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WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



Serving Catholics in the Diocese of San Angelo, Texas

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The charitable spirit of St. Vincent de Paul



The St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store at 1241 Walnut Street in Abilene.

WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



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Jay Hobbs is the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store's manager.
By Gloria Johns

Vincent de Paul (April 24, 1581 — Sept. 27, 1660) was a French Catholic priest who dedicated himself to serving the poor. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul — a council or group of those dedicated to his devotion to the poor — was founded in 1833 to help impoverished people living in the slums of Paris, France.

More than three centuries after the death of Vincent de Paul, his commitment of service to the poor is evident throughout the Catholic Diocese of San Angelo in organizations that bear his name and others that are equally faithful to his tradition.

What will stand out to you as you read the description of services for each of these organizations is the uncommon devotion and selflessness of each one of the servant volunteers and workers associated with the charitable mission



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Tess Burton, who has volunteered for 8 years, organizes the books at the Abilene store.

of the Church. In almost every situation, these individuals have multiple responsibilities to family, career, and other volunteer commitments. And yet each speaks with enthusiasm about the needs of clients and their eagerness to serve.

Big Spring

Leticia Pichitino is the president of the St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) of Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Big Spring, Texas. Irene Rodriguez is temporarily serving in that role at this time. The Holy Trinity SVdP provides help to those in need in the community with food distribution, rent and utilities assistance, gas vouchers, emergency travel, and clothing vouchers from a local agency. Located at 1009 Hearn Street, it's best to call 432-606-5000 for hours of availability and services. Or contact the parish office at 432-714-4930.

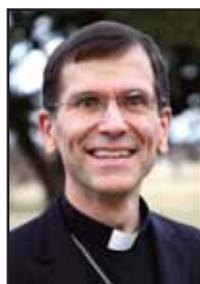
The SVdP building on Hearn Street is in dire need of a refresh to become a place of dignity the clients deserve. Contact Irene Rodriguez if you feel called to participate in this charitable Lenten project.

Sonora

St. Vincent de Paul of Sonora, Texas, affiliated with St. Ann Church, is now called Hearts of Charity. The name change took place in January, reflecting the smaller size of the organization and the difficulty of operating at a national level. Still, according to Director Adelita Alvarez, the community is the recipient of many valuable services, such as seasonal support with coats in the winter and fans in the summer. The agency also provides emergency

From the Bishop's Desk

The origin and meaning of Lent



**Bishop
Michael J. Sis**

Diocese of
San Angelo

• It took the prophet Elijah forty days to reach Mount Horeb, the mountain of God, where he had a powerful experience of prayer with God.

• Before Jesus began his public ministry, he spent forty days in the desert praying and fasting.

Here I would like to offer some reflections on the three ancient practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Prayer is that personal conversation which keeps God at the center of one's life. It is carried out in silent contemplation as well as in community worship.

Fasting includes any voluntary reduction of food, drink, or luxuries. It highlights the fact that humans have a deep, innate hunger for God that cannot be satisfied by material things. God is the greatest treasure of the human heart. St. Augustine said: "You have made us for yourself, O God, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" (*Confessions*, book I, par. 1). Fasting reminds us that there is a source of life that is infinitely more profound than food or drink.

Through our fasting and abstinence, we choose to give up certain things, such as meat, dessert, or alcohol, as an act of personal sacrifice in order to connect more closely with the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. Jesus said in Luke 9:23: "If you want to come after me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow me."

Almsgiving includes acts of fraternal charity that express solidarity with the poor. It serves as a reminder of the Christian teaching that love of God goes hand in hand with love of neighbor.

All these three Lenten disciplines make us more aware. Almsgiving makes us more aware of the needs of others. Fasting makes us more aware of what we consume and what consumes us. Prayer makes us more aware that God is our strength and our savior.

Some Christians who do not understand the practices of Lent will challenge us by asking, "Are you just trying to save yourselves through good works?" The answer is no; our Lenten practices are not intended to prove our own holiness or to win God's love for us. Our salvation was won on the cross in A.D. 33. In response to God's unconditional love, we joyfully carry out our activities of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in order to thank God and to open ourselves more fully to God's gift of grace.

Another question we are sometimes asked is, "If you give up something for Lent, why do you only give it up for Lent, and not all the time?" The answer is that the things we give up for Lent are not necessarily bad in themselves. For example, if one gives up candy or meat or wine or ice cream, it's not because they are evil or bad. They are part of the good fruits of God's earth, but we freely choose to take on a sacrifice by doing without

them, for these reasons: to connect with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, to deepen our solidarity with the poor, to remember not to take these things for granted, and to open ourselves to be filled with Jesus Christ. If we want our heart to be filled with Jesus, then we need to make some room to let him in.

Lent is a time that is specially dedicated to penance and conversion. Conversion is turning away from something and turning toward something else. In Lent, we turn away from shallow superficiality and toward a deeper level of faith. We turn away from noise and distractions and toward God, who is our true fountain of love. Christian conversion is a turning away from the darkness of sin and toward the light of Christ.

The holy season of Lent is intended to help us get out of the rut of our comfortable routines and open the door of our heart to God. Many world religions have their holy seasons. For example, the Muslims have Ramadan, the Jews have Yom Kippur, and we Christians have Lent.

Lent is not just a Catholic thing. In fact, most Christians in the world observe Lent — Catholics and non-Catholics, including the Orthodox, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and many more. The percentage of Christians who do not observe Lent are actually a minority in the Christian world.

Thus, one does not have to be Catholic to observe the season of Lent. Anyone who seeks to follow Christ can choose to prepare for Easter through some special commitment of prayer, fasting, or almsgiving. We Christians believe that the saving events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday are so profound that they merit a conscious personal and communal preparation. After passing through the observance of Lent, the Christian heart is made more ready to celebrate the Paschal Triduum and the victory of Easter.

The Prayer Square

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–15)

This is how you are to pray:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and do not subject us to the final test,
but deliver us from the evil one.

If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

Pope Leo warns of 'irreparable abyss,' if diplomacy doesn't take over violence in Iran, Middle East

By Paulina Guzik
OSV News

Pope Leo XIV issued a fervent appeal for return of diplomacy in "these dramatic hours" in the Middle East and Iran, condemning use of weapons that cause "destruction, pain, and death."

Pope Leo spoke roughly 12 hours after the U.S. and Israel revealed that Iran's supreme leader, 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is among the country's senior leaders killed in their initial assault on Iran, started in the early morning hours on Feb. 28.

During his Sunday Angelus prayer March 1, the pope said he was "following with profound concern" these events and warned of a potential "tragedy of enormous proportions." He appealed for the warring parties to assume "the moral responsibility of halting the spiral of violence" before it becomes "an irreparable abyss."

The pope insisted the nations return to diplomacy. "Stability and peace are not built through mutual threats, nor with weapons that sow destruction, pain, and death, but only through reasonable, authentic, and responsible dialogue," he said.

The ongoing joint U.S. and Israeli attack on Iran has targeted Tehran and cities across Iran, with Gulf countries caught in the crossfire as Iran launches retaliatory strikes.

"Faced with the possibility of a tragedy of enormous proportions, I address to the parties involved a heartfelt appeal to assume the moral responsibility of halting the spiral of violence before it becomes an irreparable abyss," he said.

"May diplomacy regain its role and promote the good of the peoples who yearn for peaceful coexistence based on justice," he added, urging the world to "continue to pray for peace."

What Pope Leo called a "spiral of violence" continued to unfold Sunday as mutual attacks escalated hour by hour throughout the Middle East.

Israel and Iran launched fresh attacks March 1, with the BBC reporting that Iran's state-run Islamic Republic News Agency said Tehran has been hit by 60 attacks in 24 hours, leaving 57 people dead — numbers reportedly provided by the Tehran Province Red Crescent Society.

Israel's military said on X March 1 that its strikes have killed 40 Iranian commanders, including Abdolrahim Mousavi, the chief of staff of Iran's armed forces. Iranian state television confirmed the death.

In the conflict's opening 24 hours, two people were killed in Tel Aviv as an Iranian missile hit a residential building, while 120 people in Israel were injured from Iran's counterstrikes, *The Jerusalem Post* reported.

The Guardian reported Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, was quoted as having called the killing of

Iran's supreme leader "an open war against Muslims" and having said that Iran "considers bloodshed and revenge against the perpetrators and commanders of this crime as its legitimate duty and right, and will fulfill this great responsibility and duty with all its might."

Iran's ally, Russia, condemned Khamenei's killing, with President Vladimir Putin saying that the "murder" of Khamenei was a "cynical violation of all norms of human morality."

President Donald Trump took to Truth Social on March 1 warning Iran to not retaliate further.

"Iran just stated that they are going to hit very hard today, harder than they have ever hit before," President Trump wrote on his social network. He added, "THEY BETTER NOT DO THAT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE IF THEY DO, WE WILL HIT THEM WITH A FORCE THAT HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN BEFORE!"

Pope Leo, during his Angelus appeal, reminded people that in recent days, "we have also received disturbing news of clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan." He raised a "plea for an urgent return to dialogue."

"Let us pray together that harmony may prevail in all the world's conflicts," he said, adding, "Only peace, a gift of God, can heal the wounds between peoples."

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Paulina Guzik is international editor for OSV News. Follow her on X @Guzik_Paulina.

