, strangers would become friends and companions along the once-in-a-lifetime journey we were about to embark on. Of course, World Youth Day is about the coming together of Catholics from all over the world to celebrate our faith and to be gathered under Peter's successor, Pope Francis; we were bound to meet other Catholics on an international level from the time we stepped into the airport until the time we returned and went our separate ways. It can be overwhelming being so close to so many other nationalities all at once. "How can I relate with these people?" I thought to myself. Then it hit me. I didn't have to charmingly dance my way into making a connection because we already had a clear one, our faith. Prayer is a universal language ... even if it is technically in many different languages. What I mean is that I could pray with multiple pilgrims from other countries in a language other than English. A group of women from Belgium led me in the Hail Mary and the Our Father prayers in German, and I prayed the Our Father one on one with a gentleman from Spain. But if that isn't already amazing enough, I was able to pray the most powerful prayer of all prayers, the Mass, in many different languages at a park, engulfed within a sea of people. Hundreds of flags representing everybody's home country were present, but there we were, gathered as a family.

Now, there were undoubtedly joys and hardships along this journey. Every day we had plenty of opportunities to unite our sufferings to Christ's as we endured fatigue, unfamiliarity, long gaps in between mealtimes, and lots of walking in hot and humid weather.

On the other hand, I found it an unbelievable blessing to experience what I did with the other pilgrims from San Angelo and Bryan, Texas. After all, we lived and breathed at the birthplace of St. Anthony of Padua and the apparition sites of Fatima. We ate traditional Portuguese desserts, Pastéis de Nata, and enjoyed delicious espresso, apparently a European staple. Some of us even got to see the pope in person! Lastly, I know that many of the pilgrims from our group, including myself, carried special questions, intentions, and prayers within their hearts throughout the trip. It was a time for me to process where I am in my discernment of the priesthood. St. John Paul II's papal motto, "*Totus Tuus*" (totally yours), was heavy on my mind. I felt that the whole experience was the perfect opportunity for me to look out at God's Holy Catholic Church in all of its glory and brokenness, which at times, was very evident. By saying, "Jesus, I love you, and I am totally yours," I opened my heart even more to the possibility that he may be calling me to be like the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

## Intimate moments amid the bigness

By Ariel Sanchez

World Youth Day is amazing. I got to see and do so many big things. I attended Mass led by the pope with not only thousands, but millions of other Catholics. I saw the relic of St. Thomas Aquinas. I went to Fatima, not once but *twice*. I stood in the same spot where Our Lady appeared to three humble shepherd children in Fatima. I walked the same path they walked to Our Lady. I saw so many beautiful churches. Churches that inspire, whose beauty can only point to the one who is Beauty itself. I met people from all over the world. But I also experienced intimate, beautiful moments, within this big grand thing we were doing. Moments like being comforted by my fellow pilgrims after a long day of walking. Moments like laughing way too hard at a game of Telestrations. Moments like being encouraged by our priests during a particularly long and difficult journey.

And I think this shows the duality of God. God is big. God's church is big and universal. He can do big things, be in big and grand things. But God can also be in the small, intimate, beautiful moments. God was in the pillar of fire that helped free the Israelites, and he was in the quiet wind heard by Elijah. God is in the miracle, but he is also in the comforting hug offered by a friend. And since the pilgrimage is supposed to help lead us closer to God, it makes sense that the pilgrimage reflects both God and the Christian life. We should marvel at the big things we saw and did while on this pilgrimage. We should be in awe of the big things that God can and does do for his pilgrims. But within God's and the church's bigness and universality there are intimate moments that we must enter into and latch on to. We should quiet ourselves and listen for the intimate moments God invites us to.

I can think of one WYD experience in particular that showcases this duality. One day, I, along with a few others, broke off from the main group and went to visit Fatima again. In Fatima they have paved the way the shepherd children would walk from their village to Fatima, where Our Lady would appear. This walk once paved was made into a Way of the Cross, meaning you can do the Stations of the Cross. This makes sense, I think. All Our Lady wants to do and has ever done is lead us closer to her Son. So it makes sense that a path that leads to Our Lady ultimately invites us and points to a deeper understanding and love of her Son and his sacrifice for us. So our little group did the Stations of the Cross, taking the same path the little shepherds took. Because we were in a small group, we were able to go slowly, take our time, and truly reflect on what each station meant all while remembering whose path we were on. I truly had the opportunity to reflect and meditate on the mercy of God and the big, grand, intimate love of his Son for me. I mean, there is no greater gesture of love for me and for all of us than the cross. As we went about the stations, we ran into a group of German pilgrims. As I was leading our small group, the group of German pilgrims grew quiet, listened as I read the station and then joined us for the Our Father prayer, *in German*. After this we continued our journey of the stations and the other group of pilgrims continued on their way. We came to the last station, the Resurrection, and as I read this station out loud to our group in the background we heard a group of pilgrims from Spain start to sing, *in Spanish*, "*Resucitó*," a song about the resurrection of Our Lord. What perfect timing. Godly timing, I would say. All three groups of pilgrims entered into the mystery and love of the Stations and then rejoiced in the Resurrection, in their own languages, in their own ways.

We did this big thing by going to World Youth Day. But with doing this big thing we experienced more intimate, although equally beautiful, moments not only with each other but with other pilgrims from around the world, and more importantly with our Lord, which is also a big thing.

What a beautiful reminder that God is both universal and personal. He is both. His church is both.

We are both.



# 13 local men currently in seminary studies for diocese

By Father Ryan Rojo

**Seminarians: An update**

This fall, the Diocese of San Angelo will have thirteen seminarians studying at four seminaries across the country and world. We welcomed two new men to the program: Fidel Ruvalcalba and Raymond Martinez, both parishioners of St. Stephen Parish in Midland.

The Diocese of San Angelo also welcomed Jessie Ortiz back into the seminary program. Jessie is a parishioner at San Miguel Parish in Midland.

Raymond is the oldest child of Raymond and Natalie Martinez. He was homeschooled, graduating in May 2023. Reflecting on the call to join the seminary, Raymond wrote, “I have had a special connection with priests since I was a young child, and each priest has shown me in their own way that the priesthood is a joyful and fulfilling vocation. There is so much darkness and confusion in the world right now, and the world needs God’s light and truth, perhaps more than ever in history.”

Fidel is the oldest child of Fidel and Norma Ruvalcaba. He worked in various industries in West Texas, most recently owning his own company. Reflecting on the call to join the seminary, Fidel wrote, “Priesthood for me is being a father, a teacher, and a doctor. A father who loves his congregation as children of God ... being a teacher that his congregation needs, to show people the path to holiness by leading them by example ... [and] being the doctor of souls, that offers healing through the sacrament of reconciliation.”

Please keep Raymond and Fidel in your prayers as they begin seminary formation at Conception Seminary College.

Our other men in formation bravely navigated summer assignments and programs, including World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. We are hopeful that God will send more men to begin formation to become priests. Thank you for your support!

**Work of the vocation office**

Father Ryan Rojo and the vocation office were blessed to participate in this year’s Steubenville Lonestar Conference. At the closing Mass of the conference, the celebrant intentionally invited all those open to a priestly and religious vocation to the front near the sanctuary, to receive a blessing. We were able to follow up with most of our youth from the diocese who were open to a priestly vocation. We are grateful to those youth ministers and pastors who collaborated with our efforts to identify interested youth and young adults.

This year, the vocation office re-launched the SEARCH Retreat in the Diocese of San Angelo. Existing in the diocese since the 1970s, SEARCH has been a consistent seedbed of priestly vocations since its inception, with many current priests and seminarians participating in the program. At the most recent SEARCH Retreat, nineteen young men admitted an openness to the priesthood. We are grateful to the SEARCH Retreat team for its commitment to the success of this program in our diocese.

Father Ryan Rojo was also able to give a presentation on vocations to the Small Town Teen ACTS Retreat, held July 20-23, 2023, at Christ the King Retreat Center. At this most recent Small Town Teen ACTS Retreat, six young men admitted an openness to the priesthood. We are grateful to the Small Town Teen ACTS community and team for their invitation and openness to the vocation office.

Father Ryan Rojo and the vocation office also successfully fundraised for the purchasing of two vehicles for use by our seminarians: a 2015 Chevrolet Tahoe and a 2021 GMC Terrain. The Chevrolet Tahoe will accompany our men to Conception Seminary College this fall, while the GMC Terrain will be kept in the diocese for use during parish internships.

**Stewardship opportunities**

The growing number of seminarians also means a growing need for seminary



The vocation office recently came into the possession of two new cars for the use of our seminarians. One donor graciously gifted a 2015 Chevrolet Tahoe for our seminarians. This car will accompany the eight men who will be returning to Conception Seminary College next month. The diocese also successfully raised funds to purchase a 2022 GMC Terrain. This car will be kept in the diocese for seminary use during the year.

financial support. The annual total cost of educating one seminarian is about \$60,000 per year. Through the generosity of grants and scholarships, the diocese is responsible for about half the annual cost of seminary education, totaling about \$480,000 per year. This year, the vocation office will be making an intentional push for the good of annual seminary education for the 2023-2024 academic year.

For 2023, the Catholic Extension Society will match donations made to the Seminarian Burse, \$.20 for each \$1 donated (maximum individual donation of \$25,000). The diocese’s goal is to raise \$209,000, so as to receive a matching grant for \$40,800, totaling \$250,000!

To donate to our Seminarian Burse Fund or to the Annual Fund for Seminary Education, please contact Father Ryan Rojo at 325-651-7500.

We thank you in advance for your generosity.

## Seminarian Contact Info

We encourage the faithful to write the seminarians.

**Conception Seminary College**  
**PO Box 502**  
**Conception, MO 64433**  
Seminarians: *Fidel Ruvalcaba, Raymond Martinez, Charlie Cisneros, Angel Rios, Sabastine Nwosu, Kaleb Chacon, Jesus Martinez*

**Pontifical North American College**  
**Servizio del Transito Mercì**  
**Vatican City State, Europe, 00120**  
Seminarian: *Mauricio Romero*

**Notre Dame Seminary**  
**2901 S. Carrollton Ave.**  
**New Orleans, LA 70118**  
Seminarians: *Noah Hernandez, Joshua Basse*

**Pastoral Internships:** *Jessie Ortiz* at Holy Family Parish, Abilene; *Humberto Diaz* at St. Margaret Parish, San Angelo; *Francisco Camacho* at St. Mary, Star of the Sea Parish, Ballinger.

## Stay Connected with the Diocese of San Angelo

**DOSA Mail**

The official Flocknote of the Diocese of San Angelo. Receive texts or emails with important news, updates, and messages from the diocese.

Two ways to join:

1) Text DOSA to 84576

OR

2) Visit

<https://app.flocknote.com/dosamail>

**Social Media**

Diocese of San Angelo on Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/DiocesefSanAngelo>

Bishop Michael Sis on Twitter:  
[@SABishopMike](#)


**On the Web**

[www.sanangelodiocese.org](http://www.sanangelodiocese.org)

## Share the West Texas Angelus

Sign up for DOSA Mail (instructions at left) to get the WTA and other news from the diocese in your inbox.

Past issues available at:  
[sanangelodiocese.org/west-texas-angelus](http://sanangelodiocese.org/west-texas-angelus)



### Adult Faith Opportunities in the Fall

in person or via ZOOM

*Offered by John Webber*  
Director of Music Ministry  
Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart • San Angelo


### Vatican II and The Treasury of Sacred Music

An introduction to western music and a curated listening guide to what Vatican II told us must be preserved – not in a library, not at concerts, but at Mass. **Tuesday 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm** (September 5, 12, 19, 26, October 3, 10)

### Music and the Mass

An historical overview of the interplay between music and the liturgy from its apostolic beginnings to today – the roles of the choir, cantor, organ, congregation, and other instruments will be highlighted, as well as what music styles and practices are used and what specifically governs and regulates their use. **Thursday 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm** (September 21, 28, October 5, 12, 19, 26)

Attend either in person or via ZOOM. Please register for one or both of these **FREE** programs online at:  
[sanangelocathedral.org/semester-one-classes](http://sanangelocathedral.org/semester-one-classes)  
or use the QR code



## FESTIVALS

Continued from Page 4

Sept. 30–Oct. 1  
Sacred Heart, Abilene

Oct. 1  
St. Patrick, Brady

Oct. 1  
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Eldorado

Oct. 1  
St. Lawrence, St. Lawrence

Oct. 7  
St. Francis, Abilene

Oct. 7  
St. Mary, Brownwood

Oct. 7–8  
San Miguel Arcángel, Midland

Oct. 8  
St. Boniface, Olfen

Oct. 13–14  
Our Lady of Lourdes, Andrews

Oct. 14  
Holy Family, Abilene

Oct. 15  
St. Ambrose, Wall

Oct. 21  
St. Ann, Colorado City

Oct. 21  
St. Stephen, Midland

Oct. 22  
Angelo Catholic School, San Angelo

Nov. 4–5  
St. Mary, San Angelo

Nov. 12  
St. Joseph, Rowena



# 5 years later, celebration shows committee progress

By Becca Nelson Sankey

A lot can happen in five years. Since the last Lady in Blue celebration in San Angelo in 2018, the Historic Beginnings of San Angelo site at 320 S. Oakes St. is mostly complete. Once just two bronze statues — one of a Jumano, and the other of Sor María de Ágreda reaching her hand down toward a young Jumano girl — the site is now landscaped and comprised of a pergola, fountain, pictograph replicas, and several plaques, a few of which commemorated some of the individuals instrumental in recognizing Sor María’s evangelization of the Jumanos more than 400 years ago.

Sor Maria, known by the Jumano tribes as the Lady in Blue, is documented to have appeared to the native tribes hundreds of times during the 17th century in New Mexico and Texas — including what is now San Angelo — to teach them about Christianity. The young nun from Ágreda, Spain, allegedly visited the Jumanos through bilocation, a phenomenon in which she appeared in physical form, complete with the blue cloak for which she was named, without ever leaving her convent several thousand miles away.

Bishop Emeritus Michael Pfeifer first began studying the Lady in Blue 39 years ago when he came to San Angelo as the diocese’s bishop. “I always wondered who the (Jumano) people were whom she was sent to,” he said. “Never did God for such a long period of time send a human being to bring knowledge, Catholicism, and today what overlaps into all of Christianity. In that 10-year period. ... (there are) records of 500 appearances. She died in 1665, and her story was kind of lost.”

Pfeifer spearhead the first small Lady in Blue event in San Angelo around 20 years ago. “We usually gathered ... where the two rivers come together,” he said. “We eventually started inviting more native people to take part.”