El origen y el significado de la Cuaresma



**Obispo
Michael J. Sis**

Diócesis de
San Ángelo

renta años después de que Dios los rescató de la esclavitud en Egipto y antes de entrar en la tierra prometida.

- El profeta Elías tardó cuarenta días en llegar al monte Horeb, el monte de Dios, donde tuvo una poderosa experiencia de oración con Dios.

- Antes de comenzar su ministerio público, Jesús pasó cuarenta días en el desierto orando y ayunando.

Aquí me gustaría ofrecer algunas reflexiones sobre las tres prácticas antiguas: la oración, el ayuno, y la limosna.

La oración es esa conversación personal que mantiene a Dios en el centro de nuestra vida. Se lleva a cabo tanto en la contemplación silenciosa como en el culto comunitario.

El ayuno incluye cualquier reducción voluntaria de comida, bebida, o lujos. Resalta el hecho de que los seres humanos tenemos un profundo anhelo innato de Dios que no se satisface con cosas materiales. Dios es el mayor tesoro del corazón humano. San Agustín dijo: "Nos creaste para ti, oh Dios, y nuestro corazón está inquieto hasta que descanse en ti" (*Confesiones*, libro I, párr. 1). El ayuno nos recuerda que existe una fuente de vida infinitamente más profunda que la comida o la bebida.

Mediante nuestro ayuno y abstinencia, elegimos renunciar a ciertas cosas, como la carne, los postres, o el alcohol, como un acto de sacrificio personal a modo de conectarnos más estrechamente con el sacrificio de Jesús en la cruz. Jesús dijo en Lucas 9:23: "Si quieres venir en pos de mí, niégate a ti mismo, toma tu cruz cada día, y sígueme."

La limosna incluye actos de caridad fraternal que expresan solidaridad con los pobres. Sirve como recordatorio de la enseñanza cristiana de que el amor a Dios va mano a mano con el amor al prójimo.

Estas tres disciplinas cuaresmales nos hacen más conscientes. La limosna nos hace más conscientes de las necesidades de los demás. El ayuno nos hace más conscientes de lo que consumimos y de lo que nos consume. La oración nos hace más conscientes de que Dios es nuestra fuerza y nuestro salvador.

Algunos cristianos que no comprenden las prácticas de la Cuaresma nos cuestionarán preguntándonos: "¿Ustedes intentan salvarse mediante buenas obras?" La respuesta es no; nuestras prácticas cuaresmales no buscan demostrar nuestra santidad ni ganarnos el amor de Dios. Nuestra salvación se obtuvo en la cruz en el año 33 d.C. En respuesta al amor incondicional de Dios, realizamos con alegría nuestras actividades de oración, ayuno, y limosna para agradecerle y abrimos más plenamente a su gracia.

Otra pregunta que a veces nos hacen es: "Si renuncias a algo durante la Cuaresma, ¿por qué solo durante la Cuaresma y no siempre?" La respuesta es que las cosas a las que renunciamos durante la Cuaresma no son necesariamente malas en sí mismas. Por ejemplo, si renunciamos a los dulces, la carne, el vino o el helado, no es porque sean malos. Son parte de los buenos frutos de la tierra de Dios,

pero elegimos libremente asumir un sacrificio al prescindir de ellos, por estas razones: para conectar con el sacrificio de Jesús en la cruz, para profundizar nuestra solidaridad con los pobres, para recordar que no debemos dar estas cosas por sentado, y para abrírnos a ser llenos de Jesucristo. Si queremos que nuestro corazón se llene de Jesús, entonces necesitamos dejarle espacio para entrar.

La Cuaresma es un tiempo especialmente dedicado a la penitencia y la conversión. La conversión es alejarse de algo y volverse hacia otra cosa. En la Cuaresma, nos alejamos de la superficialidad y nos dirigimos hacia una fe más profunda. Nos alejamos del ruido y las distracciones y nos dirigimos hacia Dios, quien es nuestra verdadera fuente de amor. La conversión cristiana es alejarse de la oscuridad del pecado y acercarse a la luz de Cristo.

El tiempo sagrado de la Cuaresma tiene como objetivo ayudarnos a salir de la rutina cómoda y abrir la puerta de nuestro corazón a Dios. Muchas religiones del mundo tienen sus propios tiempos sagrados. Por ejemplo, los musulmanes tienen el Ramadán, los judíos el Yom Kipur, y los cristianos la Cuaresma.

La Cuaresma no es solo una cuestión católica. De hecho, la mayoría de los cristianos del mundo la celebran: católicos y no católicos, incluyendo ortodoxos, luteranos, episcopalianos, metodistas, presbiterianos, y muchos más. El porcentaje de cristianos que no celebran la Cuaresma es, de hecho, una minoría en el mundo cristiano.

Así pues, no es necesario ser católico para observar la Cuaresma. Cualquiera que busque seguir a Cristo puede optar por prepararse para la Pascua mediante un compromiso especial de oración, ayuno, o limosna. Los cristianos creemos que los acontecimientos salvíficos del Viernes Santo y el Domingo de Pascua son tan profundos que ameritan una preparación consciente, personal y comunitaria. Tras la observancia de la Cuaresma, el corazón cristiano se prepara mejor para celebrar el Triduo Pascual y la victoria de la Pascua.

Espacio de Oración

El Padrenuestro (Mateo 6:9-15)

Ustedes, pues, recen así:
Padre nuestro, que estás en el Cielo,
santificado sea tu Nombre,
venga tu Reino,
hágase tu voluntad
así en la tierra como en el Cielo.
Danos hoy el pan que nos corresponde;
y perdona nuestras deudas,
como también nosotros
perdonamos a nuestros deudores;
y no nos dejes caer en la tentación,
sino líbranos del Maligno.

Porque si ustedes perdonan a los hombres sus ofensas, también el Padre celestial les perdonará a ustedes. Pero si ustedes no perdonan a los demás, tampoco el Padre les perdonará a ustedes.

El Papa León advierte que si la diplomacia no se impone a la violencia en Irán y Oriente Medio la situación se volver un 'abismo irreparable'

Por Paulina Guzik
OSV News

El Papa León XIV ha hecho un ferviente llamamiento para que se restablezca la diplomacia en "estas horas dramáticas" en Oriente Medio e Irán, condenando el uso de armas que causan "destrucción, dolor y muerte".

El Papa León pronunció estas palabras aproximadamente 12 horas después de que Estados Unidos e Israel revelaran que el líder supremo de Irán, el ayatolá Alí Jamenei, de 86 años, se encuentra entre los altos dirigentes del país asesinados en su ataque inicial contra Irán, iniciado en la mañana del 28 de febrero.

Durante su oración dominical del Ángelus del 1 de marzo, el Papa dijo que estaba siguiendo "con profunda preocupación" estos acontecimientos y advirtió de una posible "tragedia de enormes proporciones". Hizo un llamamiento encarecido a las partes beligerantes para que asumieran "la responsabilidad moral de detener la espiral de violencia" antes de que se convirtiera en "un abismo irreparable".

El Papa insistió en que las naciones volvieran a la diplomacia.

"La estabilidad y la paz no se construyen con amenazas mutuas, ni con armas, que siembran destrucción, dolor y muerte, sino solo a través de un diálogo razonable, auténtico y responsable", afirmó.

El actual ataque conjunto de Estados Unidos e Israel contra Irán ha tenido como objetivo Teherán y otras ciudades del país, con los países del Golfo atrapados en el fuego cruzado mientras Irán lanza ataques de represalia.

"Ante la posibilidad de una tragedia de enormes proporciones, hago un llamamiento encarecido a las partes implicadas para que asuman la responsabilidad moral de detener la espiral de violencia antes de que se convierta en un abismo irreparable", dijo el Santo Padre.

"Que la diplomacia recupere su papel y se promueva el bien de los pueblos, que anhelan una convivencia pacífica, basada en la justicia", añadió, instando al mundo a "seguir rezando por la paz".

Lo que el Papa León denominó una "espiral de violencia" siguió desarrollándose el domingo, a medida que los ataques mutuos se intensificaban hora tras hora en todo Oriente Medio.

Israel e Irán lanzaron nuevos ataques el 1 de marzo, y la BBC informó de que la Agencia de Noticias de la República Islámica, gestionada por el Estado iraní, había declarado que Teherán había sufrido 60 ataques en 24 horas, que habían dejado 57 muertos, cifras proporcionadas, según se informa, por la Sociedad de la Media Luna Roja de la provincia de Teherán.

El ejército israelí afirmó el 1 de marzo que sus ataques habían matado a 40 comandantes iraníes, entre ellos Abdollah Mousavi, jefe del Estado Mayor de las Fuerzas Armadas de Irán. La televisión estatal iraní confirmó la muerte.

En las primeras 24 horas del conflicto, dos personas murieron en Tel Aviv cuando un misil iraní impactó en un edificio residencial, mientras que 120 personas resultaron heridas en Israel por los contraataques de Irán, según informó *The Jerusalem Post*.

The Guardian informó de que el presidente de Irán, Ma-

soud Pezeshkian, calificó el asesinato del líder supremo de Irán como "una guerra abierta contra los musulmanes" y afirmó que Irán "considera el derramamiento de sangre y la venganza contra los autores y comandantes de este crimen como su deber y derecho legítimos, y cumplirá con esta gran responsabilidad y deber con todas sus fuerzas".

Rusia, país aliado de Irán, condenó el asesinato de Jamenei, y el presidente Vladimir Putin afirmó que el "asesinato" de Jamenei era una "violación cínica de todas las normas de la moralidad humana".

El presidente Donald Trump publicó el 1 de marzo en Truth Social una advertencia a Irán para que no tomara más represalias.

"Irán acaba de declarar que hoy va a golpear muy fuerte, más fuerte que nunca", escribió el presidente Trump en su red social.

Añadió: "¡PERO MEJOR QUE NO LO HAGAN, PORQUE SI LO HACEN, LES GOLPEAREMOS CON UNA FUERZA NUNCA ANTES VISTA!".

El Papa León, durante su llamamiento del Ángelus, recordó a la gente que en los últimos días "llegan además noticias preocupantes de enfrentamientos entre Pakistán y Afganistán". Y elevó una "súplica por un urgente retorno al diálogo".

"Recemos juntos para que prevalezca la concordia en todos los conflictos del mundo", dijo, y añadió: "Solo la paz, don de Dios, puede sanar las heridas entre los pueblos".

Paulina Guzik es editora internacional de OSV News. Síguela en X @Guzik_Paulina.

CALENDARS

Please pray for our clergy



March

- 1** Deacon Johnny Rodriguez (B)
1 Rev. Joseph Scharrer, CPPS. (D — 1994)
3 Rev. Joshua Gray (B)
7 Deacon Victor Ramirez (B)
10 Rev. Arockiaraj Gali (D — 2021)
10 Rev. Stephen Kennelly (D — 2017)
10 Deacon Charles Lambert (B)
10 Deacon Bonifacio Rodriguez (D — 2017)
11 Deacon William Brady (B)
11 Deacon Albert Libertore (D — 1977)
12 Deacon Fred Greene (B)
14 Rev. George Fey CPPS (D — 2013)
15 Deacon Cosme Ureta (D — 2011)
15 Rev. Msgr. Benedict Zientek (D — 2023)
17 Deacon Allan Lange (B)
20 Deacon Flabio Franco (D — 2024)
21 Deacon Frank Trudo (D — 1992)
22 Rev. George Green, OMI (D — 1987)
23 Rev. Paul Kodakarakaran (B)
25 Rev. Anthony Sloan (O — 2000)
26 Rev. Serran Braun (D — 1999)
26 Rev. Kevin Lenius (B)
26 Deacon Audon Saldivar (D — 2000)
26 Deacon Steven Zimmerman (B)
27 Rev. Prem Thumma (B)
28 Deacon Alexander Perez (B)
30 Rev. Freddy Perez (B)
31 Deacon Alexander Chick (B)
31 Deacon Harry Pelto (B)
31 Rev. Santiago Udayar (O — 1989)

April

- 2** Rev. Ignatius Edet (B)
2 Deacon Lazaro Sevier (D — 2009)
3 Deacon Edward Martinez (D — 1985)
3 Deacon Alan Neff (D — 2016)
4 Deacon Andres Hernandez (D — 2013)
4 Deacon Hector Mendez (B)
4 Rev. Jim Nugent, C.Ss.R (D — 2012)
7 Deacon Jerry Treviño (D — 2017)
12 Rev. Patrick Akpanobong (B)
13 Rev. Innocent Eziefule (B)
16 Deacon Eliseo Carrillo (D — 1989)
17 Deacon Antonio Gonzalez (D — 2025)
17 Deacon Daniel Holguin (B)
17 Rev. Msgr. James Plagens (D — 2015)
17 Rev. Lee Zimmerman, CM (D — 2000)
19 Rev. John Lavin (D — 1983)
19 Rev. Georgius Sexton, OMI (D — 1979)
19 Rev. Jeevan Kamalapuram (O — 2007)
20 Deacon Claudio Sanchez (B)
21 Rev. Thomas Leahy, SAC (D — 1969)
22 Deacon Jesus Vasquez (D — 2018)
23 Rev. Louis Droll (D — 2006)
23 Deacon Walter Hammons (B)
24 Rev. Msgr. Fred Nawarskas (B)
24 Rev. Balachandra Nagipogu (O — 2006)
25 Deacon Dwain Hennessey (B)
25 Deacon Marcos Mata (B)
25 Deacon Juan Muñoz (D — 2007)
27 Rev. John Collet, OMI (D — 2022)
29 Deacon Robert Daigle (D — 1986)
30 Rev. Gilbert Rodriguez (B)
30 Rev. Joe Barbieri — (O — 1988)

**B = Birthday | O = Date of Ordination
D = Date of Death**

(Dates of birth and ordination given for living clergy; date of death for deceased.)



Bishop's Calendar

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

March 2026

- 1** ODESSA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Rite of Election at 3:30 p.m.
1 MIDLAND, The Way Retreat Center, Project Andrew at 6:00 p.m.
2–6 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Annual Priests' Retreat
8 ROWENA, St. Joseph, Confirmation Mass at 11:00 a.m.
8 ABILENE, St. Vincent Pallotti, Young Adult leaders meeting
11 WALL, St. Ambrose, High School religious education at 6:30 p.m.
12 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priest Personnel Board meeting at 10:30 a.m.
13 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Finance Council meeting at 11:00 a.m.
14 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Deacon Community Board meeting at 9:30 a.m.
14 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Diaconal Formation Mass at 11:30 a.m.
14 MILES, St. Thomas, Confirmation Mass at 5:30 p.m.
15 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Diaconal Formation Mass at 11:00 a.m.
16–20 MISSOURI, Seminary visits
21 SAN ANGELO, St. Margaret, Mass at 5:00 p.m.
22 SAN ANGELO, St. Margaret, Masses at 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., and 12:00 noon
22–23 SAN ANTONIO, TCCB Spring meeting
24 MIDLAND, San Miguel Arcángel, Adult Confirmation Mass at 7:00 p.m.
26 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Presbyteral Council meeting at 11:00 a.m.
29 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Palm Sunday Mass at 10:00 a.m.
29 SAN ANGELO, Holy Angels, Seder Meal at 5:00 p.m.
31 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Chrism Mass at 11:00 a.m.

April 2026

- 2** SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Mass of the

- 3** Lord's Supper at 6:30 p.m.
3 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Service of the Lord's Passion at 6:30 p.m.
4 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Easter Vigil at 8:30 p.m.
5 CARLSBAD, St. Therese, Mass and blessing of narthex at 9:00 a.m.
5 SAN ANGELO, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Spanish Mass at 12:00 p.m.
8 BALLINGER, St. Mary, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
11 FORT STOCKTON, Our Lady of Guadalupe (St. Agnes), Confirmation Mass at 5:30 p.m.
12 RANKIN, St. Thomas the Apostle, Confirmation Mass at 9:00 a.m.
12 BIG LAKE, St. Margaret of Cortona, Confirmation Mass at 12:30 p.m.
12 MIDLAND, The Way Retreat Center, Project Miriam at 6:00 p.m.
14 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Catholic Charitable Foundation Board meeting at 10:00 a.m.
15 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Priest Personnel Board meeting at 9:30 a.m.
15 WALL, St. Ambrose, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
17 MIDLAND, St. Ann, Confirmation Mass at 6:30 p.m.
18 MIDLAND, Holy Cross Catholic High School, Diocesan Schools Commission at 9:30 a.m.
19 GARDEN CITY, St. Lawrence, Confirmation Mass at 10:00 a.m.
20 SAN ANGELO, ISD Board of Trustees meeting at 5:15 p.m.
22 COLEMAN, Sacred Heart, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.
23 SAN ANGELO, Diocesan Liturgical Commission meeting at 1:00 p.m.
24–25 DALLAS, Knights of Columbus State Convention
26 GREENWOOD, St. Rita of Cascia, Confirmation Mass at 11:30 a.m.
26 MIDLAND, San Miguel Arcángel, Confirmation Mass at 5:00 p.m.
27 SAN ANGELO, Christ the King Retreat Center, Diocesan Mission Council meeting at 4:00 p.m.
30 ODESSA, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Confirmation Mass at 6:00 p.m.



Christ the King Retreat Center

March 2026

- 2–6** DOSA Priests' Annual Retreat
9 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
13–15 Deacon Formation
19–22 Men's Walk to Emmaus
23 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
27–29 Engaged Encounter/Natural Family Planning

April 2026

- 3** CKRC Offices closed for Good Friday
9 DOSA Staff Meeting, Mass & Lunch
10–12 Deacon Formation
13 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group
18 ASU Newman Center Gala
24–26 Engaged Encounter/Natural Family Planning
27 Heart of Mercy Prayer Group

Special Collections

February 18–April 2, 2026 Operation Rice Bowl

Be sure to pick up a Rice Bowl from your parish to collect donations for Catholic Relief Services during Lent.

You can also give online at <https://www.crsrice-bowl.org>.

March 15, 2026 Catholic Relief Services Collection

Across the globe, war, natural disasters, political strife, extreme poverty, and human trafficking combine to affect families in ways often unimaginable, leaving many separated for long periods of time. The Catholic Relief Services Collection (CRSC) values families and works to provide for their needs by protecting vulnerable children, reuniting families, and encouraging legislation that reflects the importance of family in society.

Catholic agencies that prioritize the family and protect the life and dignity of each person are supported by funding from this collection. These agencies include international relief and development organizations, programs for refugee resettlement, immigration legal services, advocacy and emergency relief, and evangelization and pastoral ministry. Your support of the Catholic Relief Services Collection helps international relief and solidarity efforts here at home and around the world.