Prior to August, the last local Lady in Blue celebration was held in 2018, when the statues were installed. This year’s weekend events included the showing of the Lady in Blue documentary, *The Needle & the Thread*, by Victor Mancilla, a screenwriter, producer and filmmaker; a procession to the Historic Beginnings of San Angelo site led by Jumano descendant Bill Acosta of New Mexico; a caravan to the historic pictographs at the Campbell Ranch in Paint Rock; a reception and veneration of relics at St. Joseph Church; and a Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Sis at Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart.

This year also marked the first local Lady in Blue celebration since the 2019 Texas House of Representatives adoption of House Resolution 1565, which officially recognized the Jumanos’ historical and cultural contributions to Texas. The resolution also mentions Sor María de Ágreda and her work in converting the Jumanos to Christianity, as well as efforts to have her canonized.

Conspicuously absent from this year’s celebration were a few individuals who worked tirelessly to bring awareness to Sor María, including former Lady in Blue Chair Tilly Chandler, Dan McCrea and Daniel Seidel.

“I was happy to see it all come together, and that both cultures could come together to celebrate, but I wish all three of them could have been there,” said Cenny Flores, Chandler’s daughter and a member of the Lady in Blue Committee. “I think they would have been very happy.”

## BLESSINGS

Continued from Page 1

at the time it seems seamless, but you have to respect each one for what it is, and that’s why I appreciate Bishop Sis and the bishops in New Mexico. In the old days, we could not take our drums into the church because the priests would not accept it, and they wanted us dressed differently.”

Acosta led this year’s Lady in Blue procession to the Historic Beginnings of San Angelo site Aug. 12, where he prayed in a way that honored the trinity, the earth, and the four compass points before blessing each person in attendance with corn meal. (Typically, sage is burned, but because of the drought and burn ban, corn meal was used instead.)

“He led it in a way in which, in my

# Former Planned Parenthood building blessed for new pro-life purpose

By Brian Bodiford  
West Texas Angelus

When the Planned Parenthood clinic in San Angelo closed in 2013, many saw the fruit of prayer at work. The facility, which offered chemical abortion services, had been the target of prayer warriors’ efforts during its time, most visibly during the many public rosaries prayed outside the facility. That’s why, when the building recently changed ownership, the new tenants requested a Catholic blessing.

The building at 2010 Pecos Street in San Angelo was recently acquired by the Pregnancy Help Center of the Concho Valley. For the last decade, the building has served as office space, but the current owners will inaugurate a new pro-life mission in the facility.

At an Aug. 12 ceremony, Pregnancy Help Center director Sandra Franke shared how the former owner offered to donate the building after a strategic planning meeting. A generous offer that had to be weighed carefully by the center’s governing board, Franke said, “They voted ‘Duh!’” at a “ten-minute board meeting where they voted yes.” The board will make the final decision about how to use the building.

Before offering a Catholic blessing on the facility, Bishop Michael Sis reflected on the building’s change in mission. “This was a building dedicated to taking human life,” he said, “and now it’s going to be a building dedicated to



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

**Bishop Emeritus Michael Pfeifer spoke at a ceremony blessing the former Planned Parenthood building in San Angelo Aug. 12. The building was recently acquired by the Pregnancy Help Center of the Concho Valley.**

saving human life.”

The responsorial Psalm used during the blessing had those gathered say in refrain, “Lord, give success to the work of our hands.” Bishop Sis expressed his hope that those who work in the facility in the future would remember the refrain as he prayed to “place into the hands of God this building for the use of the Pregnancy Help Center of the Concho Valley.”

“We ask you to send your blessing on all those who will work in this facility,” Bishop Sis said. Before offering a

blessing over those gathered for the ceremony, he asked them to pray a Hail Mary, “remembering the thousands of rosaries” prayed outside in the past.

One person present for many of those rosaries and back for the blessing was Bishop Emeritus Michael Pfeifer, who served as Bishop of San Angelo during the time Planned Parenthood operated in the city. Bishop Pfeifer expressed “joy at being inside this building” after years of being restricted to

**See BLESSING, Page 14**

## A letter from Abbess Sister Vianney María Escorihuela Estrada, Ágreda, Spain, on the occasion of the 2023 Lady in Blue celebration:

Ave María Purísima!  
Peace be with you.

Greetings to Bishop Sis, Bishop Pfeifer, the Historic Beginnings Committee, the faithful of the Diocese of San Angelo, and to all those present here today and in these three days of grace, fraternity, and communion.

What a joy to greet you, and even more, through one of our own sisters. Sister Patricia was visiting her mother in Mexico, so she is able to be there with you today. Four hundred years after our mother and sister appeared and evangelized in the southern part of the United States. Without a doubt it is a great grace from the Lord.

We are very happy and moved by the great enthusiasm and interest that you have in spreading the word about Sor María de Jesús de Ágreda. You are a living witness of the message of peace and love that she wanted to deliver. You are a witness to the faith in Jesus and Mary Immaculate that she tried to live, and to her principal desire, which was that all people would know God, and knowing him, would love him. This is the greatest desire and inheritance that we can bequeath to our neighbor.

And the manner in which you live the faith is the greatest help for the process of beatification of Sor María, for the life and legacy of the saints inspire us to be true Christians.

In these moments we need to spread the Christian message of Madre Ágreda. We need to show to the children, youth, and young adults today, that God has a message for us in María de Jesús of Ágreda; that they are not just things of the past, from 400 years ago. Today she brings us again a message of that living love that she professed to God and her brothers and sisters. Her love for others, her love for sacred Scripture, her love for the church, even knowing that it is made up of saints and sinners, and her love for God alone, through Mary Immaculate. Her life, her legacy, and her writings speak to us today. They teach us to love God, to love one another, and to forgive.

The gift of bilocation was not given to her in order for us today to see how extraordinary María was. It was given to her in order to carry out her mission of evangelization. To be precise, her bilocation is not an obstacle for her beatification, because it was demonstrated before

a court of the Spanish Inquisition. That says a lot. Let’s make our own that call to evangelize, to defend our faith, and to desire above all that the men and women of today may have the joy of knowing and loving Jesus Christ and his Blessed Mother.

We want to be always close to you, and we always will be. God willing, we will embark upon a community project where you will be very much present. Later we will be giving you news about this beautiful project.

We hope that you will enjoy the visit of our sister Patricia in these days of great celebration. I cannot forget Tilly Chandler. How she would have enjoyed the presence of one of our sisters here! What a great woman! Together with Sor María de Jesús de Ágreda in heaven, she will be giving you a push.

We also ask you to pray for us, and we will be praying for each and every one of you and your families. We love you in Christ and in Mary Immaculate.

In name of the Franciscan Conceptionista Community of Ágreda,  
Sister Vianney Maria Escorihuela Estrada, Abbess

opinion, was respectful of the Jumano culture and the Catholic faith,” said Bishop Michael Sis of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo. “When he was blessing the four directions, he did it in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He put the cornmeal on us in the sign of the cross.”

Aside from the processional crucifix, Sis said that all the crosses carried at the procession were Jumano-made, incorporating natural elements. Acosta gave one of the crosses to Sis prior to the Lady in Blue Mass, held Aug. 13 at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

“The Jumanos sat in the front row at the Mass, and I chose to use that cross in a couple ways in the Mass because I wanted (Acosta) to see that I appreciate his use of the cross in the (blessing) ceremony” at the Historic Beginnings site, Sis said.

The demonstration of both Acosta’s

and the other Jumano descendants’ Catholic faith and respect to their Native American roots is proof that “one doesn’t have to erase one’s culture to be a Catholic Christian,” Sis said.

It was, after all, what Sor Maria wanted. Acosta theorized that Sor Maria’s appearances to the Jumanos was her gentle way of introducing them to the Christian faith before the Spaniards arrived and forcefully converted them.

The Spaniards “tried to invade and tried to change people,” Acosta said. “But Sor Maria was the one who prepared them before the Spaniards got there. The Jumanos came to get blessed and baptized, and the Spaniards said, ‘Who’s been here before us?’”

There are conflicting ideas about where exactly Sor Maria appeared to the Jumanos and where she baptized them, Acosta said, but what is most important is

that she brought people to God in the 17th century, and she continues to lead them to him today, albeit in a less direct, obvious way. “Some are coming back to the Catholic faith because of her,” Acosta said of the Jumanos. “The Jumano people are slowly finding themselves again. It’s a re-awakening.”

The Catholic Church is still reviewing Sor Maria’s miracles and the case for her canonization. For now, she is considered venerable. Acosta said it could be another year, or even 100 more before she is canonized, but “everything has its time and place.”

For now, Acosta and the Jumanos he leads in their faith journey take comfort in knowing that Sor Maria is for everyone, “just like God the Father and Jesus Christ,” he said. “She’s still evangelizing, and to me that’s even more of a reason for her sainthood.”



# Youth and adult leaders recognized at annual awards banquet

By Alison Pope

In my work for the diocese, I often get to hear about the many wonderful people we have making a difference in our communities — both youth and adults. It is inspiring to hear about the many ways our people serve both their parish, civic, and school communities as an outreach of their faith. Once a year, we gather to honor some of these individuals at our annual Awards Banquet, hosted by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

This year’s banquet was held on June 11 at the ASU Newman Center. We started the event with Mass and then shared a meal together. Father Freddy Perez, Director of the Newman Center, served as our guest speaker. Father Freddy shared his own experiences of how people encountered and journeyed with him and his family as a young person. He shared how “the Catholic Church had stopped encountering me,” but particular individuals bridged that gap at important times in his life. Father Freddy also reflected on the Gospel story of the hemorrhaging woman and how it reminds us that encounters with Christ are always life-giving, and challenged us to continue to give life to others when we encounter them.

After listening to Father Freddy’s insight, we proceeded with the awards portion of the program. The following parish leaders were presented certificates of appreciation for their work as catechists, Coordinators of Youth Ministry, Coordinators of Religious Education, and Directors of Religious Education for their leadership, commitment, and service to catechetical and youth ministry in their parishes:

- Sylvia Chappa (Holy Family, Mereta)
- Veronica Garcia (St. Joseph/St. Anthony, Odessa)
- Sally Hagen (Our Lady of Peace, Goodfellow AFB)
- Janie Hernandez (St. Joseph, San Angelo)
- Angela Lopez (St. Joseph, San Angelo)
- Gloria Medina (St. Joseph/St. Anthony, Odessa)
- Melissa Rocha (Our Lady of Peace, Goodfellow AFB)
- Lucy Thomas (St. Ambrose, Wall)

Certificates of recognition were awarded to young people who have been identified by their parish leaders as an admirable example of a young person who is demonstrating leadership and setting an example in how they live out their faith. The following youth were recognized:

- Victor Carrasco (San Miguel, Midland)
- Zach Jones (St. Ambrose, Wall)
- Alejandro Lopez (St. Mary, Odessa)
- Ryan Munoz (St. Joseph, San Angelo)
- John Paul Nombrano (Sacred Heart Cathedral, San Angelo)
- Maytee Orozco (St. Paschal, Sterling City)
- Steven Robles (St. Ann, Sonora)
- Malia Rocha (Our Lady of Peace, Goodfellow AFB)
- Brissa Salas (St. Joseph, San Angelo)
- Angela Samaniego (St. Paschal, Sterling City)

In addition to the certificates, four awards were presented — two youth awards and two adult awards. The Timothy Award is presented to one youth, grades 7–10, who exhibits leadership in their parish, school, and larger community setting, demonstrates Gospel values through service to others, and witnesses to their faith by living as a disciple of Christ, setting an example in Catholic morals and integrity. The 2023 Timothy Award was presented to Samuel Hagen from Our Lady of Peace, Goodfellow Air Force Base.

The Christus Vivit award is a new addition to our awards banquet. It is presented to one youth in grades 11–12, who exhibits leadership in parish, school, and larger community settings, demonstrates Gospel values through service to others, and lives and models what it means to be a missionary disciple in the world today. The 2023 Christus Vivit award was presented to Joseph Abrego from St. Ann, Sonora.

The Companion on the Journey Award for Youth Ministry is presented to an adult who has shown excellence in youth ministry leadership as reflected in *Renewing the Vision*, shows a commitment to ongoing education and formation, has longevity in ministry, and shows leadership and participation at a local, diocesan, and/or national level. The 2023 Companion on the Journey: Youth Ministry Award was presented to Ernie Acevedo from St. Mary, San Angelo.

The Companion on the Journey Award for Catechetical Ministry is presented to an adult who has shown excellence in catechetical ministry as reflected in the *Directory for Catechesis*, shows a commitment to ongoing education and formation, has longevity in ministry, and shows outstanding leadership at the local, diocesan, and/or national level. The 2023 Companion on the Jour-



COURTESY

Timothy Award winner Samuel Hagan and Companion on the Journey: Catechetical Ministry Award winner Mary Rivas were among those honored at the annual Office of Evangelization and Catechesis Awards Banquet.

ney: Catechetical Ministry Award was presented to Mary Rivas from St. Joseph/St. Anthony, Odessa.

We’d like to extend a special thank you to the Newman Center and its staff for all their hospitality and help with this year’s event. Thank you to Carmen Morales for decorating; to Deacon Pete and Becky Madrid for their help with serving and cleaning up; and to Father Freddy Perez for hosting and serving as our speaker.

---  
Alison Pope is the director of the Diocese of San Angelo’s Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.


## CALVARY CEMETERY FALL CLEANUP

On October 21, 2023, there will be a cleanup of Calvary Cemetery in San Angelo. Cemetery personnel will remove ALL flowers as well as ALL unauthorized items, including items in vases, on or around graves and items placed in trees. Examples include, but are not limited to: borders, bricks, gravel/rocks, garden ornaments, solar lights, rosaries, wind chimes, statues, unauthorized benches, etc.

The gates to the cemetery will be locked on this day from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please remove anything you do not want discarded by 6 p.m., October 20, 2023.

All items that do not conform to cemetery rules will be permanently removed and disposed of without notification. We ask that you please take time to read the rules of the cemetery posted at the main entrance or on our website or Facebook page.

CALVARY CEMETERY  
325-651-7500  
sanangelodiocese.org/calvary-cemetery



## ST. BONIFACE, ST. JOSEPH, & ST. THOMAS CATHOLIC CHURCH PRESENTS STEVE AND JANET RAY

### DECEMBER 12-13, 2023 6:30 PM ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH ROWENA, TEXAS Tuesday 12th FROM BAPTIST TO CATHOLIC

### Wednesday 13th DEFENDING THE EUCHARIST: YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

There is no charge for these two awesome inspiring evenings,  
however a free will offering will be collected



# Prayer and the Holy Spirit at the Charismatic Conference

By Dee Halbert



COURTESY

Deacon Joel Gutierrez was installed as the liaison for Spanish-speaking charismatic prayer groups in the diocese at the Catholic Charismatic Conference. Conference presenter Father John of the Holy Spirit Kuehner and English-speaking prayer group liason Sandy Seidel (second from left) joined other team members in praying over Deacon Gutierrez.

These are the days of Elijah! The annual Diocesan Charismatic Conference on July 14 and 15 was well attended with participants coming from throughout our San Angelo Diocese and throughout Texas. Participants drove in with their families from Houston, Austin, Lubbock, and beyond.

The conference was held at the lovely, spirit-filled St. Margaret Catholic Church in San Angelo and their new hall. Thank you Father Josh and community for your help and hospitality!

Father John of the Holy Spirit Kuehner celebrated the charismatic Mass on Friday evening. He exhorted us to fully utilize the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us to praise and worship the Lord and welcome the Holy Spirit. Participants prayed and sang in each one's beautiful gift of tongues and words of exaltation that came together in heavenly harmony. The Holy Spirit was poured out into our hearts with love and power. We prayed for consolation for Bishop Sis and his family, as he was unable to join us this year due to his beloved father's passing.

Deacon Joel Gutierrez from St. Lawrence Parish was installed as the new liaison for our Spanish-speaking charismatic prayer groups in the diocese. He will serve alongside Sandy Seidel, who is our liaison for the English-speaking prayer groups.

Willie and Linda Sosa were honored for over 40 years of ministry in the charismatic renewal. They served 20 years on the Servants of the Servants Committee for the diocese. Willie and Linda continue their mission of evangelization and prayer ministry in the San Angelo Diocese and beyond. They have done missionary work in Nepal, Venezuela, Mexico, England, and Ukraine.

Father John's talks on Saturday were focused on the importance of carrying the presence of



COURTESY

Linda and Willie Sosa were honored for their years of service at the Catholic Charismatic Conference July 14 and 15.

God wherever God has placed us. Carrying God's presence can only be done through surrender of self and humility.

We need to not use, "I did this and I did that," but to always give God the glory.

Prayer teams from our diocesan prayer groups laid hands on and prayed for those asking for healing prayer. The Lord was faithful and healed and delivered many. Peace and consolation were experienced by everyone. All experienced a fresh outpouring of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It was a joy-filled gathering and so good to come together again in the spirit of unity as brothers and sisters in Christ. The Holy Spirit was faithful and filled us anew with the love of Christ and confirmed each of us in our particular call. All glory to God!

For more information regarding Catholic charismatic events or prayer groups in your area go to [sanangelodiocese.org](http://sanangelodiocese.org) under Ministries tab or go directly to [catholiccharismatic.com](http://catholiccharismatic.com).



COURTESY

A Life in the Spirit Seminar was held at St. Joseph Catholic Church in San Angelo on July 28 and 29. The Heart of Mercy prayer group was invited by the Magnificat chapter in San Angelo to present teachings on the Life in the Spirit and encountering the Holy Spirit through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many were blessed through that encounter with the Holy Spirit. The Heart of Mercy prayer group meets the second and fourth Mondays of the month at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo at 7 p.m. Please join us! For more information call Amy Perez at 325-656-3308.



COURTESY

Father Bala Anthony Govindu was installed by Bishop Michael Sis as pastor of St. Stephen Parish in Midland at a Mass Aug. 15, 2023.



COURTESY

The students from Holy Spirit Parish in Sweetwater's summer 2023 Vacation Bible School.

## Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship now taking applications

SAN ANTONIO — The Rev. Msgr. Larry J. Droll Scholarship, worth \$2,000, will be awarded to two Catholic lay men or women pursuing graduate degrees in theology or religious studies and in need of tuition assistance. This scholarship is geared toward those who have already obtained their bachelor's degree and are either enrolled or want to enroll in a Catholic graduate school.

Students must be enrolled, in-person or remotely, in an accredited graduate program at a Catholic university in the United States. Scholarships are paid only to the university

for tuition and other needs. The applicant must also be a practicing Roman Catholic who resides in a state in which Catholic Life Insurance is licensed to operate. These states include Texas, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.

The deadline to apply is Oct. 16, 2023.

Applications are available at [www.clu.com](http://www.clu.com). Founded in 1901, Catholic Life Insurance offers life insurance, IRAs, and annuities to individuals and businesses.



ALAN TORRE | APTORRE PHOTOGRAPHY



COURTESY

The people of St. Stephen Parish in Midland recently held a surprise 94th birthday party for Msgr. James Bridges.

Father Juan Fernando Bonilla-Sanchez, MSP, incenses the baptismal font at St. Joseph Parish in San Angelo at a Mass Aug. 20, 2023, in which Bishop Michael Sis installed Father Bonilla-Sanchez as pastor of the parish.



# Liturgy of the Hours 101

**By Daria Sockey**  
OSV News

During his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI said that there was one prayer that he wished all Catholics would learn to use. Can you guess what it is?

Guess again — not the Rosary. Nope. Not the Divine Mercy Chaplet either.

Here are some hints. This prayer is nearly as old as the church itself. Most laity have no idea what it is, but your pastor says it every day.

Give up?

It’s the Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office.

### Ancient roots

The Liturgy of the Hours is a repeating four-week cycle of psalms, biblical canticles, prayers and Scripture readings that has been part of the church’s public prayer

— in one form or another — almost from the beginning. The prayers vary in accordance with the liturgical season and also — like the Mass — commemorate the feasts of the church calendar.

The complete Liturgy of the Hours is contained in four books, and is also commonly known as the breviary. It is prayed at morning, midday, evening, night, plus a “floating hour” that can be done at any time.

Normally, laypeople who pray the hours only use one or two of these. Praying the two principal hours of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, either individually or in common, is especially encouraged by the church. The single volume *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours* contains both Morning and Evening Prayer, as well as Night Prayer, and is well-suited for the busy layperson.

The Liturgy of the Hours is also available on a number of websites and mobile applications.

The term “hours,” by the way, does not refer to the length of the prayers, which take perhaps 10 minutes to say. These short sets of psalms, readings, and petitions are spaced throughout the day in order to sanctify the various parts of our day, hence the name “hours.”

The Acts of the Apostles refers several times to St. Peter or other apostles going to the temple to pray at morning, afternoon or evening. Early Christians developed this Jewish custom, adding New Testament elements to the Old when they gathered for daily prayers. Desert hermits and monastics expanded the daily hours of prayer. St. Benedict, with his vision of liturgical prayer as the “work of God,” laid the foundation for the hours as they exist today, although there have been many revisions since his time.

### Not just for monks

For many years before the Second Vatican Council, the Liturgy of the Hours was seen as the spiritual territory of clergy and religious. The breviary was completely in Latin. Each of the hours took longer to say, since the entire 150 psalms were recited or chanted over the course of each week. Cloistered orders, such as the Carthusians, Carmelites and Benedictines, saw (and still see) the Liturgy of the Hours as their primary spiritual work, assembling in chapel every few hours around the clock to pray, even rising in the middle of the night to do so. Active religious and parish priests also had to devote considerable parts of their day to the hours, although they were dispensed from chanting it, and from having to say the prayers at rigidly fixed times of day.

Vatican II called for the revision of the Liturgy of the Hours in the 1960s. It was simplified in several ways in order to make it easier both for busy priests and for the laity. The hours were shortened, so that the cycle of psalms (known as the Psalter) is now recited over the course of a month rather than a week. The Scripture readings became more varied, and the liturgical hours were arranged to more fully coordinate with the seasons of the liturgical year. Vernacular editions were developed.

Pope St. Paul VI expressed the wish that the revised Liturgy of the Hours would become “the prayer of the whole people of God,” recommending that it be prayed in parishes and by individuals at home.

Pope St. John Paul II also promoted the Liturgy of the Hours. Not only do the psalms express “every sentiment of the human heart,” he said, but also, quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium* from Vatican II, he reminded Catholics at an April 2001 general audience that when we pray the hours, “Jesus attaches to himself the entire community of mankind and has them join him in singing his divine song of praise.” Pope St. John Paul II devoted Wednesday general audiences for several years to catechesis on each psalm and canticle of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. Pope Benedict XVI continued this series after Pope John Paul’s death, and called for greater lay participation on several occasions.

### Digital revolution

Finally, more than 40 years after its revision, the Liturgy of the Hours is starting to gain ground among the laity. Its growing popularity has happily intersected with the digital revolution. Although today’s version of the Liturgy of the Hours is simpler than its older form, it still takes patience to learn to navigate a printed breviary, with its many sections and ribbon markers. The advent of online breviaries and mobile breviary applications now makes the Liturgy of the Hours accessible to everyone. Some of these even include audio versions of the hours so that beginners can hear how the prayers are meant to be done, and have a “virtual community” to pray with.

Try it. You might like it.

---

*Daria Sockey is the author of The Everyday Catholic's Guide to the Liturgy of the Hours. She is also director of faith formation at St. Joseph Church in Oil City, Pennsylvania.*

## Questions: A priest with grandchildren and a question on tattoos

**Q: My new parish priest's wife died before he became a priest. He sometimes even talks about his grandchildren during the homily. Why is this allowed? He obviously wasn’t always celibate, and I thought priests had to be celibate? (Portland, ME)**

A: Latin (a.k.a. “Roman”) Catholic priests are indeed expected to be celibate. As canon 277, 1 of the *Code of Canon Law* tells us, they are “obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven and are therefore bound to celibacy. Celibacy is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can more easily remain close to Christ with an undivided heart and can dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and their neighbor.” (A quick note on terminology: in canon law, “continence” means refraining from all sexual relations, while “celibacy” refers to being unmarried. “Chastity,” a term not mentioned in this canon, means expressing one’s sexuality in ways appropriate to one’s state in life.)

However, priestly celibacy is not a retroactive requirement. Provided that he is otherwise suitable, a man can be ordained to the priesthood if he is presently unmarried and willing to commit to a life of chaste celibacy going forward — even if he had been previously married or is a father to children. Of course, if a previously married man aspires to the priesthood, generally during his formation period there will be additional, careful discernment concerning any possible family obligations he may have. E.g., men with minor children are generally not admitted to seminary formation, since in such a case he would already have serious preexisting obligations as a natural father.

Incidentally, married Catholic clergy are not quite as extraordinary as you might expect. Permanent deacons, while not priests, have still received the sacrament of holy orders and are therefore still considered clergy; and most of the permanent deacons we have in the Unites States are married men. And the various Eastern Catholic Churches have a tradition of married priests. There is also a pastoral provision that allows former Anglican priests who have converted to Catholicism to discern a vocation to the Catholic priesthood, allowing for the possibility of their ordination even if they are married.

But one major caveat in this discussion is that while it can be possible to ordain already-married or once-married



Jenna Marie Cooper  
OSV News

### Question Corner

men, a man cannot validly marry after he had been ordained. This means that married Eastern Catholic priests, permanent deacons, etc. cannot re-marry if their wife dies. And in the case of your pastor, a widowed man who later becomes a priest obviously would not be allowed to marry again.

**Q: Is a tattoo a good way to develop a devotion to Our Lady? (Madison, WI)**

A: Tattoos are certainly not one of the church’s first line, go-to recommendations for deepening any sort of devotion. And as far as I have been able to tell, the church does not have any specific teaching regarding tattoos in general.

That being said, whether or not a tattoo could be useful for a specific person to develop a devotion to Our Lady depends on that particular individual, their particular life circumstances and cultural context, their personal spirituality and unique spiritual needs. While there needs to be sufficient reflection for any permanent decision, in theory I would imagine that a tasteful and artistically beautiful tattoo in a Marian theme could help some people further love and honor Our Lady.

Interestingly, although the church doesn’t have any official doctrine on tattoos, there are a few instances where tattoos are part of a broader cultural Catholic tradition. One good example is a custom, dating back to the Middle Ages, where Catholic pilgrims to the Holy Lady get a religious tattoo to commemorate their pilgrimage.

---

*Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.*

### GRN RADIO PROGRAM SCHEDULE

**GUADALUPE RADIO NETWORK**

Radio for your soul can be heard on:

- Abilene - 91.7 FM, KQOS
- Midland-Odessa - 1180 AM, KLPF
- Midland-Odessa – 90.9 FM (Español)
- San Angelo - 91.5 FM, KPDE

**POPULAR ENGLISH PROGRAMS**

6:00-7:30 AM – GRN Catholic Drive Time

7:30 AM – Holy Mass - The Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity

8:00 AM – Catholic Connections - Teresa Tomeo

9:00 AM – More 2 Life - Dr. Greg & Lisa Popcak

10:00 AM – Women of Grace - Johnnette Williams

11:00 AM – Take 2 - Jerry Usher & Debbie Georgianni

12:00 PM – The Doctor is In - Dr. Ray Guarendi

1:00 PM – Called to Communion - Dr. David Anders

2:00 PM – EWTN Open Line

3:00 PM – A Life Lived Joyfully with The Divine Mercy Chaplet  
Live call-in show for questions/comments

4:00 PM – Monday & Friday – The Catholic Current - Fr. Robert McTeigue, S.J.

Tuesday - Thursday – Kresta in the Afternoon

5:00 – 7:00 PM – Catholic Answers Live

8:00 PM – EWTN Nightly News

To promote your business & events, please email Sammy Rodriguez Jr. at: sammy@grnonline or Call: 432-682-5476

For a complete schedule or to listen live, go to our website at: GRNOnline.com. Download our free Apps for English or Spanish programming.

Guadalupe Radio Network  
Operated by La Pasiones Foundation

The Guadalupe Radio Network is a proud Affiliate of the EWTN Global Catholic Network



# Immediate gratification

“... except from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From that tree you shall not eat...”

These words are extremely significant because they can be seen in actuality as the very “first commandment” that God gives. Just as a parent tells their child, “If you don’t remember anything else I say, DO NOT PLAY IN THE STREET,” or similar admonitions regarding sex, drugs, alcohol, and dishonesty, among others, God was emphatic about what would happen if he was not listened to! Unfortunately, our original parents had a very short memory and the rest ... is, truly, history ... a history which continues to repeat itself.

God does not ask for much ... only that we draw close to him for he alone knows the ecstatic union for which we were created. But after Lucifer initiated the concept of “self-service,” Adam and Eve believed that lie, and the irresistible temptation that immediate gratification presents. When faced with the consequences of their “insubordination,” Adam shirks responsibly for his decision and blames Eve, a quick learner, who immediately passes that blame on to the serpent. For each, however, there is a “grave” consequence.