April 3, 2026 Pontifical Collection for the Holy Land

This pontifical collection collects funds for support of the holy places, but above all for those pastoral, charitable, educational, and social works which the Church supports in the Holy Land for the welfare of their Christian brethren and of the local communities.

Bishop Sis addresses tapestry of leaders in Abilene

By Loretta Fulton

In a sense, Bishop Michael Sis was “preaching to the choir” when he addressed the Abilene Association of Congregations about ecumenism.

By its very definition, the association is ecumenical, consisting of members who represent various Christian traditions in Abilene. Bishop Sis spoke at the Feb. 25 meeting held at Holy Family Catholic Church. The nine yearly meetings rotate among the churches represented.

The Catholic perspective on ecumenism derives from the Gospel of John, chapter 17, verses 20–21:

“Father, I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

The bishop noted that the variety of denominations in the world allows for a wide diversity of approaches to Christ but also makes it harder for non-Christians to be convinced to join.

“If you guys are so divided among yourselves, why should I join you?” they ask.

Bishop Sis laid out four working principles of ecumenism:

1. We pray for the help of the Holy Spirit.
2. We celebrate what we have in common, and we respect our differences.
3. There is unity in diversity.
4. We seek active partnerships in areas of common pursuit.

Abilene is a good example of various denominations working together to achieve a common goal. Bishop Sis recalled being at a meeting several years ago at Baptist-affiliated Hardin-Simmons University to voice opinions on why the City Council should deny

payday lending loans in Abilene. The council ended up giving the green light to payday loans, but the meeting brought people together for the common good.

“We tried together,” Bishop Sis said.

The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops maintains a staff in Austin to address issues before the Texas Legislature. Likewise, the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas hosts pastors before each legislative session to equip them to advocate for public policy issues. It is a perfect example, Bishop Sis said, of different Christian traditions working together for good.

“They’re one of our greatest allies,” he said.

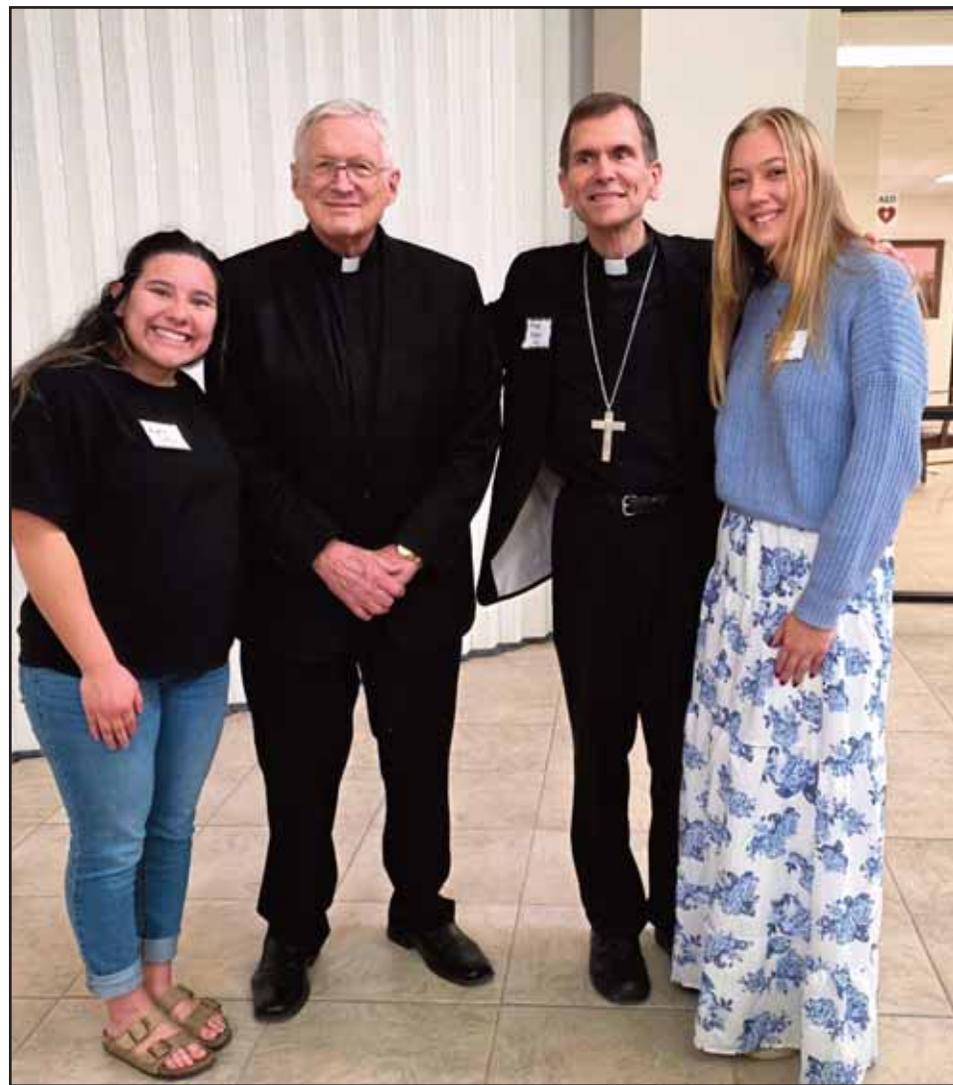
Bishop Sis also cited Pregnancy Resources of Abilene and the Safe Haven Baby Box at Abilene’s Fire Station No. 7 as examples of “collaboration in works of mercy” as a means of promoting ecumenism. Karen Light, a member of Holy Family Catholic Church, took the initiative and set things in motion to bring the first Baby Box in Texas to Abilene. It was dedicated April 2, 2024, with Bishop Sis as one of the speakers.

The bishop emphasized that “unity does not have to be uniformity,” and in fact argued that “uniformity” would make for a dull world. He cited the family and the beauty of a tapestry as examples. If all members of a family were identical, “it would just be a monotonous uniformity.”

A tapestry is beautiful because of its variety of textures and colors. If all the threads were identical, the tapestry would be boring. It is the same with humanity.

“Together, we form a beautiful human tapestry,” he said.

Loretta Fulton is a freelance writer in Abilene.



COURTESY AIDA PANTOJA

Avery Ortiz, Msgr. Fred Nawarskas, Bishop Michael Sis, and Eleanor Larson posed for a photo at the Abilene Association of Congregations meeting Feb. 25.

Lenten Penance Services

Below is a list of upcoming Lenten Penance Services in the Diocese of San Angelo. For more information, please contact the parish hosting the service.

March 10

6:00 p.m. — Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, El-dorado

6:30 p.m. — St. Mary Queen of Peace Parish, Brownwood

March 11

6:30 p.m. — St. Mary, Star of the Sea Parish, Ballinger

6:30 p.m. — Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Ozona

March 12

6:00 p.m. — St. Mary Parish, Odessa

6:30 p.m. — St. Ann Parish, Colorado City

6:30 p.m. — Holy Angels Parish, San Angelo

March 16

6:30 p.m. — St. Joseph Parish, Rowena

March 17

6:00 p.m. — St. Agnes Church, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Fort Stockton

6:30 p.m. — St. Ambrose Parish, Wall

March 18

6:00 p.m. — St. Margaret of Cortona, Big Lake

6:30 p.m. — St. Vincent Pallotti Parish, Abilene

7:00 p.m. — San Miguel Arcángel Parish, Midland

March 19

6:00 p.m. — St. Margaret of Scotland Parish, San Angelo

6:30 p.m. — Sacred Heart Parish, Abilene

7:00 p.m. — Holy Redeemer Parish, Odessa

March 20

6:00 p.m. — Good Shepherd Parish, Crane

6:30 p.m. — St. Joseph Parish, San Angelo

March 24

6:00 p.m. — St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Odessa

6:30 p.m. — Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart, San Angelo

March 25

6:00 p.m. — St. Lawrence Parish, St. Lawrence

March 26

6:00 p.m. — St. Patrick Parish, Brady

6:00 p.m. — St. Joseph Parish, Stanton

March 27

All day — Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Midland

March 30

7:00 p.m. — Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Andrews

March 31

6:00 p.m. — St. Ann Parish, Midland

April 1

6:00 p.m. — St. Joseph Parish, Odessa

6:30 p.m. — Holy Spirit Parish, Sweetwater

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 or by calling 800-276-1562 (national hotline).

Reportar Abuso Sexual

La Diócesis Católica de San Angelo 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 Angelo, 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 o llamando al 800-276-1562 (línea directa nacional).

Charismatic Corner: Poverty of spirit and the greatness of God's freedom

By Louis Brown

The road to restoration, renewal, and ultimately freedom runs along the road, the way, of repentance. Since the fall through the sin, of our first parents, every human person struggles with their sin, wounds, and offenses against God. Every human person also struggles with the sins, wounds, and offenses of others. Yet despite our failings, our Lord offers to liberate each one of us from slavery to sin and to deliver us to an eternal life of joy, peace, and freedom. This turning away from sin and turning toward Christ, who is love itself, is called repentance.

Repent! The call to repentance was a significant part of the message of Moses to the Israelites. It was the message of John the Baptist to the Jewish people in the wilderness. It is the message Our Lady of Fatima gives to the world. Repentance was the act and message of St. John Paul II at the Western Wall in Jerusalem in 2000. And repentance is the call our Lord sends to each of us every day: repent, turn away from slavery, turn to him, and be free.

How do we repent? We repent initially through the recognition that something is wrong within us, that something is not quite right. We repent through coming to know the reality of our own personal poverty. We repent by admitting the truth that we have nothing without God and desperately need his grace. We repent through the realization that we can be who we are only through God's grace.

Repentance begins with the sincere recognition that we have nothing without God. Repentance begins with understanding that our nothingness creates extraordinary space for God to fill us with his fullness. We repent by

telling our Lord that we can do nothing good of our own accord but that with him, we have everything. When we become more deeply aware of our own poverty — of our own failings, sins, and wounds — we must then communicate to our Lord our sincere sorrow for our failures. Once we become aware of some sin or area in our lives requiring conversion it is good to pray to our Lord immediately and to tell him that we repent. It is ideal to then follow up on this prayer of repentance by seeking to be reconciled with God through the sacrament of confession, that we might receive the supernatural grace of God's mercy and healing, and receive the strength to turn more powerfully toward Jesus Christ. Every day we can seek to turn more fully toward God, to go deeper into his heart of mercy, and to never go back to the sin or failing for which we repented.

In the spirit of poverty we can continue to allow God to fill us with his love. We can open up our mouths wide and allow the Lord to fill it with his grace so as to make our repentance and conversion permanent. We can deepen our act of repentance and draw closer to God's heart through praying the rosary, through fasting in reparation for all the sins of our life, and through frequent reception of the sacrament of reconciliation.

We can seek further healing through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord seeks to more fully restore each of us to our eternal inheritance as his sons and daughters. He wants us to be free. Through encountering the Holy Spirit, whether it be through inner healing sessions such as the inner healing approach of the Missionaries of the New Evangelization, through Unbound, or through other prayer sessions, healing retreats, or Life in the Spirit seminars, our Lord will remove the lies, unforgiveness, shame, lust,

anger, pride, and other evils that have been obstacles, blockages, or sometimes massive walls that have locked us into a world that is so much less than the fullness of freedom for God's children. The inner healing that Christ wants to give to each of us, every day of every year of our lives, first requires that we give up those things that would destroy. Healing requires that we "let go" of the ring of power, so to speak, the sin and immoral patterns that we falsely cling to for freedom, but which actually enslave us. These patterns of sin, would, if left unchecked, eventually destroy us.

Freedom, love, joy, and peace lay ahead on the way before us. Yet to get to the destination for which each of us are made, to find ourselves, and ultimately to find Christ, we must first go on the way, on the long but beautiful road of repentance.

Louis Brown serves as the Executive Director of the Christ Medicus Foundation (CMF), a Catholic health care nonprofit whose mission is to share the healing love of Jesus Christ through defending religious freedom and offering pro-life health care options in the marketplace. Louis is blessed to volunteer with a Catholic healing ministry in the Washington, D.C., area and serves on the Pentecost Today USA Council.

Reprint from *Pentecost Today Magazine* 2021, Issue 1, National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the US @ www.PentecostTodayUSA.org.

Go to CatholicCharismatic.com to find our San Angelo diocesan prayer groups and events.

Priest retreat 2026 led by Father Mitch Pacwa



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



Jesuit Father Mitch Pacwa was the retreat master for the annual Diocese of San Angelo Priests' Retreat, held March 2–6, 2026, at Christ the King Retreat Center in San Angelo. In these photos, Father Pacwa spoke and preached to the gathered priests of the diocese.

COURTESY

Lebanese archbishop: Innocents are 'paying the price' of Middle East war

By Junno Arocho Esteves
OSV News

As the scourge of war spreads across the Middle East, including Lebanon, the ones paying the ultimate price are the innocent men, women, and children who want to live in peace, said Melkite Greek Catholic Archbishop Georges Iskandar of Tyre.

In a message to OSV News March 2, Archbishop Iskandar said the region was awakened at midnight "to the sound of intense airstrikes" by Israel in "an abrupt escalation that civilians did not anticipate."

"What weighs most heavily upon the heart is that those paying the price are simple and peaceful people: families in their homes, children, the sick, and the elderly — men and women who have no part in the calculations of greater conflicts and no responsibility for the forces that have brought about this violence," the Melkite archbishop said.

"In a matter of moments, they found themselves at the center of a storm they did not choose, armed only with fear and prayer," he added.

Hours after the U.S. and Israel launched a Feb. 28 attack on Iran, resulting in the death of Iran's longtime supreme leader, 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Hezbollah militants fired missiles and drones on an Israeli military outpost in Haifa.

In response, Israel fired missiles on southern Lebanon and issued evacuation notices to dozens of villages in southern and eastern Lebanon, prompting mass displacement. Archbishop Iskandar confirmed to OSV News that the "rapid Israeli warnings" for residents to evacuate came "within a very short timeframe."

"Within minutes, the roads were overwhelmed with vehicles, and traffic came to a standstill for long hours," he said. "Families with children and elderly relatives were stranded on the roads, uncertain where to go, carrying only what they could gather in haste, leaving behind homes, memories, and livelihoods."

"It was a painful sight: unarmed civilians fleeing danger, not because they are parties to a conflict, but because the geography in which they live suddenly became a theater of confrontation," the archbishop lamented.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam condemned Hezbollah's attack, saying that "launching rockets from southern Lebanon is an irresponsible and suspicious act."

"It endangers Lebanon's security and safety and provides Israel with pretexts to continue its aggressions against it," he posted on X March 2.

The papal foundation Aid to the Church in Need, or ACN, issued a statement March 2, warning that the escalation of violence across the Middle East could have "catastrophic consequences for Christian communities throughout the region."

See **LEBANON**, Page 18

CCD or Faith Formation? What's in a name?

By Alison Pope

I learned from an early age that names matter. Even though it's been close to 40 years, I still vividly remember my first day of first grade. We had moved to town that summer, so I was the new girl. We were using our Big Chief tablets to practice writing our names as Mrs. Sullivan walked past my desk and stopped. She looked at my paper and then told me I was spelling my name incorrectly. I was a people pleaser at that young age (my, how things have changed), so I very politely told her that I was, in fact, spelling my name correctly. I was sent to the principal's office for arguing with her. The principal called my mom, who encouraged the principal to check my file and look at the copy of my birth certificate she had provided when she had enrolled me. The principal escorted me back to class and informed Mrs. Sullivan that I was right and had been spelling my name correctly.

Many years later, and I often find myself reminding others that names matter, especially the names we call different ministries. The one that continues to come up repeatedly is when a parish still uses the term "CCD." Not only is the term outdated and inaccurate, most of those who use the acronym do not even know what it stands for.

CCD stands for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. It was originally founded in 1562 in Milan. This was during the Counter-Reformation, a time when the Catholic Church was working to improve the religious knowledge of its members in response to the Protestant Reformation. In 1905, Pope Pius X issued the encyclical *Acerbo Nimis*, which directed every parish to have a CCD program to combat the ignorance of divine things. In 1934, the United States bishops established a national office for the CCD to standardize the curriculum being used.

In its modern usage, the term CCD was used for the classes taught to school age children to learn the basic doctrines of the faith. It was primarily based on knowledge of facts and often focused on memorization. It was later replaced with the term Religious Education.

Like CCD, Religious Education (or Parish School of Religious in some parishes) by definition and description tended to focus on learning of facts so they could be repeated and implied a traditional classroom instruction only. It is a limited process where people are brought together to learn about the faith on a limited basis.

The term that is now recommended we use is Faith Formation. This envisions a more comprehensive, life-long process that encompasses all ages from birth to death. Faith Formation is seen as more than simply memorizing facts of the faith but should involve connecting those facts with the heart. Faith Formation first and foremost brings all participants into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. It also helps participants learn how to live out their faith in their daily life. Faith Formation also recognizes that while some aspect of traditional learning is

necessary, learning about the faith takes place in a variety of contexts — the lived experience of the faith community, prayer, liturgy, the domestic church, and the many ways God is present in our lives, both inside the church walls and outside the walls as well.

Using the term Faith Formation is more than simply a rebranding exercise, it reflects a fundamental shift in how the Church views growth in faith. A comprehensive Faith Formation program helps us to get people out of the "graduation" mindset. I have heard people from all over the country lament on how many parents see the celebration of a sacrament as an end to their child's learning. The way we have programs set up contributes to that mentality, especially when we do not offer any Faith Formation for the teens who have celebrated confirmation or for the adults of our parishes. Faith Formation suggests that the goal isn't just to pass a test on facts and celebrate a sacrament, but to develop a personal relationship with God.

Historically, CCD and Religious Education have been viewed as something for children. The *Directory for Catechesis*, however, reminds us that "Catechesis for adults ... must be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it. This implies that the catechesis of other age groups should have it for a point of reference" (77). Adults should be actively engaged in faith formation to be the example for the younger generations that learning about and growing in faith is a life-long process.

The "Confraternity" in CCD originally referred to a specific group of teachers. A comprehensive Faith Formation program reminds us of the importance of the role of the family — the domestic church — and emphasizes that parents are the primary educators of their children's faith. When we focus on faith formation with all ages and stages of life, we help strengthen the domestic church by accompanying parents as the primary catechists of their children.

In the current diocesan pastoral plan, "Called to Flourish: Growing into Our Full Potential" one of the initiatives for parishes in year one is to "Evaluate current faith formation offerings for all age levels and make plans to adjust/change as needed in Year Two." I would challenge those working to implement this pastoral plan at our parishes and mission to consider the name of your ministries and offerings as part of that evaluation. Do the names we use, specifically when looking at our catechetical offerings, accurately reflect the goals of our programs? Or are we hanging onto an outdated and inaccurate name out of nostalgia or lack of knowledge? If we want to serve God's people to the best of our abilities, are we called to simply have them memorize facts, or are we called to engage them in forming their faith throughout their entire lives?