It is, of course, no different for us as we more and more put self-interests ahead of everything else and rush headlong toward anything that can expedite “the pursuit of happiness” that our society guarantees. “Happiness,” however is no longer interpreted as “fulfillment,” “contentment,” or the “satisfaction” that comes from serving God and others, but rather what fulfills our own sensual needs as soon as possible. We can see it everywhere.

Technology has provided unimaginable benefits for us and will continue to help us in countless beneficial ways. iPhones have been declared the “way of the future” for many medical needs. But it also is a willing participant in the desire for immediacy. We push a button on a computer and are presented with everything ever written about a subject in a few nanoseconds and grow frustrated when our computers are “slow” and take a couple of seconds to accomplish that same extraordinary feat. We sit with a device in our hand, point it



James R. Sulliman, PhD

and go through hundreds of viewing or listening options on our televisions ... hundreds of thousands more are available with apps. Is it surprising that more people are shooting others as an extension of “remote control?”

The bonding that came with family dinners has been replaced by an “every man for himself” attack on the world of “fast” and unhealthy foods. According to 2017–2018 data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), nearly 1 in 3 adults (30.7%) are overweight, and more than 2 in 5 adults (42.4%) are obese! The number of health issues and deaths which are related to dietary choices are astronomical ... and growing. And it is not just questionable food that we ingest but the drugs and alcohol that we invite into our systems to immediately help us “cope,” “relax,” “chill,” “take away stress,” or ease the pain of broken relationships. A bottle of Jack Daniels or a little fentanyl have begun many pursuits of happiness that have led to destruction.

The benefit of “delayed” gratification was first studied in the 1960s with a “marshmallow test.” Walter Mischel conducted research using young children in a nursery. He gave them a choice: they could have one marshmallow immediately or he would come back in 15 minutes and they could have two. He followed up on the children for decades and found the children who delayed gratification performed better academically, earned more money, and were healthier and happier. Also, the children avoided many negative outcomes

including jail time, obesity, and drug use. We “children of God” have similar choices.

To paraphrase Shakespeare, the fault is not in the stars but in ourselves. We have become a nation of Persons of Immediate Gratification, or simply PIG for short, and the consequences of our choices are killing individuals and families both literally and figuratively as we expect our immediate needs to be fulfilled by others, organizations, or the government, and to be fulfilled NOW. We follow in the steps of our predecessors by refusing to be subordinate to God and insisting that “OUR will be done!” Is it any wonder why a nation that has many of its people touting the “wisdom” of becoming “self-constructive” is now seeing the logical extension of “self-destruction,” which is inevitable for those who only want worldly pleasures and want them “here and now?”

Paul warned Timothy (3:1-5), “But understand this: there will be terrifying times in the last days. People will be self-centered and lovers of money, proud, haughty, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious, callous, implacable, slanderous, licentious, brutal, hating what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, as they make a pretense of religion but deny its power.” And he advised Titus (2:12-13) “to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our savior Jesus Christ.”

We must “turn to prayer for those who cannot see past this life” and help others to choose the path that leads to eternal love. Satan never stops tempting us with immediate gratifications that are hard to resist and go against the will of God. We know what to expect if we do:

“... when you eat from it you shall die.” (Gn 2:17)

---

Dr. James Sulliman has 50 years’ experience in individual, marriage, and family therapy. He is also the Abilene-area pro-life coordinator for the Diocese of San Angelo.

## St. Sergius set the stage for Russian monasticism

Barfolomey (Bartholomew) Kirillovich was born on May 3, 1314, into a wealthy aristocratic Russian family. He was about 15 when the rulers of Moscow attacked their town of Rostov and he was forced to flee with his family. They lost everything and were forced to work as peasant farmers at Radonezh.

Bartholomew was not as bright as his brothers, but he became literate enough to study the Bible and developed a longing for the solitary life.

After his parents died, he and his brother Stephen became monks and lived as hermits. They chose a site for a hermitage in a wild forest location and built a wooden hut and a chapel there. Paul Burns reported in *Butler’s Lives of the Saints* that a priest from Kiev dedicated the settlement to the Holy Trinity — an unusual dedication in Russia at the time. David Farmer writes in the *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* that this monastery re-established community life which had ceased under the Tartars. After a couple of years Stephen tired of the solitary life and left to join a community in Moscow. Bartholomew stayed on and received his tonsure from an abbot in the area, taking the name of Sergius. His reputation spread and disciples came to join him, each building a hut for himself. He agreed to be their abbot and was ordained priest at Pereyaslav Zalesky.

Sergius’ insistence on the common life and prohibition of begging led to some discontent. David Farmer writes in the *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* that several monks wanted



Mary Lou Gibson

Speaking of Saints

Stephen to be their abbot instead. So Sergius left to found another monastery in the remote forest. He was later restored by the metropolitan Alexis.

Sergius continued to live a life of prayer and austerity and his reputation for wisdom grew. He acted as mediator and peacemaker in political matters and princes came to consult with him. One of these was the Great Prince Dmitry Donskoy of Moscow who was threatened by Tartar forces from the east. Burns wrote that Prince Donskoy asked Sergius for advice and Sergius reminded him of his duty to protect his people and sent him away with two monks (former soldiers) to advise him.

Donskoy led Russian forces against the Tatars and Mongols and won the great victory of Kulikovo in 1380 which permanently removed the Tartar threat. A Britannica account reports that as a consequence of this victory, Sergius

was hailed as the saint protector of Russia.

He became known for his ascetic life and his compassion for the needy. He taught the peasants better methods for cultivating the soil and traveled widely promoting peace among rival Russian princes.

Sergius became ill in 1392 and died on Sept. 25. He was buried in the principal church of the monastery of the Holy Trinity. This became a place of pilgrimage except during 1917-1945 when the Communist authorities closed the monastery and moved his relics to an “anti-religion museum.”

Sergius was canonized in 1448 and is regarded as the founding father of Russian monasticism. He founded about forty monasteries. Burns wrote that he is the prime example of “men of the wilderness” (*pustiniky* in Russian) who helped restore Russian society after the Tartar invasions in the 13th century.

Editor Bernard Bangle writes in *Butler’s Lives of the Saints* that Sergius is among the Russian Orthodox Church’s most popular saints and one of those few who also appears on the Catholic calendar.

A Britannica account reports that although he left no writings, his teachings and monastic institutions inspired an oral tradition that exerted a principal influence on Russian spirituality ([Britannica.com/biography/Saint-Sergius-of-Radonezh](http://Britannica.com/biography/Saint-Sergius-of-Radonezh)).

---

Mary Lou Gibson writes about the saints for the West Texas Angelus from her home in Austin.

## Catholic media use is on the upswing

The good news today is that Catholics are still reading, listening and watching Catholic materials. The better news is that the numbers who are reading, listening and watching have been going up.

The bad news, of course, is that it isn’t everybody.

Catholic statistics of all sorts have been trending downward for years, highlighting a frustrating decline in sacramental practice and attendance. Only 21 percent of Catholics are attending Mass weekly or more. In fact, 53 percent of self-identified Catholics go to Mass only a few times a year or not at all.

Yet a new survey by the premier Catholic research institution known familiarly as CARA (the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) shows that Catholics are accessing Catholic materials at a significantly higher rate than when the survey was last taken in 2011.

Here is some of what the CARA survey is telling us:

— Watching religious or spiritual video content nearly doubled from 24 percent in 2011 to 45 percent in 2023. (Thank



Greg Erlandson  
OSV News

Amid the Fray

you, *Chosen*.)

— Listening to religious or spiritual audio content more than doubled from 13 percent to 29 percent. (Thank you, Bishop Robert Barron and Father Mike Schmitz.)

— Reading a print or e-version of a religious or spiritual book also jumped, as did the purchasing of these materials. (Thank you, Catholic publishers, for hanging in there!)

When it comes to newspapers, the numbers are also heartening. The reading of print copies of magazines or newspapers has stayed flat at 18 percent, but

See ERLANDSON, Page 20

## Social ministry and the diaconate: Where the rubber meets the road

Every day, in Harris County, Texas, alone, several hundred youths ages 10 to 17 reside in juvenile detention centers. Lost in despair and hopelessness, these youth turn to volunteers of Special Youth Services, or SYS, who offer an encouraging word, inspiring Scripture and comforting prayer to see them through their difficulties. Coming from all walks of life — laypersons, religious, and clergy — they all work in the vineyard together, serving some of the most vulnerable youth.

And whether it’s offering weekly Bible studies or pastoral visits, it is the Holy Spirit continuously at work in the hearts of the youth, and just as equally in the hearts of the volunteers, no matter how experienced or seasoned they are, myself included.

During my diaconate formation years, I, along with several other candidates for the diaconate, entered the vineyard as an SYS volunteer. Assigned as our social ministry, it was our opportunity to practice what we learned through formation — where the “rubber meets the road,” as some would say. For me, that road would even-



Deacon Fernando Garcia  
OSV News

tually lead to working as a pastoral minister for SYS.

However, whether as a volunteer or pastoral minister, I saw what they meant in the diaconate program — that we are never done being formed.

I recall one day in particular that seemed like so many others spent in the facilities, filled with God’s teachings through individual prayer, pastoral listening and a lot of catechesis. As the conversation with one young man was winding down he asked about my plans for the evening. I said I was attending the vigil for

See GARCIA, Page 19



Catholic Voices

Thoughts on World Youth Day in Lisbon

I’ve just returned from World Youth Day in Lisbon, my fourth experience of this unique gathering. I had attended the celebrations in Madrid (2011), Krakow (2016), and Panama (2019), but in many ways, this one was, for me, the most memorable.

First, a few general remarks. I believe that World Youth Day is one of Pope John Paul II’s greatest gifts to the Catholic Church, its appeal continuing unabated some forty years after it was launched. Though naysayers have consistently predicted, or even called for, its demise, this international confab of young Catholics shows no signs of running out of steam. As is always the case, this World Youth Day in Lisbon featured armies of kids from practically every nation on earth, simultaneously celebrating their nationalities and their common Catholic affiliation, effortlessly resolving the potential tension between those identities. And as always before, this one centered around the presence of the successor St. Peter, the visible sign of the church’s unity. Though Pope Francis is, by any measure, an old man, he, by virtue of his office and his personal charisma, drew young people to him like a magnet. By some estimates, a million and a half people showed up for the closing Mass.

I had the privilege of speaking on five separate occasions in Lisbon. My first engagement was with a huge crowd of young people from France. Because I had studied in Paris for my doctorate and hence had some facility in the language, the French bishops had asked me to address this group. When I arrived at the venue — an expansive area near the Tagus River — the French kids were dancing to and singing with a very energetic band on-stage. Then, they were regaled by a video presentation from a very popular French footballer, who evidently lives his Catholic faith with enthusiasm. Judging from their boisterous reaction, I gathered that they were delighted that this sports hero was on their own spiritual team. Next, I came out, clutching my prepared text more than a little nervously since I hadn’t spoken French in public for nearly thirty years. But the kids seemed able to tolerate my American accent. I spoke to them of their own marvelous spiritual heritage, expressed so richly in the great cathedrals of Amiens, Reims, Notre Dame de Paris, and Chartres, buildings that had sung so powerfully to me when I was a student in their country. And I urged them not to cave into the fashionable secularism of our age, an



Bishop Robert Barron

Word on Fire Ministries

ideology that effectively kills the spirit. My next talk took place the following day in a charming auditorium at the University of Lisbon. At the invitation of the Vatican Dicastery on Education and Culture, I had been asked to address a group of teachers, professors, and administrators on the topic of Catholic education. Taking my cues from St. Bonaventure and St. John Henry Newman, I argued that Christ the Logos must stand at the heart of the circle of university disciplines and that he does so noncompetitively, not compromising the integrity of the other subjects, but rather making them more luminous and beautiful. I was particularly moved by the eagerness and enthusiasm of the young scholars and aspiring teachers who listened to me that afternoon. Then, that evening, I gave an extended homily at the Benediction service offered to over 12,000 young Americans who had assembled in a large park in the northern section of Lisbon. The weather was perfect, the mood was festive and yet prayerful, and when the Eucharist was brought forth, a very moving silence fell over the massive throng. I spoke to the young people about proclaiming the real Christ and not a watered-down simulacrum. When the real Jesus is declared, I said, hearts are set on fire. I concluded my remarks that night with the reminder that, though our culture is obsessed with safety, a religion that places before our eyes on a regular basis the image of a man nailed to a cross is not a religion that puts a high premium on safety! The church is not interested so much in keeping us safe as preparing us for spiritual adventure and the embrace of our mission. My fourth presentation was the next day at a gorgeous church in downtown Lisbon. Five hundred or so young people were packed into that space for one of the official dialogue-catecheses. This year, Pope Francis wanted the

bishops not simply to speak to the youth but to enter into conversation with them. My formal discourse was on the true nature of freedom. In the presence of an eerily lifelike statue of John Paul II perched against the side wall, I told the crowd that authentic freedom is not doing what one pleases but instead the disciplining of desire so as to make the achievement of the good first possible and then effortless. As obvious examples, I laid out the process whereby one becomes a free speaker of a foreign language or a free player of the piano or a free golfer. In all of those cases, freedom is tantamount to the interiorization of the relevant disciplines, laws, and practices — and most certainly not to mere liberty or license. I very much enjoyed the subsequent discussion I had with a panel of young people. Our topic was social media, and I was not altogether surprised to hear that their assessment was decidedly more negative than positive. The fifth and final talk was a session with a large group of well over a thousand. At the Pope’s request, this gathering was to be more contemplative than instructional. Thus, there was a Eucharistic procession and Benediction, and afterward, I spoke on the nature of prayer. I emphasized that prayer is best construed as a conversation between friends, involving both talking and listening, both words and silence. I made the practical recommendations that they should take up the Rosary and the Jesus Prayer and should make a daily Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament a priority. In the midst of my pilgrimage, I made a visit to the Shrine at Fatima, located about an hour and a half outside of Lisbon. I found it to be one of those curiously radioactive places — like Lourdes, like Chartres, like Jerusalem — a spot where heaven and earth seemed to meet. Particularly moving to me were the tombs of the two shepherd children — Jacinta and Francisco — that are located in the basilica, not far from the little grove of trees where the Mother of God spoke to them in 1917. I will admit that the week was a tad grueling: lots of speeches, lots of walking, enormous crowds of people everywhere. But it was exhilarating as well, and full of grace.

- - -

*Bishop Robert Barron is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in Minnesota.*

Unfinished relationships

A colleague of mine, a clinical therapist, shares this story: A woman came to him in considerable distress. Her husband had recently died of a heart attack. His death had been sudden and at a most inept time. They’d been happily married for thirty years and, during all those years, had never had a major crisis in their relationship. But, on the day her husband died, they had gotten into an argument about something very insignificant and it had escalated to where they began to hurl some mean and cutting words at each other. At a point, agitated and angry, her husband walked out of the room, told her he was going shopping, then died of a heart attack before he got to the car. Understandably, the woman was devastated, both by the sudden death of her spouse and by that last exchange. “All these years,” she lamented, “we had this loving relationship and then we have this useless argument over nothing and it ends up being our last conversation!” The therapist led off with something meant in humor. He said, “How horrible of him to do that to you! To die just then!” Obviously, the man hadn’t intended his death, but its timing was in fact awfully unfair to his wife, as it left her holding a guilt that was seemingly permanent with no apparent avenue for resolution. However, then the therapist went into a different mode. He asked her, “If you had your husband back for five minutes what would you say to him?” Without hesitation, she answered: “I’d tell him how much I loved him, how good he was to me for all these years, and how our little moment of anger at the end was a meaningless episode that means nothing in terms our love.” The therapist then said, “You’re a woman of faith, you believe in the communion of saints; well, your husband is alive still and present to you now, so why don’t



Father Ron Rolheiser

you just say all those things to him right now? It’s not too late to express that all to him!” He’s right. It’s never too late! It’s never too late to tell our deceased loved ones how we really feel about them. It’s never too late to apologize for the ways we might have hurt them. It’s never too late to ask their forgiveness for our negligence in the relationship, and it’s never too late to speak the words of appreciation, affirmation, and gratitude that we should have spoken to them while they were alive. As Christians, we have the great consolation of knowing that death isn’t final, that it’s never too late. And we desperately need that particular consolation, that second chance. No matter who we are, we’re always inadequate in our relationships. We can’t always be present to our loved ones as we should, we sometimes say things in anger and bitterness that leave deep scars, we betray trust in all kinds of ways, and we mostly lack the maturity and self-confidence to express the affirmation we should be conveying to our loved ones. None of us ever fully measures up. When Karl Rahner says that none of us ever have the “full symphony” in this life, he isn’t just referring to the fact that none of us ever fully realizes her dream, he’s also referring to the fact that in all our

most important relationships none of us ever fully measures up. We cannot not be disappointing sometimes. At the end of the day, all of us lose loved ones in ways similar to how that woman lost her husband, with unfinished business, with bad timing. There are always things that should have been said and weren’t, and there are always things that shouldn’t have been said and were. But that’s where our Christian faith comes in. We aren’t the only ones who come up short. At the moment of Jesus’ death, virtually all of his disciples had deserted. The timing here was also very bad. Good Friday was bad long before it was good. But, and this is the point, as Christians, we don’t believe there will always be perfect endings in this life, nor that we will always be adequate in life. Rather we believe that the fullness of life and happiness will come to us through the redemption of what has gone wrong, not least with what has gone wrong because of our own inadequacies and weakness. G.K. Chesterton said that Christianity is special because in its belief in the communion of saints, “even the dead get a vote.” They get more than a vote. They still get to hear what we’re saying to them. So, if you’ve lost a loved one in a situation where there was still something unresolved, where there was still a tension that needed easing, where you should have been more attentive, or where you feel badly because you never adequately expressed the affirmation and affection that you might have, know it’s not too late. It can all still be done!

- - -

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website: [www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com). Now on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser](https://www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser).*

BLESSING

Continued from Page 8

outdoor prayer at the “death center.” “In God’s design,” the retired bishop said of the building, “it is now a place where the precious unborn will be protected.” During his time at the helm of the San Angelo Diocese, Bishop Pfeifer prayed that the Planned Parenthood facility would close, but also prayed for the conversion of the hearts of those who worked there. “We have to condemn the evil that you do,” Bishop Pfeifer remembered saying to them, “but we love you.” During one rally outside the facility, Bishop Pfeifer

placed the Eucharist against the door of the building. “I knew Jesus had entered,” he said. “I can only go so far. Doors can’t stop him.” Bishop Pfeifer also offered a four-step plan for seeing more pro-life victories across the country: prayer; fasting; peaceful vigils and rallies; and being active in all pro-life efforts, both Catholic and ecumenical. “I never dreamt I would be standing inside here,” Bishop Pfeifer said again, laughing with obvious joy, before giving a gift to Pregnancy Help Center director Franke. “We’re going to redeem this space,” Franke said at the conclusion of the ceremony. For Irma Diaz, the blessing of the facility recalls nearly 40 years of her life, and that of her son, Frank

Diaz Jr. Her thoughts were on another day when she and Bishop Pfeifer were together – his ordination as bishop in 1985. She was 7 months pregnant, and Bishop Pfeifer offered one of his first blessings as a bishop to the child in her womb. Years later, when Frank was in college at Angelo State University, he was so upset about the effects of abortion that he was one of the regulars at rosaries and prayer rallies at the Planned Parenthood facility. “I always tell the story of how he was blessed before he was born,” Irma Diaz said. “He always had a heart for pro-life” ministry, she said. “It’s always been in my heart and being here today is like — What a miracle!” she continued. “God surprises us, that’s what he does.”



# ¿Qué pasa con los embriones sintéticos?

Las células madre embrionarias han mostrado cierto atractivo y promesa porque son notablemente flexibles. Los investigadores pueden crear varios tipos de células a partir de ellas, ya sean células nerviosas o células de los islotes pancreáticos, y estas podrían, en teoría, usarse para tratar enfermedades como el Parkinson o la diabetes. Estas células moralmente problemáticas, obtenidas mediante la destrucción de embriones humanos, son, sin embargo, limitadas en su grado de flexibilidad, sin la capacidad de "rebobinar" y formar un embrión completo.

Hasta ahora:  
Informes recientes sugieren que ahora puede ser posible generar "embriones sintéticos" a partir de células madre embrionarias a través de diversas manipulaciones, incluidos los pasos de reprogramación genética y la mezcla de varios tipos de células, sin la necesidad de esperma y óvulo. Los investigadores afirman que los embriones sintéticos podrían usarse para ayudarlos a descubrir los misterios del desarrollo humano muy temprano y abordar la pérdida temprana del embarazo.

Cuando un investigador de la Universidad de Cambridge y otro en Israel anunciaron que habían sido capaces de producir tal "modelo embrionario", una larga "línea en la arena biológica" parece haber sido cruzada, junto con algunas líneas éticas importantes también.

Al menos dos preocupaciones éticas notables surgen a raíz de esta nueva tecnología: primero, el uso de tipos de células derivadas de manera no ética en la investigación biomédica, especialmente las células madre embrionarias humanas, sigue siendo una preocupación importante.

En segundo lugar, si los científicos son capaces de producir con éxito un embrión humano vivo mediante esta tecnología, esto claramente plantearía serias objeciones éticas adicionales.

Los nuevos seres humanos tienen derecho al respeto de entrar en el mundo sólo a través del abrazo conyugal. Cada vez que creamos embriones humanos vivos mediante otros enfoques, ya sea por clonación, por FIV, por construcción de embriones sintéticos o por otros métodos novedosos, cruzamos una línea moral clave.

La gran pregunta que se cierne sobre esta investigación es: ¿Son estos llamados "embriones sintéticos" realmente embriones humanos vivos? Si lo son, hemos entrado directamente en la mina terrestre ética de crear seres humanos únicamente para ser explotados con fines de investigación o experimentales. Si no lo son, ¿se puede cruzar esa línea a través de pasos adicionales para convertirlos en auténticos embriones humanos?

Es probable que los científicos continúen mejorando sus técnicas para generar mejores sustitutos de embriones, lo que les permitirá estudiar con mayor detalle la forma en que se desarrolla el desarrollo humano temprano.

Como lo resume el director del Centro de Bioética Anscombe, David Albert Jones:

"Un embrión sintético no es un 'modelo' de un embrión, es un intento de hacer un embrión. Si este intento tiene éxito, científicamente, entonces será incorrecto éticamente, pero si no tiene éxito científico, entonces no podrá decirnos mucho sobre el desarrollo humano normal".

El laboratorio de Cambridge concluyó que las estructuras que hizo no eran embriones reales. Alfonso Martínez Arias, biólogo del desarrollo de la Universidad Pompeu Fabra en Barcelona, España, estuvo de acuerdo, describiéndolos como "masas de células separadas en compartimentos, pero sin una organización similar a la de un embrión". Sugirió que la manipulación celular



Padre Tad Pacholczyk  
Making Sense of Bioethics

"confunde lo que hacen (las) células" para que no se produzca un embrión real.

Sin embargo, el equipo de investigación con sede en el Instituto Weizmann en Israel produjo modelos de embriones sintéticos extremadamente realistas que crecieron hasta por dos semanas. Exhibieron características bastante similares a los embriones regulares, como señaló el biólogo del desarrollo Jesse Veenvliet del Instituto Max Planck de Biología Celular Molecular y Genética:

"La similitud con el embrión natural es notable, casi extraña". Si camina como un pato y grazna como un pato, entonces, como dicen, ¿podría ser realmente un pato?

Algunos afirman que si se implantaran embriones sintéticos, no podrían iniciar un embarazo, y esto demuestra que no son embriones reales.

Pero los embarazos de las mujeres a veces fracasan por abortos espontáneos no porque su hijo "no fuera un embrión", sino porque su hijo se vio afectado por un defecto genético o de desarrollo.

¿Podrían estos embriones sintéticos recién producidos ser embriones reales que tienen un defecto gracias a las diversas manipulaciones de laboratorio a las que han sido sometidos? Parece inseguro partir de la suposición de que son "sintéticos" y, por lo tanto, "no verdaderamente embriones", dada la difícil tarea de distinguir un "no embrión" de un "embrión con un defecto".

Al emplear términos como "estructuras embrionarias", "embriones sintéticos", "modelos de embriones de células madre" o incluso "embriones", los investigadores pueden estar tratando de eludir la ética confiando en el eufemismo.

Aunque el espermatozoide y el óvulo no se emplean directamente para hacer embriones sintéticos, esto tampoco descarta la posibilidad de que estas entidades puedan ser embriones genuinos.

En la clonación humana, por ejemplo, no se necesita esperma para hacer embriones humanos clonados reales. La oveja Dolly surgió de un embrión de oveja real, a pesar de que no había espermatozoides involucrados. Con el tiempo, los científicos están ideando formas tecnológicamente más avanzadas de crear organismos, incluidos los organismos humanos, aparte del enfoque habitual que se basa directamente en el esperma y el óvulo.

Éticamente hablando, hay mucho en juego en este tipo de experimentos con embriones sintéticos que amenazan con manipular y destruir la vida humana. Estos estudios deben llevarse a cabo mediante el estudio de modelos animales, evitando cuidadosamente el uso de células madre embrionarias humanas y la producción de embriones humanos.

---

*El Padre Tadeusz Pacholczyk hizo su doctorado en Neurociencias en la Universidad de Yale y su trabajo postdoctoral en la Universidad de Harvard. Es sacerdote para la Diócesis de Fall River, Massachusetts y se desempeña como Director de Educación del Centro Nacional Católico de Bioética en Philadelphia. Para mayor información, por favor visite el National Catholic Bioethics Center (www.ncbcenter.org) y FatherTad.com. Traducción: Rosa Cabrales.*

# Un recordatorio y una corrección: Todos, todos, todos

Hay una palabra en latín que siempre me ha llamado la atención: totus. Muchos católicos la conocemos o la hemos escuchado en algún momento. Significa "todos", sin excepción alguna. Evoca totalidad y comunión.

Si en algún momento nos encontráramos buscando una palabra con la capacidad de representar lo que significa ser un cristiano católico, creo que totus puede ser esa palabra. Es un término saturado de la idea de universalidad y una invitación radical a entrar en relación con los demás y con todo lo que existe.

Todavía estoy procesando el momento emocionante cuando el Papa Francisco afirmó que en la Iglesia hay lugar para "todos, todos, todos". Lo dijo durante la ceremonia de apertura del Día Mundial de la Juventud del año 2023, frente a cientos de miles de jóvenes reunidos en Lisboa que provenían de toda esquina del planeta.

Fue uno de los momentos más claros en el pontificado del Papa Francisco llamándonos a todos los católicos a recordar quiénes somos y lo que significa ser Iglesia.

El Papa insistió, "hay espacio para todos. Para todos. En la Iglesia, ninguno sobra. Ninguno está de más. Hay espacio para todos. Así como somos. Todos. Y eso Jesús lo dice claramente."

Más emocionante, sin embargo, fue escuchar las voces de la gran multitud retornando en sus propios idiomas, quienes por invitación del Papa hacían eco a la fórmula trídica: todos, todos, todos; everyone, everyone, everyone; totus, totus, totus. Así proclamaban nuestros jóvenes católicos, guiados por el Espíritu Santo, al unísono con el sucesor de Pedro.

Vivimos en un mundo definido por batallas tenaces que buscan incluir y excluir. Individuos, organizaciones, instituciones, naciones y poderes se esfuerzan por establecer criterios rigurosos para determinar quién pertenece y quién no pertenece; quién tiene acceso a entrar y quién se queda afuera. Aquellos que son excluidos luchan por sobrevivir y a participar en cuanto les sea posible.

En lugar de reconocer que la existencia del ser humano usualmente se realiza en los



Hosffman Ospino  
OSV News  
Caminando Juntos

espacios en donde las diferencias y la impresionante cantidad de maneras que vivimos nuestra existencia se encuentran, muchos de nuestros contemporáneos están sumergidos en batallas ideológicas que dividen, hieren y muchas veces matan.

Entonces escuchamos a nuestros jóvenes católicos, proclamando a una sola voz: todos, todos, todos. Dicho clamor no es una mera aspiración ingenua. Es un recordatorio y una corrección. Un recordatorio del plan original de Dios para la Iglesia; de que el Evangelio de Jesús es un llamado a acoger y no a excluir. Es una corrección de curso, especialmente cuando en nuestras comunidades, colegios e incluso en nuestras familias se comienza a adoptar el lenguaje de exclusión.

El ser cristiano católico jamás debe equipararse al proceso de demostrar cierto valor y credenciales para hacerse miembro de un club con intereses especiales (ej., tradicionalista, progresista). Muchas veces olvidamos esto. Por ser bautizados, a pesar de nuestras diferencias, opiniones y la lucha diaria por entender de lleno el misterio de la existencia humana, la comunión eclesial es de hecho nuestro punto de partida. ¡Ya somos Iglesia! Y como tal estamos invitados permanentemente a la comunión.

Por supuesto, hay que tener en cuenta el pecado y la posibilidad de que alguien tome la decisión consciente de alejarse de la comunión eclesial. Aún así, las puertas del perdón y la reconciliación siempre están abiertas. Somos parte de una Iglesia en donde hay lugar para todos: todos, todos, todos.