Alison Pope is Director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of San Angelo.

In times of conflict, pray this prayer to St. Francis by Pope Leo

By OSV News

As tensions escalate following the Feb. 28 U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran, we share this prayer to St. Francis of Assisi — a timeless intercessor for peace — which Pope Leo XIV shared with leaders of the Franciscan order on the beginning of the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' death in January 2026.

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace, intercede for us before the Lord.

You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano, teach us to seek in him the source of all reconciliation that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war and misunderstanding, give us the courage to build bridges where the world raises up boundaries.

In this time afflicted by conflict and division, intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers: unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ.

Amen.

From Algeria to Angola, Africans hope message of peace, dialogue will resonate during papal trip

YAOUNDE, Cameroon (OSV News) -- Church leaders across Africa are expressing deep joy as Pope Leo prepares for his first trip to the continent, April 13–23, with stops in Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea. The Vatican says the journey will focus on peace, care for the poor and reconciliation. In Algeria, bishops said the pope comes "as an apostle of peace," walking in the footsteps of St. Augustine of Hippo in a nation that is 99% Sunni Muslim and home to a small but vibrant Catholic community. In conflict-scarred Cameroon, where separatist violence has killed thousands, Church leaders call the visit a "rising sun" of hope. Angola, still healing from decades of war, is mobilizing nationwide, with hopes for a message of reconciliation, especially for its young people. The trip concludes in Equatorial Guinea, marking 44 years since St. John Paul II visited, and celebrating 170 years of evangelization in the majority-Catholic nation. The pope's first stop in Equatorial Guinea will be in the city of Mongomo where he will meet with all priests and catechists from all the dioceses of the country. He will then travel to Bata and will end his three-day visit in Malabo.

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MARCH 21, 2026



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**GUEST SPEAKER:
FR. FELIX ARCHIBONG**



Father Felix Archibong is the pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Eldorado & St. Ann Parish in Sonora. He was a seminarian at Assumption Seminary in San Antonio and was ordained by Bishop Sis on May 30, 2015, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in San Angelo. Father Felix is a native of Calabar, a coastal city in southeastern Nigeria. "My desire to become a priest began when I was a little boy. I was about seven years old when I had feelings to be a priest to serve God's people. My father was quick to notice this interest in me and did all he could to nurture it."

Come & bring a friend and enjoy a catered breakfast by Charlie Blane Catering, fellowship, praise & worship music by Sacred Sound, intercessory prayer and Fr. Felix's testimony.

3 ways to purchase tickets: 1. Eventbrite 2. Fill out the form below, submit by mail, & postmark by 4/8/26. 3. Contact a service team member with the numbers provided.



St Mary's Catholic Church Hall
7 W. Avenue N
San Angelo, TX 76903

**Our Lady of Fatima, San Angelo
April 11, 2026**

9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Communion Service will be celebrated @ 7:30 a.m.

**Tickets are \$25 per person, if purchased by April 8th.
TICKETS WILL NOT BE SOLD AT THE DOOR.**
After 4/8/26, the cost is \$30. Call Mary Padilla at 325-245-6663 to check availability and to make reservations.

Our Lady of Fatima Service Team	
Roxanne Adame, Coordinator	325-650-0172
Isabel Gonzalez, Assistant Coordinator	325-227-2137
Vickie Rivero, Secretary	325-812-3852
Mary Padilla, Treasurer	325-245-6663
Elvira Gonzales, Historian	325-315-5978

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Mail Registration Form

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 Additional Guest names may be written on back of this form.
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Enclosed is \$ _____ for _____ reservations.

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Check payable to: *Magnificat*
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- Int'l Ministry based on "The Visitation" Luke 1:39
- Diocesan Approval by Bishop *Michael Sis*
- Spiritual Director: *Deacon Mike Lopez*
- All Clergy & Religious are Complimentary –
Call 325-245-6663 by 4/8/26 to confirm attendance.
- Your check (payable to *Magnificat*) is your receipt.
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- **Scan the QR code for Eventbrite tickets \$25 + fee**
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For more information about Magnificat, visit
www.magnificat-ministry.net/chapters/tx-san-angelo/

Vatican synod study group proposes creation of pontifical commission for new technologies

By Courtney Mares
OSV News

ROME — A Synod on Synodality study group has recommended the creation of a new "Pontifical Commission for Digital Culture and New Technologies" in the first of 15 synod study group reports expected in the coming weeks.

The Vatican published the first two final reports from its Synod on Synodality study groups on March 3.

The first report contains recommendations on navigating the Church's presence in digital spaces, including a proposal for a Vatican office or commission to monitor emerging theological, pastoral, and canonical questions; prepare guidelines and training strategies for bishops, priests, religious, and laypeople; and support bishops' conferences in integrating digital mission into their pastoral plans.

The second report focuses on guidelines for the formation of future priests and includes a call for more women to play a role in aiding the formation of seminarians for the priesthood. The report also lists 26 real world examples of "best practices" from seminaries around the world.

In one of the examples, the report points to how almost all seminaries in France now include at least one woman on their seminary council with voting rights, after a 2021 directive from the country's bishops. In one French seminary, a married couple, a marriage counselor and her retired husband, married 39 years with six children, lives in the seminary as an integral part of its formation team alongside six priests.

Pope Leo XIV directed that the study group reports be made public, according to the General Secretariat of the Synod, "in order to share with the entire People of God the fruit of the reflection and discernment undertaken, thereby giving concrete expression to one of the essential characteristics of the synodal Church: transparency and accountability."

Cardinal Mario Grech, the secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, noted the final reports "are to be understood as working documents, a point of departure rather than

See TECHNOLOGIES, Page 19



**2026
MEDICAL
MISSION
To
La Ceiba, Honduras**



MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

The diocese of San Angelo is seeking compassionate medical professionals, (physicians, nurses, PA's and NP's), to join us on our second mission to provide essential healthcare services to underserved communities of Honduras. This year's mission aims to offer medical assistance, health education, and spiritual support to those in need.

**Special Request for:
OB/GYN, Pediatricians, and Family Practice Physicians**

For more information, and to sign up, visit www.SanRafaelExpeditions.org
or email: info@SanRafaelExpeditions.org or call Janelle O'Connell at (325-668-3397)



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2026 Women's Small Town ACTS Retreat

May 28-31, 2026, Christ the King Retreat Center

For More Information contact Karla Hoelscher 432-268-3891

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Are you seeking healing and hope?**

The Project Rachel Ministry of the Diocese of San Angelo is here for you. Our team has been praying for you, and you are not alone. Jesus offers healing and mercy to all who desire peace and self-forgiveness. Please reach out to our confidential helpline or email to learn more about healing retreats, counseling, and compassionate support.

Project Rachel Ministry – Diocese of San Angelo

Call or text: (432) 236-9883

✉ projectrachel@sanangelodiocese.org

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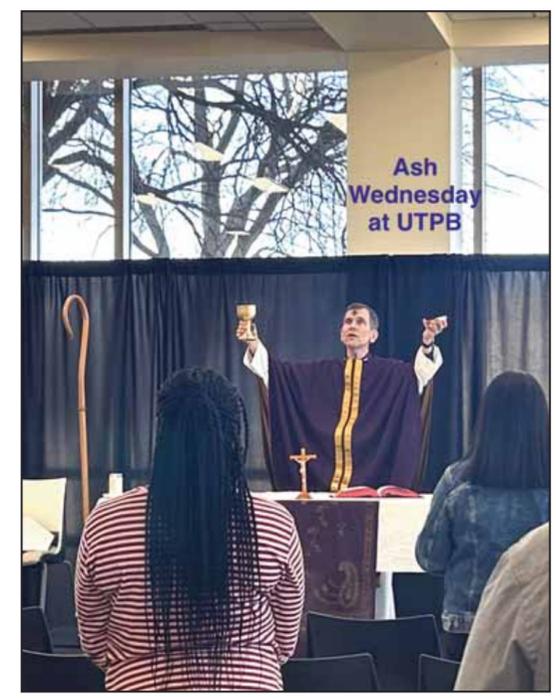
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Ash Wednesday with students



Bishop Michael J. Sis celebrated Ash Wednesday Masses Feb. 18 at the campuses of the University of Texas Permian Basin in Odessa and Midland College in Midland.

COURTESY

Learning about local history



At a Feb. 10 meeting of the priests of the San Angelo Deanery, the gathered clergy took the opportunity to visit the historic site of Fort McKavett. Pictured are Father Johnrita Adegboyega, Msgr. Larry Droll, Bishop Michael J. Sis, Dean Father Felix Archibong, and Father Carlos Felipe Rodriguez.

COURTESY

New sights to see at SEAS



COURTESY



COURTESY

Bishop Sis was at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Odessa March 1. While there he blessed a new statue of St. Carlo Acutis and a newly renovated parlor at the parish.

Fishers of men



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

The Guadalupe Radio Network held their third annual San Angelo Fishers of Men fundraising dinner Feb. 28 at Bentwood Country Club. The featured speaker (top photo) was Cy Kellet, host of the radio show Catholic Answers Live. The Fishers of Men Award was given to Mario and Connie DeHoyos.