---

*Hosffman Ospino es profesor de teología y educación religiosa en Boston College.*

# Buscar chivos expiatorios de manera tóxica no va a arreglar el sistema de inmigración

Como he escrito anteriormente durante este último año algunos funcionarios públicos y organizaciones privadas se han unido a algunos medios de comunicación para hacer afirmaciones falsas o engañosas sobre el trabajo de la Iglesia con los migrantes y refugiados. Inicialmente, las acusaciones fueron contra Caridades Católicas, especialmente contra las organizaciones locales que trabajan con migrantes en la frontera con México.

Actualmente, como vemos con la afluencia de solicitantes de asilo en la frontera, los responsables políticos han puesto en la mira a organizaciones de Caridades Católicas de otros estados enviando a solicitantes de asilo directamente a sus puertas, como ha ocurrido recientemente en Nueva York y Sacramento. Incluso se ha implicado a la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos y a obispos a título individual por influir de algún modo en la migración irregular de personas a Estados Unidos.

Estas afirmaciones se han utilizado para desviar la atención del verdadero problema al que se enfrenta la nación: la falta de vías legales para la migración en virtud de nuestras leyes actuales de inmigración.

Un análisis de la enseñanza del ministerio social de la Iglesia ayudará a disipar las dudas que han sido colocadas en el foro público por algunos funcionarios públicos desinformados. En primer lugar, permítanme ser claro: la Iglesia no aboga por las fronteras abiertas. De hecho, la doctrina es clara al



Obispo Nicholas DiMarzio  
OSV News  
Caminando con Migrantes

afirmar que una nación soberana tiene derecho a admitir a quienes desee, pero debe basarse en el bien común, no sólo de la nación receptora, sino también de los migrantes. De hecho, la Iglesia prefiere que una persona no ejerza su derecho a emigrar si las condiciones en su país de origen son adecuadas para llevar una vida digna. La Iglesia nunca fomenta la migración ilegal o indocumentada, sino que aboga por vías legales para la migración. También los emigrantes elegirían medios legales, si estuvieran disponibles.

Cuando era un joven sacerdote, una de mis obligaciones era la supervisión de un refugio local. Recuerdo que una mujer indocumentada en el albergue me preguntó: "¿Es pecado ser indocumentada?". "No", le respondí, "no es tu pecado".

Los migrantes tienen conciencias bien formadas y toman decisiones de acuerdo con lo que saben y creen, a menudo en situaciones desesperadas. La verdad tácita de la



## Rapid onset gender dysphoria and the tragic seduction of our daughters

In recent years, the number of young people with gender dysphoria, or extreme discomfort in one’s biological sex, has skyrocketed in the U.S. and Western Europe.

Professor Lisa Littman, a researcher at Brown University, was the first to publish a report that indicated that many transgender-

identified children experience “rapid onset gender dysphoria,” a clustering phenomenon in which one, several, or even all the friends in a group become transgender-identified within a similar timeframe. Other researchers have since published similar findings.

- Littman proposed the hypothesis that this transgender identification could involve a novel form of peer or social contagion that contrasts with our classical understanding of gender dysphoria dating back about a hundred years. Some of the novel aspects of the phenomenon include:
1. The initial age of onset has markedly shifted, from pre-school aged kids to the teenage years, typically around the age of 16;
  2. The sex ratio has flipped from mostly young boys prior to 2010, to now more than 75 percent adolescent girls; and
  3. The prevalence of the phenomenon has risen dramatically in recent years, both absolutely and relatively, leading some to suggest we are facing an “epidemic” in Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria.

In other words, teenage girls with no prior history of gender dysphoria are now the predominant demographic identifying as transgender.

Discussing the phenomenon in Psychology Today, Christopher J. Ferguson, Ph.D. notes that the "sudden surge in the number of teen girls identifying as trans boys is due not to gender dysphoria or transgenderism but rather to girls with other mental conditions who are mistakenly self-identifying as trans because there is social capital built into marginalized identities."

When surveyed by Littman, over 60 percent of parents reported that the announcement of their child’s coming out had resulted in a popularity improvement at school and in other settings.

These young people appear to be escaping into a victim group into which they don’t actually fit, in part because within the broader culture, gender dysphoria has become one of the few victim identities one can choose.

Many of these youth reportedly had one or more psychiatric diagnoses and almost half were engaging in self-harm prior to the onset of gender dysphoria. There is evidence that transitioning can worsen mental health and correlate with suicidal thoughts. Claims that gender transitioning reduces the risk of suicide remain highly controversial and unsupported by well-designed and properly-controlled scientific studies.

The surge in transgender-identifying adolescents may also be partly explained as a maladaptive coping mechanism for teens struggling with the challenges and stresses arising from their adolescent journey through puberty and their explorations of sexuality in a hypersexualized society. Prior trauma, whether sexual, peer, or family, may also play a role.

The steep spike in the phenomenon of rapid onset gender dysphoria appears to be connected to other social factors as well.

For example, YouTube influencers and internet advocates of gender transitioning often have charismatic personalities and offer compelling personal testimonies and confessional stories that draw the attention of youthful audiences. These entertaining and well-produced videos strongly encourage young people to transition, promising happiness and a new lease on life. Prior to announcing their new transgender identity, over 65 percent of the teens were reported by their parents to have spent extended time, sometimes even several weeks of total immersion, watching YouTube transition vlogs and other trans-oriented social media.

A second relevant factor is that various authority figures in the lives of teens, including teachers, therapists and doctors, have started encouraging and affirming the idea of gender transitioning. These respected individuals may energetically advocate for a young person to transition, claiming they know best what the young person needs, and it is virtually always: “transition.”

When parents are hesitant to go along, these authority figures may adopt a savior posture by bringing up a coercive suicide narrative, asking them whether they prefer to have a live son or a dead daughter, while actively seeking to re-educate the allegedly naïve and transphobic parents.

Gender-affirmative advocacy applies powerful pressure on impressionable youth and vulnerable parents. These approaches can tragically seduce our adolescent daughters, resulting in permanent and irreversible damage through hormonal treatments, mastectomies and mutilative genital surgeries.

Thankfully, medical professionals in several European countries are beginning to change course. Treatments for youth with gender dysphoria have become decidedly more cautious. The paramount importance of psychological care is being recognized, with transitioning becoming restricted to research protocols.

We need to begin promoting a more wholesome and balanced perspective to girls, namely, that being a woman is good and beautiful. Therapists need to counsel patience in the face of adolescent claims of discomfort with their biological sex, recognizing that some may be seeking gender transition as an escape from other emotional difficulties. Many who have transitioned are now regretting their choice, with “detransitioning” occurring at an accelerated rate among the same females who presented during adolescence with gender dysphoria.

Young people facing rapid onset gender dysphoria need authentic support and encouragement, rather than surgeries and hormones, especially in the face of data revealing that most of them, if not offered “affirmation therapies,” will outgrow their dysphoria and come to accept their birth sex once their turbulent adolescent years have passed.

---  
Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as Senior Ethicist at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See [www.ncbcenter.org](http://www.ncbcenter.org) and [www.fathertad.com](http://www.fathertad.com).



Father Tad Pacholczyk

Making Sense of Bioethics

### Catholic Voices

## Toxic scapegoating doesn't actually help fix the immigration system

As I have written before, during the past year, some vocal public officials and private organizations have joined with some media outlets in making false or misleading claims regarding the church's work with migrants and refugees. Initially, they were aimed at Catholic Charities, especially those local organizations working with migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border. Now, as we see with the influx of asylum-seekers at the border, political officials have targeted Catholic Charities organizations in other states by sending asylum-seekers directly to their doorsteps, as recently happened in New York and Sacramento. Even the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and individual bishops have been implicated as somehow influencing the irregular migration of people to the United States.

These claims have been used as a diversion from the real issue the nation is confronting: a lack of legal channels for migration under our present immigration laws.

A review of the social ministry teaching of the church will help dispel the doubts that have been placed in the public forum by some uninformed public officials. First, let me be clear: The church does not advocate for open borders. In fact, the teaching is clear that a sovereign nation has the right to admit those whom it chooses, but it must be based on the common good -- not only of the receiving nation but also of the migrants. In fact, the church prefers that a person not exercise their right to migrate if conditions in their home country are adequate for a decent life. The church never encourages illegal or undocumented migra-



Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio  
OSV News

Walking with Migrants

tion but advocates for legal pathways for their migration. The migrants as well would choose legal means, if available.

As a young priest, one of my duties was the supervision of a local shelter. I remember being asked a question by an undocumented woman at the shelter: "Is it a sin to be undocumented?" "No," I said, "it is not your sin."

Migrants have well-formed consciences and make decisions in accord with what they know and believe, often in desperate situations. The unspoken truth of undocumented migration today is that, because of an inadequate public policy, undocumented immigrants labor -- without legal rights and at very low wages -- for the benefit of our own nation.

The church's concern for migrants has been a long-standing tradition and teaching that became very apparent after the Second World War when it became institutionalized in the organization of the Vatican and dioceses. New Catholic organizations

See DiMARZIO, Page 18

## 'Totus, totus, totus!': A reminder and a correction

Allow me to start this column repeating three times a word many Catholics know or have heard: "totus, totus, totus."

It means "everyone"; no exceptions.

It evokes wholeness and communion.

If at any point we find ourselves searching for a word capable of capturing what it means to be Catholic Christians, "totus" may be that word. It is a term impregnated with universality and a radical invitation toward embracing, in one breath, everyone and everything that exists.

I am still processing the electrifying moment when Pope Francis said in his native Spanish, "todos, todos, todos" during the opening ceremony for the 2023 World Youth Day, in front of hundreds of thousands of young people from every corner of the planet gathered in Lisbon.

It was one of Pope Francis' clearest moments in his pontificate, calling all Catholics to remember who we are and what it means to be church.

The pope insisted, "There is room for everyone. Everyone. In the church, no one is left out or left over. There is room for everyone. Just the way we are. Everyone. Jesus says this clearly."



Hosffman Ospino  
OSV News

Journeying Together

More electrifying, however, was the roar of the multitude echoing the triadic mantra in their own languages at the pope's invitation: todos, todos, todos; everyone, everyone, everyone. Our young Catholics spoke, guided by the Holy Spirit, in unison with the successor of Peter.

We live in a world marked by tenacious battles aiming to include and exclude. Individuals, organizations, institutions, nations and powers fight to set rigorous criteria about who belongs and who does not belong — who gets access to be in and who stays out. Those excluded struggle for

See OSPINO, Page 18

## 30 years later, 'Veritatis Splendor' remains a forceful guide to living a moral life

By Matthew Dugandzic  
OSV News

Pope St. John Paul II promulgated *Veritatis Splendor* (*The Splendor of the Truth*) on Aug. 6, 1993 — 30 years ago. I find these words hard to believe even as I write them, since this encyclical, far from losing relevance with age, seems only to grow in its importance.

It was written amidst a great deal of turmoil regarding the moral teachings of the church and, in its upholding of traditional doctrines and, perhaps more importantly, its shedding further light thereon, it provided guidance and direction for the moral theologians who, like me, came of age in its wake. I have no doubt that it will, like *Rerum Novarum*, be included among those encyclicals that so profoundly influenced Catholic thought that it will be impossible to understand Catholic moral theology without having read it. It will be essential reading, furthermore, not only for those who want to understand contemporary moral theology but for those who want to avoid the mistakes of the past. These mistakes emerged in the flurry of theo-

logical activity that followed the Second Vatican Council, which closed in 1965 and led the various sub-disciplines of Catholic theology to reevaluate their approaches to understanding the truths of revelation. This reevaluation was not all bad — far from it — and it bore much fruit that has since remained with the church. In the field of moral theology, for example, this era witnessed a recovery of the understanding that moral theology is ultimately about happiness, not rules. The reason why we follow rules is that we want to be happy, not because a ruler-toting sister told us to. But some of the theological exuberance of this time period led many to accept ideas that were at odds with the perennial teachings of the church. *Veritatis Splendor* was written, in part, to combat two of them: fundamental option theory and proportionalism.

### Fundamental option theory

Fundamental option theory is based on the idea that every person has a basic commitment or

See VERITATIS, Page 19



# Preachy pilot or priest? Helpful wings to higher places

In the realm of aviation, a recent video of an American Airlines pilot delivering a stern but compassionate pre-flight announcement has sparked a wide variety of reactions online. The pilot’s speech, which set ground rules for passenger conduct in-flight, didn’t mince words. While some deemed it patronizing, others praised his words as a demonstration of strong leadership.

A colleague pointed out the article and got me thinking: This happens to priests, too.

Like the pilot, priests stand as leaders in their respective parishes, guiding and shepherding the flock. The pilot’s speech, a “little bit of fatherhood” as he called it, exemplifies a direct and authoritative approach to ensure the safety and comfort of all passengers. Similarly, priests are called upon to speak firmly when addressing behaviors or trends that contradict the teachings of the faith. The pilot is entrusted with safety, but priests are entrusted with souls.

## Unsettling the conscience

As our culture diverges in more striking ways from Christianity, priests will have to speak with courage and clarity about those things that are foreign to the Gospel. Our promises to God demand that we challenge parishioners to be better versions of themselves, to encourage them in holiness. On the Last Day, we will be held accountable to God for what we’ve said ... and failed to say. Parishioners may have their feathers ruffled, but sometimes a conscience must be unsettled to inspire change.

A friar recently shared with me a story about correcting an altar boy. The friar threatened the young man to pay closer attention at Mass, saying that if he continued to make mistakes he’d be fired from serving. Later that day, the friar received a



Father Patrick Briscoe, OP  
OSV News

phone call from the boy’s mother. Terrified that the woman was going to be angry, he cautiously engaged. In fact, she was calling to thank the priest for teaching her son a life lesson. The boy had learned to be proud to have a job so important that he could be fired from it. The stern correction inspired in him diligence and zeal.

## Conflict and unity

When it comes to air travel, unruly passenger incidents have surged, leading to concerns for the safety and well-being of all onboard. Similarly, we may witness challenges and conflicts within our parishes. Radically different experiences of the church have led to generational conflicts, which often reveal themselves in discussions of doctrine and liturgy. A priest’s zeal for orthodoxy can chaff established parishioners, particularly if it demands conversion.

But a challenging word is not the same as a cruel word. Like the pilot, we priests should approach these conversations with genuine humility, doing our best to understand the struggles faced by our parishioners. It is crucial to strike the right balance between authority and compassion.