Happy 90th birthday Msgr. Gully!



COURTESY

Msgr. Bernard Gully, a retired priest of the Diocese of San Angelo residing in San Angelo, celebrated 90 years on the earth Feb. 28. His birthday is actually Feb. 29, though, which means he's only had 22 opportunities to celebrate on the actual date.

Easter evidence: Why Jesus' resurrection is trusted as true

By Sister Anna Marie McGuan
OSV News

Easter Sunday is the Church's greatest feast day — a day in which we celebrate Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead.

It is the "feast of feasts" and the "solemnity of solemnities." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Beginning with the Easter Triduum as its source of light, the new age of the Resurrection fills the whole liturgical year with its brilliance" (No. 1168).

Christians believe that Jesus "crushed death," and the "mystery of the Resurrection ... permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him" (CCC, No. 1169).

Jesus Christ truly died on Good Friday. There was no mistaken prognosis that Jesus did not really expire on the cross; there was no accidentally identifying Jesus as someone else. There was no theft of Jesus' body from the tomb; no swallowing up of the body in an earthquake.

From the beginning, Christians proclaimed not only the resurrection of Jesus, but also his very real death. His human soul separated from his human body. All of the Gospels testify to this. Without that death, his appearances to the women and to his apostles on Easter morning would have been humdrum. Instead, people were terrified, overjoyed, and astonished.

There are factors that confirm the Church in her faith in the resurrection of Jesus. First is the empty tomb. The apostles saw the empty tomb and heard the testimony of the women who went there on the first Easter morning: "The empty tomb was ... an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection" (CCC, No. 640).

Second, the apostles saw Jesus with their own eyes. They disbelieved at first — and who wouldn't? — but were convinced by the fact that they could touch him, speak to him, and eat with him. Jesus' body was clearly different than it was before, and almost always the women, the apostles, and the disciples do not recognize him at first. Each time, however, Jesus reveals himself to them, and they are able to make the connection that this one standing before them was the same one who died by crucifixion on Good Friday.

In the encounter with the apostle Thomas, Jesus actually points to his wounds as the way for Thomas to make the connection that the man standing before him, talking and breathing, is the same man who was crucified. Jesus had to lead Thomas and the others to that understanding, because his glorified and risen body was no longer subject to the limitations of space and time. He could appear as he wished, when he wished. He could be in their presence and not reveal himself, and then allow them to recognize him in an instant.

All of this has to do with his glorified, risen humanity and its new properties. "At Jesus' Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is 'the man of heaven'" (CCC, No. 646).

The Resurrection also brought St. Paul, who hated Christians, to believe in Christ and to be baptized in Damascus, after having encountered him on the road there. He saw him with his own eyes. He heard his voice. He spoke to him. Later, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul had to compare his authority to preach the Gospel as being on par with that of the first apostles, and so he based his valid apostleship on his encounter with the risen Jesus. He himself saw the Lord Jesus risen from the dead, and from that encounter, Paul's life was transformed, and he became God's apostle.

It was the fact of the resurrection that compelled the apostles to preach that Jesus was and always will be the true messiah and the savior of the world. It is still the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus that compels Christians to share his life and message and to dedicate their lives to him.



CNS PHOTO | PABLO ESPARZA

A statue of the Risen Christ on top of the facade of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican is seen in a Nov. 13, 2024, photo.

Without the resurrection, Paul says, Christianity is useless: "For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15: 16-17). He continues: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (v. 20-22).

Because of the evidence of the empty tomb and the encounters of the risen Jesus with the women, the apostles and disciples, and St. Paul, the Church has always believed and preached the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is the moment that definitively changed human history forever.

Jesus' rising from the dead was the catalyst for all evangelization, meaning the fact of Jesus' resurrection impelled the apostles to go and tell people what had happened.

That is still what the Church proclaims today, and she always will.

Sister Anna Marie McGuan, a member of the Institute of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, is director of Christian formation in the Diocese of Knoxville.

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- Abilene - 91.7 FM, KQOS
- Midland-Odessa - 1180 AM, KLPF
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- San Angelo - 91.5 FM, KPDE

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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 - *Beacon of Truth with The Divine Mercy Chaplet* - Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

4:00 PM - *The Quest* (877-757-9424) - Live call-in show for questions/comments

5:00 - 7:00 PM - *Catholic Answers Live*

8:00 PM - *EWTN Nightly News*

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Why doesn't the Church require more demanding fasting for Lent?

Q: I think the Catholic Church's Lenten discipline is kind of a joke. Specifically, Friday abstinence really isn't that tough since most people aren't going to suffer if they can't have meat for one day a week. Why doesn't the Church require something more demanding, like omitting all animal products on days of penance, or fasting on only bread and water?

A: I think it might make sense to start by drawing a distinction between the personal penance an individual member of the faithful freely embraces for himself or herself, and the communal nature of the Church's required Lenten penances.

With respect to personal penance, we know that all Christians need some sort of asceticism — that is, spiritual practice of self-denial — in their lives of faith. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us:

"Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion (i.e., after baptism) is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, 'clasping sinners to her bosom, (is) at once holy and always in need of purification, (and) follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.' This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a 'contrite heart,' drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first" (CCC 1428).

And while an interior conversion of heart is always the primary and most important thing, the catechism further observes that nevertheless "interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance" (CCC 1430).

To be truly effective as a means of interior purification, the personal penances we embrace for ourselves need to be appropriate for our own unique circumstances. That is, they should be serious enough that we notice them, but also not so burdensome that they interfere with the duties of our state in life or injure our health.

For example, waking up an hour or two before dawn to study Scripture devoutly might be helpful to a young university student, but might be overly taxing and thus spiritually counterproductive to a sleep-deprived nursing mother.

In contrast, the Church's official Lenten disciplines are meant to apply broadly to the faithful in general to be observed together, as a community. This not only fosters an important sense of Catholic identity, but it also reminds us that nobody is saved on his or her own. These communal



Jenna Marie Cooper
OSV News

Question Corner

penances are fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and, as you mentioned in your question, abstaining from meat on all Fridays in Lent.

There are some limited exceptions, of course. As per Canon 1252 of the *Code of Canon Law*, strictly speaking, only Catholics ages 14 and older are obliged to abstain from meat on Fridays (although "pastors of souls and parents are to ensure that even those who by reason of their age are not bound by the law of fasting and abstinence, are taught the true meaning of penance.")

The requirement to fast is only binding on Catholic ages 18 to 59 who are medically able to restrict food safely. And even so, the fast the Church requires doesn't restrict to any particular amount of food. Catholics can have one full meal on fast days, with two smaller snacks if needed, as long as the two snacks together are not as much as the full meal. So while there are some objective parameters, it is at least somewhat customizable to the strength of the individual.

You're right that none of these required communal penances are overly demanding. But, in some ways that is a feature, not a bug. A more demanding common discipline would require far more exceptions, which could make it difficult for the majority of the Church to observe them together as one spiritual family.

Like so many Catholic things, this isn't a matter of "either/or," but of "both/and." That is, we are called to both the Church's required Lenten discipline and to our own personal penances.

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.

St. Gertrude: Abbess, friend to pilgrims, holy cat lady

St. Gertrude of Nivelles was a nun and abbess in the Benedictine monastery of Nivelles, Belgium, in about 640. She was born in Landen in 626, the daughter of Pepin and his wife, Ita. Gertrude was raised in a very religious atmosphere. She devoted herself to the religious life from an early age and stated that she would never marry, but that Christ alone would be her bridegroom.

This deeply spiritual lady became a nun in the monastery built by her widowed mother, Blessed Ita of Nivelles. This was a double monastery with one part for men and another for women. Ita lived there as a nun and appointed Gertrude as its first abbess.

She became known for her hospitality to pilgrims and for her aid to Irish monks who taught the holy Scripture to her nuns. Gertrude and her mother gave two of these Irish monks some land called Fosse. The brothers, St. Follian and St. Ultan, built a monastery there.

Her hospitality to strangers inspired a drink for the road called "Saint Gertrude's Cup" by Belgians, according to Sean Kelley and Rosemary Rogers (*Saints Preserve Us!*).

She is known as the patron saint of cats and is also invoked against rodents and the fear of mice and rats. She is often depicted in art with mice running up her pastoral staff. Some historians say the mice symbolize the souls in purgatory to whom she had a great devotion (<http://saintspreserved.com/gertbio.htm>).

There was a lot of property that her mother owned,



Mary Lou Gibson

Speaking of Saints

and she and Gertrude used it to build churches, monasteries, and hospices. After Ita's death in 652, Gertrude resigned her office as abbess so that she could spend more time studying holy Scripture, which some writers say she almost knew by heart. By this time, her health had deteriorated and she was in a very weakened state because of her severe penances continually abstaining from food and sleep. Several biographers wrote that her death at age 33 was significant because it was the same age of Jesus at his death.

So, how did this saintly lady come to be known as the patroness of cats? There is no one legend or experience that links her to these animals. But since she is also invoked against rats and mice, particularly field mice, her patronage stems from those rodents.

From earliest times, rats and mice have lived among the people. They roamed the fields and nested in houses,

barns, churches, inns, and monasteries. Cats were a natural deterrent to these rodents. Kelley and Rogers wrote that Gertrude and her nuns kept many cats to combat their vermin problem. Thus, her power over these rodents accounted for her traditional patronage of cats.

Gertrude is still invoked against rodents in her native Belgium, and many people believe that water from her well and cakes baked in her convents will repel vermin.