## A fair hearing

Both pilot and priest aim to cultivate a

See BRISCOE, Page 19

# It don't come easy: Working hard for instant gratification

How we live our lives is substantially different from how our parents and grandparents lived theirs. We no longer need to wait a whole week for the next episode of a favorite TV show; we can watch all five seasons in a single binge. We don't have to buy tickets or drive to a theater to see a movie; we can stream it whenever we want and pause it to make popcorn. We can listen to our music whenever we want to hear it and regardless of where we are. And if we want to shop for a new bookcase or a pair of shoes, we can do it online and at any hour of the day or night.

Life may seem more complicated, but most of what we need to do takes less time than it used to. We bank and pay our bills online, split a restaurant check with friends, take classes, and see our lab results all on our phones. We apply for a new job and find someone to date from the comfort of our favorite chair.

The result is that every one of us has time to do more.

That sounds like progress until we stop long enough to fully consider the "more" we're so busy doing. We spend more, own more, eat more (and throw away more) than our predecessors did just one generation ago. We access more healthcare, subscribe to more ongoing services and pay people to do things our parents did for themselves more than ever before. In all of history, no group of people has consumed as much as we do. And, as we kill ourselves to keep consuming or to meet the demands of those who do, we tell ourselves we have achieved a higher standard of living.

But there's a catch to all this. It's not just the world around us that's changed; we've changed too. Being able to tailor our lives to fit our personal preferences places us at the center of our world and creates a whole portfolio of high, possibly unfair, expectations. We want what we want when we want it. We take in as much



Jaymie Stuart Wolfe  
OSV News

as possible as quickly as possible, like Pacman speeding through the maze to the next available snack, barely digesting anything as we consume, consume, consume. Even within our spiritual gleanings, valuable insights barely take hold because we take so little downtime to let anything really sink in.

Most of us stopped asking ourselves "How much is enough?" — for ourselves and of each other — a long time ago, even as we take everything, including the availability of others, for granted. We work hard — too hard — to keep feeding our insatiable appetites while forgetting that things don't just appear out of thin air. Hidden in everything we consume is the contribution made by a living human soul. That film, book, meal, music download, contract, retreat, or homily we consume (and too often quickly forget) is a product of someone else's real time and labor, sacrifice, creativity, and expertise.

Somewhere along the way to where we have arrived, we've lost sight of the fact that our on-demand lifestyle isn't fair in what it demands of other people. None of us is entitled to someone else's labor, or their time. The overnight clerk at the 24-hour gas station and the professor we email at 10:00 p.m. the night before the term project is due don't owe us much of anything. In fact, loving our neighbors might just include not overworking them;

See WOLFE, Page 18

# UR4GVN: A vanity license plate soothed my stress and brought me to my senses

When my son was in sixth grade, he was standing with some buddies at dismissal time at our parish Catholic school. It was a typical cold winter day in Anchorage, Alaska, and the sidewalks were a familiar sheet of ice. “See those sixth graders over there?” asked a fifth grader, overheard by another boy. “Watch how many I can knock down.”

Sliding on the ice at full speed into the unsuspecting group, he toppled several, scattering them like snowsuit-clad bowling pins. My son Mike was among them, and his braces were knocked loose.

I’d been at work, there was supper to fix, the grocery store first. Now, as rush hour neared and the day’s sunlight waned, school pick-up became an unscheduled drive across town to the orthodontist.

Braces are expensive. Mike’s were not covered by a dental plan. The stress of the day began to overwhelm me. Pausing at a stoplight, I noted the vanity license plate on the car ahead of me. It read “UR4GVN.”

I was forgiven? For what? But tears came to my eyes. I felt a heavy weight lifting.

In Scripture, we repeatedly hear Jesus say those words, “Your sins are forgiven.” Sometimes — as with the paralyzed man lowered through a roof by his friends — Jesus says those words before a physical healing.

Was Jesus ready with forgiveness because the folks he encountered were terrible people? Or is Jesus so ready to forgive because he knows we’re all sinners and we yearn to feel forgiveness? We all live with what the writer Father Henri Nouwen called “our endless capacity for self-loathing.” It’s often the hidden cause of our stress, this feeling that we are not “enough.”

Jesus wants us to know how loved we are.

In the Gospel of Luke, Peter has had a night of unsuccessful fishing, but Jesus tells him to try again. Peter dutifully puts his nets back in the water, finding a catch so abundant the boat nearly collapses.

Sensing the presence of the miraculous, Peter’s response is not unlike our own sometimes: “Leave me, Lord, I am a sinful man” (Lk 5:8).

It’s hard to believe we are worthy of such abundant love, and always such forgiveness.

In his book about a journey through the Holy Land,



Effie Caldarola  
OSV News

*Jesus, A Pilgrimage*, Jesuit Father James Martin talks about guilt. He mentions Dorothy Day, now a candidate for sainthood. As a young woman, before she became a Catholic, she had had an abortion, which she later deeply regretted.

Martin asks what a difference it would have made in Day’s life, and in the social activism that is her legacy, if she had let “feelings of inadequacy” about her abortion overwhelm her.

In my own life, the suicide of a close family member posed a similar destructive possibility. My family had the inevitable question: What more could we have done? As a friend told me once, the “woulda, shoulda, coulda brothers” can dominate our lives if we don’t yield to Jesus’ mercy.

We all need to face up to our sinfulness: an unkind word that can never be taken back, a child-rearing mistake, memories of impatience with an aged parent. We make amends where we can, but then we hear Jesus’ words of forgiveness and are called to move forward to the abundant life.

Our mission lies before us — not behind us, in the dusty bin of old sin or regret.

The Benedictines have a saying I love: “Always we begin again.” That phrase orients me toward hope.

And the braces? The teeth were undamaged, the braces easily retightened. And the stress? It was lifted. Because I’d been reminded that I was forgiven.

---

Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmother who received her master's degree in pastoral ministry from Seattle University.

# Cartoon Corner







Guadalupe Radio Network's

10TH ANNUAL

# “Fishers of Men”

BENEFIT DINNER



Monsignor Charles Pope  
Keynote Speaker



Sondra & Toby Eoff  
2023 “Fishers of Men”  
Award Recipients



His Excellency  
Bishop Michael J. Sis  
Benediction

“Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men” – Matthew 4:19

Join us for a faith-filled evening with one of the most inspiring speakers, Catholic media contributors, and priests in our Church today! Msgr. Pope has published several articles in pastoral journals, offered a regular column in the Catholic Standard, and has been a contributor for Our Sunday Visitor, National Catholic Register, and EWTN. He has taught numerous catechetical courses both in his parish work, and for the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. and has preached more than a dozen retreats for priests. He's also a host for "A Life Lived Joyfully" on the Guadalupe Radio Network, Tuesdays and Fridays at 3PM.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 7, 2023

ODESSA MARRIOTT HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER 305 E 5TH ST, ODESSA, TX 79761	DOORS 6:30PM	TICKETS GRNTICKETS@GRNONLINE.COM TOLL FREE: 888-784-3476
--	-----------------	--

WWW.GRNONLINE.COM/FOM



## INMIGRACIÓN

Continúa de Página 15

migración indocumentada hoy en día es que, debido a una política pública inadecuada, los inmigrantes indocumentados trabajan -- sin derechos legales y con salarios muy bajos -- en beneficio de nuestra propia nación.

La preocupación de la Iglesia por los inmigrantes ha sido una tradición y una enseñanza de larga data que se hizo muy evidente después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, cuando se institucionalizó en la organización del Vaticano y las diócesis. Se crearon nuevas organizaciones católicas para ocuparse del reasentamiento de refugiados. Más recientemente, una carta pastoral conjunta de los obispos estadounidenses y mexicanos de hace 20 años afirmaba: "Los prestadores de servicios sociales y religiosos, intentan responder al migrante que toca a su puerta sin violar los principios de la ley". Estas organizaciones no fomentan la migración indocumentada, sino que tratan con las personas que llegan a sus umbrales. En muchos lugares, las organizaciones eclesíásticas cooperan con las administraciones locales, estatales y federales para atender las necesidades tanto de los inmigrantes documentados como de los indocumentados. Algunos funcionarios públicos han utilizado este hecho para afirmar falsamente que nuestras organizaciones eclesíásticas se benefician económicamente de la ayuda prestada. En mis más de 50 años de prestación de servicios con ayuda gubernamental, puedo atestiguar que, como organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro, nunca tuvieron beneficios, sino siempre déficit al realizar estas obras de caridad para los migrantes.

Otra acusación casi increíble es que la Iglesia apoya de alguna manera el tráfico y la trata de seres humanos al aceptar la responsabilidad de asistir a estos migrantes una vez que han llegado. Nada más lejos de la realidad. Incluso se ha insinuado sobre nuestros programas para niños no acompañados separados de sus padres. El hecho es que el gobierno ya ha separado a los padres de sus hijos y nosotros nos hemos convertido en los cuidadores.

Si alguna vez hubo un caso de chivo expiatorio de los buenos samaritanos de este mundo, este esfuerzo actual por pintar a la Iglesia como promotora de la migración indocumentada se lleva el premio. Y esto no es correcto.

En realidad, el trabajo de la Iglesia ayudando a los inmigrantes es para compensar los fallos del gobierno, que se niega a promulgar leyes de inmigración justas. La mujer indocumentada que conocí en el albergue no debería tener que preocuparse por si ser indocumentada es un pecado. Debería tener la oportunidad de emigrar de forma legal y segura y de que se respetara la dignidad humana que Dios le ha dado.

---

*El obispo Nicholas DiMarzio es obispo emérito de la diócesis de Brooklyn, Nueva York. Escribe la columna "Walking With Migrants" para OSV News.*

---

## WOLFE

Continued from Page 17

it might mean taking a moment to consider their lives, and appreciate their work.

That's why our faith has a body of thought we call Catholic Social Teaching — 2,000 years of considering how we must treat the people with whom we live in this remarkable era, and why. It's too easy to lose our own humanity and disregard the real lives of others' in the rat race we are so thoughtlessly running.

It's become way too easy to convince ourselves that we deserve everything we want, the moment we want it, no matter what it costs someone else.

The next time we find ourselves on the 24/7 consuming end of life, let's keep our wits about us and recognize not only the price we pay for all the instant gratifications we want and demand, but the real — and very human — cost behind it all.

---

*Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a sinner, Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.*

## OSPINO

Continued from Page 16

survival and (whenever possible) a place at fellowship.

Instead of acknowledging that life constantly unfolds at the crossroads of difference and the astounding array of ways in which human beings actually live out their existence, our contemporaries are enmeshed in ideological battles that divide, hurt and sometimes kill.

Then, we hear our Catholic youth clamoring in one voice: totus, totus, totus. Such clamoring is not mere wishful thinking. It is a reminder and a correction. A reminder of God's original project for the church — that the Gospel of Jesus is about welcoming, not excluding. It is a correction of course, especially when talk about exclusion enters our faith communities, our schools and even our own families.

To be a Catholic Christian must not be considered analogous to proving worth in order to join a membership club with a particular label (e.g., traditional, progressive). Sometimes we forget this. Despite our differences and opinions (and the daily struggle to make sense of the mystery of being human), ecclesial communion, for all the baptized, is our de facto starting point — we are already in! Communion is a permanent invitation.

Of course, there is sin and the possibility of someone intentionally opting out of ecclesial communion. Yet, the doors to forgiveness and reconciliation are always open. Ours is a church with room for everyone: "totus, totus, totus."

---

*Hosffman Ospino is a professor of theology and religious education at Boston College.*

## DiMARZIO

Continued from Page 16

were formed to deal with refugee resettlement. More recently, a joint pastoral letter of the U.S. and Mexican bishops 20 years ago stated: "Religious and social service providers, ... without violating civil law, attempt to respond to the migrant knocking at the door."

These organizations do not encourage undocumented migration, but they deal with the people on their doorsteps. In many places, church organizations cooperate with local, state and federal governments in meeting the needs of both documented and undocumented migrants. Some public officials have used this to falsely claim our church organizations financially benefit from the assistance rendered. In my more than 50 years of providing services with government assistance, I can testify that as nonprofit organizations there was never a profit but always a deficit in doing these works of charity for migrants.

Another almost unbelievable accusation is that the church somehow supports human trafficking and smuggling by accepting responsibility for assisting these migrants once they have arrived. Nothing could be further from the truth. It even has been insinuated about our programs for unaccompanied children separated from their parents. The fact is the government has already separated the parents from their children and we have become the caretakers.

If there ever was a case of scapegoating the good Samaritans of this world, this current effort to paint the church as a promoter of undocumented migration wins the prize. And this is incorrect.

In truth, the church's work assisting migrants is to make up for the failures of the government, which refuses to enact just immigration laws. The undocumented woman I met at the shelter should not have to worry about whether being undocumented is a sin. She should have the opportunity to migrate in a legal and safe manner and have her God-given human dignity respected.

---

*Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio is the retired bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York. He writes the column "Walking With Migrants" for OSV News.*



# BRISCOE

Continued from Page 17

sense of unity. The pilot emphasized the importance of treating fellow travelers with respect and kindness, urging them to cooperate for a pleasant journey. Likewise, priests must emphasize the value of Christian virtues such as humility, patience and charity to build a vibrant and supportive faith community.

The video showcased the pilot’s genuine concern for the safety and comfort of his passengers. His words were akin to a firm but loving father setting boundaries for his children. In the same way, a priest’s chiding is an act of spiritual fatherhood, urging parishioners to stay true to their faith and continue to reform their lives after the pattern of Christ’s Gospel.

Just as the pilot thought it wouldn’t suffice to continue making the same announcement on that flight, priests must bravely call their parishioners’ attention to challenges and temptations at hand. And just as passengers owe it to the pilot to comply with his requests, parishioners owe it to their priest to give him a fair hearing. In fact, if father has made you upset, it’s quite possible you deserved it.

---  
*Father Patrick Briscoe, OP, is a Dominican friar and the editor of Our Sunday Visitor.*

September 1, 2023  
**EDICTAL SUMMONS**  
**CASE: TAPSCOTT -- GRANTHAM**  
**NO.: SO/23/31**

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking MIRANDA LYNDAL GRANTHAM.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before the 30th day of September 2023, to answer to the Petition of Joshua Cody Tapscott, now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, “Joshua Tapscott and Miranda Grantham, Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage.” Said Petition is identified as Case: TAPSCOTT -- GRANTHAM; Protocol No.: SO/23/31, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

You may communicate with the Tribunal in person or in writing. Failure to communicate within the prescribed period of time will be considered your consent for the Tribunal to continue its proceedings in the above-named case.

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo on September 1, 2023.

Very Rev. Joseph Barbieri, JCD  
Judicial Vicar

September 1, 2023  
**EDICTAL SUMMONS**  
**CASE: LARA -- BYLAND**  
**NO.: SO/23/15**

The Tribunal Office of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo is seeking JEANETTE YVETTE BYLAND.

You are hereby summoned to appear before the Tribunal of the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, at 804 Ford Street, San Angelo, Texas 76905, on or before the 30th day of September 2023, to answer to the Petition of George Bitolas Lara, II, now introduced before the Diocesan Tribunal in an action styled, “George Lara, II and Jeanette Byland, Petition for Declaration of Invalidity of Marriage.” Said Petition is identified as Case: LARA -- BYLAND; Protocol No.: SO/23/15, on the Tribunal Docket of the Diocese of San Angelo.

You may communicate with the Tribunal in person or in writing. Failure to communicate within the prescribed period of time will be considered your consent for the Tribunal to continue its proceedings in the above-named case.

Given at the Tribunal of the Diocese of San Angelo on the September 1, 2023.

Very Rev. Joseph Barbieri, JCD  
Judicial Vicar

# GARCIA

Continued from Page 13

my friend’s mother, who'd passed away. We finished our conversation and concluded with prayer, lifting up his petitions to God. As we stood up and shook hands, he said in a solemn voice, “I’m sorry about your friend, sir.”

Here I stood before a young man who was at a loss — without his freedom, his family, friends and home. Having lost so much, and in the middle of his chaos, he stood there comforting me!

The rubber had met the road as my years of learning were tested, and I was found wanting. How often had I allowed my own chaos to blind me from the pain and suffering of others, diminishing the gravity of their situation based on my own situation?

Humbled by the young man’s empathy for me while still dealing with his situation, it was I who had been taught the lesson — a lesson that is still not forgotten.

Recently I returned to the diaconate formation program — now in the role of director of admissions and scrutiny for the Office of the Permanent Diaconate. While I have still found opportunities to stay connected and serve SYS, I have a greater understanding and appreciation for the value of social ministries assigned to the candidates to the diaconate.

Whether it's visiting detention centers, prisons, hospitals, or other facilities, social ministries like SYS continue to offer candidates to the diaconate an opportunity to practice what they’ve learned. More importantly, they offer continuous learning opportunities for them, helping in the formation process and refining the skills of the potential deacon.

---  
*Deacon Fernando Garcia is the director of admissions and scrutiny of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate at St. Mary's Seminary in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.*

# VERITATIS

Continued from Page 16

trajectory — that is, he or she has opted in a fundamental way to God or to something else. This, as far as it goes, is true, and Pope John Paul II says as much. The problem emerges when proponents of fundamental option theory try to distinguish the fundamental option from concrete actions. Think, for example, of a person who says, “Well, I am not the best Catholic; I don’t go to church every Sunday, but I am basically a good person.” This is a colloquial expression of the idea behind fundamental option theory: A person can be, fundamentally, good or bad, regardless of the particular actions that they perform, since they have decided, deep down, that they love God — even if they do not do everything, as Catholics, or as human beings following the natural law, they are supposed to.

John Paul II argues that this idea is not only contrary to church teaching, but it also does not make sense on a rational level. Regarding church teaching: If fundamental option theory were true, then it would destroy the notion of mortal sin, which, in one single act, removes a person from the state of grace and destroys the charity that was in their heart. And this, of course, is not just a matter of doctrine — it also makes sense. When we act, we act in

accord with our beliefs and commitments, such that our actions sometimes reveal that we believe or are committed to something other than what we say we are. A man, for example, who cheats on his wife, is showing with his actions that he does not love her as much as he says he does. Likewise, it is impossible to say that one is a good Catholic while casually ignoring the moral teachings of the church.

## Proportionalism

Proportionalism was a school of thought that called the traditional category of “intrinsic evil” into question. It is no secret that Catholics like rules. Not only do we have a lot of them, we have different kinds of them. Some admit of exceptions — for example, you must go to church on Sunday, unless you are sick. Other rules do not admit exceptions: You must never commit adultery, no matter how noble your intentions. Intrinsically evil actions fall into this second category. This term describes actions that are evil in themselves — that is, evil because of the kind of action that they are. Such actions, which never admit of exceptions, include things such as murder, fornication and blasphemy.

It is not hard to recognize or define such actions; everyone knows what murder is, and proof of this is that juries do not

need a lesson in ethics before they are asked to judge whether a defendant is guilty of murder or not. The proportionalists, however, tried to develop a novel methodology for defining actions in terms of intention. If, according to Catholic teaching, a person can ward off an attack, even if lethal force is required, as long as he intends to defend himself and not to kill the attacker, then why, the proportionalists wonder, can we not say that one person could justly kill another if he had a very good reason (say, to stop a war)? Why would such an action have to be called “murder” and not “preventing a war”? John Paul II points out that labeling actions in such a way — in terms of what an agent intends to accomplish by them, and not in terms of what they are in themselves — leads to a position where any action could conceivably be justified somehow, which means that nothing would be absolutely forbidden. If Christians thought this historically, then there would never have been any martyrs, since anyone faced with a difficult choice could always rationalize doing something evil for the sake of something good.

## Understanding the moral life

With simple and straightforward arguments such as these, John Paul II did much in *Veritatis Splendor* to get Catholic moral

theology back on track by correcting these two widespread errors. But more than this — and what is perhaps the real legacy of *Veritatis Splendor* — John Paul II also explained why it is so important to uphold the teaching that certain kinds of behavior are absolutely forbidden.

The Christian life is a life lived in love and in imitation of Jesus Christ and of the love that he showed for the church. Just as there are certain actions — such as adultery — that are incompatible with the marital love shared between a husband and wife, so there are certain actions — such as blasphemy — that are incompatible with the love that God has poured into our hearts. In short, behind every “no,” there is a much greater “yes.” If Christians are called not to kill, it is not just because killing is bad, but more fundamentally because life is good. If Christians are called not to fornicate, it is because the good of conjugal love is too great to transgress. This is the legacy of *Veritatis Splendor*. If the moral life is one lived in love, then its rules seem less like burdens placed upon one’s shoulders and more like guideposts that illuminate the boundaries of the straight and narrow path of holiness.

---  
*Matthew Dugandzic is the academic dean of St. Mary's Seminary and University and a permanent board member of the Sacra Doctrina Project.*

Member  
OSV News  
*Catholic Media Association*  
Published the 1st Monday following the 1st Saturday of each month and delivered to all registered parishioners in the San Angelo Diocese.  
Subscription rate for all others:  
\$10 per year  
THIRD CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT  
SAN ANGELO, TEXAS  
Printed by  
*Livestock Weekly*  
San Angelo, Texas

Submissions:

Story suggestions, calendar items, parish briefs, and all other submissions should be emailed to  
bbodiford@sanangelodiocese.org

COPY, PHOTO DEADLINE:  
Third Friday of every month.  
Photos should be in jpeg format.

Letters to the editor are welcome, and should be emailed to  
bbodiford@sanangelodiocese.org

Letters to the editor are printed at the discretion of the editor and identities of the writer are subject to verification. Please include name, address and phone number when submitting letters.

**Bishop Michael J. Sis**  
*Publisher*

**Brian Bodiford**  
*Editor*  
*Director of Communications*

**The West Texas Angelus**  
Official Newspaper of the  
Diocese of San Angelo, Texas  
POSTMASTER: Send all address changes to:  
WEST TEXAS ANGELUS  
P.O. Box 1829  
SAN ANGELO, TX  
76902-1829



# A call to commitment 60 years after March on Washington

*Bishop Michael Sis gave the concluding talk Aug. 26 at an event on the steps of San Angelo City Hall commemorating the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington, the event where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. The March on Washington was held Aug. 28, 1963. The text of Bishop Sis’ remarks is below.*

Thanks to everyone for being here today.

And thanks to the organizing committee of the Martin Luther King Jr. Association for all the planning that has brought us together in a spirit of unity.

We have come a long way since 1963.

Yet still, here in San Angelo, in 2023, we face many challenges to unity and equality:

We still have a long way to go.

When we gather as fellow citizens, it is very common for us to make the Pledge of Allegiance. We know it by heart, but we don’t always live as:

- One nation
- Under God
- Indivisible
- With liberty and justice for all.

Sometimes our language, or the jokes we tell, or the attitude in our hearts, have elements of prejudice, fear, animosity, or hatred.

Sometimes our speech depicts those that we disagree with as enemies.

Sometimes we are silent when we need to speak up, and we are lethargic when we need to act.

At this point in our gathering today, it is time for us to make an internal commitment of our will. A commitment to what?

To be an agent of change for the good.

To live with a spirit of fraternity and solidarity.

To view every human being as our brother and sister.

To ask ourselves honestly, in our quiet moments of prayer, if there is any racism or violence in our hearts, and repent of it.

To teach our children and our grandchildren that all human beings share a common historical origin, the same essential human nature, and the



**Bishop Michael Sis gave the concluding talk Aug. 26 at an event on the steps of San Angelo City Hall commemorating the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington, the event where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. The March on Washington was held Aug. 28, 1963.**

same divine calling and destiny.

To keep our eyes always open for signs of unfairness, discrimination, malice, or prejudice.

To speak the truth in love.

To love our enemies, and bless those who curse us, and pray for those who seek to harm us.

On the part of our institutions, to commit ourselves to best practices of fairness, justice, human dignity, and basic respect for each and every human being.

To celebrate the fact that, in the beautiful worldwide tapestry of humanity, with its glorious variety of race,

ethnicity, size, shape, and color, we are all created in the image and likeness of God.

To cherish and protect every human life, whether convenient or not, regardless of age, location, economic status, language, ethnicity, or skin color.

To open our hearts and minds to God’s gift of new inspiration, new courage, and new life.

To live as people of hope.

To work together with renewed vigor right here in West Texas to bring about a society that is more fair, less divided, and more loving.

To be a city that gives evidence that

people different from one another can live and work collectively in community in a way that is peaceful, productive, and life-giving.

To seek to provide opportunities for people to make a decent living and provide for their families and build a future for their children.

To create a healthier society and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence, or war.

To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

To live truly as one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

## POPE

Continued from Page 2

"Don't forget this; it's very important: To proclaim the Gospel, it is not enough to witness to the good, but it is necessary to be able to endure evil," the pope said.

"Even today, in so many places, inculturating the Gospel and evangelizing cultures requires perseverance and patience, it requires not fearing conflict, not losing heart."

Pope Francis told the crowd he was thinking particularly of a specific country, which he did not name, "where Christians are persecuted because they are Christians and cannot practice their religion well and in peace."

But Mary encourages and reassures Juan Diego, telling him, "Am I not here, I

who am your mother?"

"This is beautiful," the pope said. "So many times, when we are in desolation, in sadness, in difficulty, she also says it to us, to our hearts: 'Am I not here, I who am your mother?'"

After Our Lady of Guadalupe gave Juan Diego a sign — her image on his cloak — and the bishop approved the building of a church, the pope said, he dedicated his life to welcoming pilgrims and evangelizing them.

Today at the Mexican shrine and at Marian shrines around the world, people continue to be evangelized in a "simple and genuine" way, the pope said. "We need to go to these oases of consolation and mercy, where faith is expressed in our mother tongue, where we lay down the labors of life in Our Lady's arms and return to life with peace in our hearts."

## GUADALUPE

Continued from Page 3

"A pesar del cielo, llega lo inesperado, a veces de la propia Iglesia", dijo el Papa.

"No lo olvidemos: para anunciar el Evangelio no basta con dar testimonio del bien, sino que hay que saber soportar el mal", dijo el Papa. "Incluso hoy, en tantos lugares, inculturar el Evangelio y evangelizar las culturas requiere perseverancia y paciencia, requiere no temer el conflicto, no desfallecer".

El Papa Francisco dijo a la multitud que estaba pensando particularmente en un país específico, que no nombró, "donde los cristianos son perseguidos porque son cristianos y no pueden practicar su religión bien y en paz".

Pero María anima y tranquiliza a Juan Diego, diciéndole: "¿No estoy yo aquí, que

soy tu madre?".

"Es hermoso esto", dijo el Papa. "Muchas veces cuando estamos en la desolación, en la tristeza, en la dificultad, también nos lo dice a nosotros, en el corazón: '¿No estoy yo aquí, que soy tu madre?'".

Después de que Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe diera a Juan Diego una señal — su imagen en su manto — y el obispo aprobara la construcción de una iglesia, dijo el Papa, dedicó su vida a acoger peregrinos y a evangelizarlos.

Hoy, en el santuario mexicano y en los santuarios marianos de todo el mundo, se sigue evangelizando a la gente de modo "sencillo y genuino", dijo el Papa. "Necesitamos acudir a estos oasis de consuelo y de misericordia, donde la fe se expresa en lenguaje materno; donde depositamos las fatigas de la vida en los brazos de la Virgen y volvemos a la vida con paz en el corazón".

## ERLANDSON

Continued from Page 13

reading a newspaper or magazine online jumped from 3 percent to 13 percent. A total of 21 percent get information about the church from print or online newspapers. Only parish bulletins or word of mouth rank higher.

For all the chancery naysayers who repeat the cliché that print is dead and urge the killing of the newspaper or magazine to save money, the survey may be a disappointment. But for church leaders committed to keeping Catholics both inspired and informed, it is validation that a both/and approach to communications remains the recipe: Print plus online plus

social media.

The survey also underscores a fact often missing when talking about the cost of a diocesan publication. The most faithful and dedicated Catholics read and rely on them.

CARA found that 62 percent of weekly Mass attendees believe the print version of their diocesan newspaper or magazine is an essential part of how the diocese communicates. Sixty percent of monthly Mass attendees responded similarly. And “54 percent of weekly attendees agree that they would be upset by any suggestion that their diocese stop producing a print version of its publication. Fifty-three percent of monthly attendees responded as such,” the report said.

Only 55 percent of Catholics regularly

contribute to the parish offertory collection. While CARA did not specifically ask this question, my guess is that the largest percentage of those donors would be those weekly attendees and media readers.

The survey recognizes that there are a wide range of Catholic communication efforts, from websites, social media and blogs, to television, radio, video, print, and online. The number of Catholics actively practicing their faith may be in slow decline, but those who are committed are relying now more than ever on Catholic media.

The takeaways are this: church leaders should want to be in the game, not standing on the sidelines while others control the messaging. And they should also want to be committed to providing

resources of high quality because it maintains their connection with their most committed parishioners. This isn’t their only audience, and newspapers and magazines are not their only tools, but they remain essential in a world where secular mass communications are becoming more sophisticated and, too often, more manipulative.

When weighing the cost of their media efforts, dioceses should make sure the mission value of these investments makes it into their spreadsheets as well.

- - -

*Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News. Follow him on Twitter @GregErlandson.*