Writer Malcolm Day describes the cult of mice attached to St. Gertrude in his book *A Treasury of Saints*. As mentioned earlier, the mice on her pastoral staff represented souls in purgatory. Day noted that offerings of mice made of gold and silver were often left at her shrine in Cologne up through the early part of the 19th century.

St. Gertrude is also the patron of gardeners, and her March 17th feast day is observed by gardeners who regard fine weather on that day as a sign to begin spring planting.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* reports that she was venerated as a saint immediately after her death. A church was built in her honor by Agnes, the third abbess of Nivelles. She is the special patron of the towns of Geertruidenberg, Breda, and Bergen-op-Zoom in North Brabant. Devotion to St. Gertrude was most popular in the Middle Ages, Englebert wrote, and was widespread throughout Belgium, Germany, and Poland.

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

Change and chains



James R. Sulliman, PhD

We are told of an interaction of extreme importance in Luke when we read "Filled with the holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone.'" Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said to him in reply, 'It is written: "You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.'" Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you," and: "With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him in reply, 'It also says, "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'" When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time" (Lk 4:1-13).

These three temptations were the three greatest weapons that Satan had in an effort to defeat his greatest enemy ... God. The anguish Evil experienced was and is, indeed, its own unique and greatest hell, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). Just as it was defeated by God the Father when Lucifer was cast out of heaven and banished to earth, God the Son also proves to be an impossible match. Satan's relentless attacks on God's children that began with Eve and Adam take on greater urgency as he is vanquished yet again.

These three temptations represent the misuse of our

physical senses, a love for materialism, and prideful self-centeredness, or, sins of the flesh, sins of the world, and sins of the devil. They are used by the evil one in an effort to bind us in "chains" so that we might only be focused on the here and now with its mantra of immediate gratification, rather than our eternal lives.

John warned of this: "Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world. Yet the world and its enticement are passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever" (1 Jn 2:15-17).

During the Lenten season, we are advised to focus on fasting, prayer, and charitable acts. Are these not the antidotes to the deadly poisons that Satan stealthily disguises? Fasting firmly lets our bodies know that the "Bread of Life" is the only true "nourishment," and it is God who must be the focus of all our senses. Deliberate self-denial has unimaginable benefits.

In prayer, we grow closer to God, Mary, the saints, and all our loved ones. We detach from the possessions that possess us. We can imagine the day of our own personal "elevation" and leaving this world behind for we are told, "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (Jn 12:32). We must try to pray at

least one rosary each day and include prayer for an end to the killing of babies in their mothers' wombs, as well as for those who cannot see past this life for they will be weakened by life's perennial pleasures.

Acts of charity help us to emulate Jesus and become Christ-centered in all our words and actions, abandoning self-centeredness and the death it causes to our relationships with God, others ... and ourselves. Jesus told us exactly how to get to heaven. "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Mt 25:31-40).

That we try to fast, pray, and think of others during Lent is commendable. For these things to diminish significantly after we experience the glory of his Resurrection is counterintuitive. What about the other 325 days of the year? Change must be permanent to avoid permanent chains.

Dr. James Sulliman has 50 years' experience in individual, marriage, and family therapy.

How young Latino Catholics are renewing the Church this Lent

By Vicente Del Real
OSV News

Every Lent, the Church invites us to return to the Lord. We fast, we pray, we share our gifts. But this year, 40 young Latino Catholics are also doing something simple and deeply transformative: They are telling their stories on how God is working in their lives.

At Iskali, Lent has become a season not only of reflection but of sharing witness. Through a campaign called 40 Testimonies for 40 Days, young adults are sharing how God is working in their lives today. Their stories are raw, hopeful, and deeply rooted in the lived experience of faith.

They reveal a generation that is not abandoning the Church but searching for spaces where their faith, culture, and struggles are seen and heard. By sharing their stories, they hope to enrich the broader Church and inspire others to recognize how God continues to act in people's lives, inviting each of us to be renewed in a special way during this Lenten season.

For many, saying yes to this invitation is not easy. It requires vulnerability. It asks young people to revisit wounds, struggles, and moments of doubt. But it also opens the door for grace.

Oscar Villanueva, a firefighter and paramedic, chose to participate so that others might encounter Christ earlier in their journey.

"I chose to share my testimony so that other young

people can see that you don't have to wait to experience pain and suffering like I did when I first encountered Christ," he said. "Instead, anyone can come to him at any stage and receive grace."

In his work responding to emergencies, Villanueva witnesses suffering daily. Yet he also sees God present in those moments.

"I feel the Lord's presence as a healing hand in my line of work," he said. "I have the opportunity to meet the sick and injured when they need help the most. I see how God lays his hands on patients every day. Life is nothing but a privilege, granted by the Lord himself."

His message to the Church is simple but urgent: "Keep an open mind, an open heart, and eyes and ears free of judgment."

This spirit of encounter and belonging is at the heart of the campaign. Eileen Delgadillo, who coordinates the storytelling effort, believes these testimonies help the Church see something essential.

"I hope this campaign helps the wider Church recognize that God is continuously working in the lives of young adults," she said. "Each of us has a story to tell. God plants different gifts within every one of us and meets us exactly where we are."

She emphasized that many young Hispanic Catholics long to be heard.

"It is important for the Church to listen to the voices of young Hispanic Catholics because too often we feel unheard or unseen. We want to continue representing our

culture and experiences within our Catholic faith and community. Our stories matter. By listening to us, the Church affirms that we belong."

For Crystal Martinez, testimony itself became a path of healing. Hearing others share their faith opened her heart and gave her courage.

"What led me to say yes was the breakthrough I had hearing other people's stories," she said. "Realizing that no matter where you are in life, God will always be waiting for you."

She now hopes her own story will do the same for others.

"Coming into Iskali I felt as if I was too damaged to be saved," she said. "Hearing the testimonies of others truly saved me from those ideas. My only hope is that in sharing my story, others will feel the same."

Victoria Diaz describes testimony as recognition, the experience of being seen. "After hearing the first testimony, I felt like my soul felt seen," she said. "Like when you meet someone who speaks your language or has a similar story. I wanted others to know that I also see them."

For Diaz, faith has reshaped how she loves.

"God never stopped loving me despite my brokenness," she said. "Experiencing this has helped me start seeing people through his eyes."

Her invitation this Lent is both tender and bold: "Let

Catholic Voices

Welcome to the Church!

360
Catechumens

(unbaptized, preparing for sacraments of initiation)

2025: 338 | 2024: 291

258
Candidates

(baptized Christians preparing for full communion)

2025: 269 | 2024: 97

618
Total

2025: 607 | 2024: 388

Who is joining this Easter? Here's a look at the numbers in the Diocese of San Angelo.

Finding yourself in the Prodigal Son parable



Barbara Moore

heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours.'"

Do you see it? There are no accidental words in Scripture. Every one of them has a meaning and a purpose. Even though we don't realize it, many of us can find ourselves like the older brother in this story in the fact that we don't see ourselves as children, but as servants. We get caught up in a master/slave relationship. Do you see the small phrase that you may have never noticed before? "Look, all these years I served you." That older son thinks of himself as a servant.

How do we know this? The older boy hears the party but doesn't go to his dad to ask what is going on. In fact, he already seems upset. He calls a servant, almost like checking with a coworker first to see what's going on before you ask someone in authority. This is the first sign that the relationship with his dad may not be as good as

we would hope. Then, when he learns more, he becomes angry and won't even go inside. Have you noticed that this father goes out to both sons. He makes his dad come to him. How does he speak to his father? As an employee: "I have served you and never once disobeyed your orders."

Really? Is that a healthy father/son relationship? Sounds more like a master and slave mentality. He even uses the word "son" in reference to the younger brother, but he doesn't connect himself to this family member, only saying "your son." He wants no claim to have a relationship there.

What a position he has placed himself in. Do you ever find yourself looking at God and thinking more about obeying him and his rules? We must be on guard to watch our mentality so that we don't fall into this trap, because the father's words to this older brother show us something special.

He calls him son. He reminds him that everything he owns is his as well. This brother has always been able to partake of the gifts, but his heart did not recognize this. He was not in a father/son relationship where he shared in the life of his dad. He was too busy working and obeying instead of living and loving. It should make us sad and spur us on to make sure we don't fall into that trap as well.

One last thought: Don't lose the fact that the younger brother moves from son to servant in his own mind as he longs to come home. These two boys are on opposite journeys, but the father sees them both for who they truly are, his children. Loved and precious in his sight and always in his heart, no matter how far they stray in distance or attitude. May we remember that, whichever Prodigal Son we are at any given moment, our Father wants to share all that he has with us and that we are his children.

Barbara Moore is Parish Communication and Engagement Manager at Holy Family Catholic Church in Abilene.

10 things Christian children should know about their parents



Robin Miller

The Family Warrior

will be given it" (Jas 1:5).

4. Your parents are commanded to teach you about God. Their mission is not just to raise you well but to lead you to heaven. Every prayer they pray and every lesson they share is meant to point you toward Christ. They carry the responsibility of shaping your spiritual foundation with love and intention.

"Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up" (Dt 6:6-7).

5. Your parents discipline you because they love you. Correction isn't rejection. It's protection. Discipline helps you grow into the person God created you to be. Loving correction keeps you from paths that could harm your heart, your future, or your relationship with God. "Whoever spares the rod hates the child, but whoever loves will apply discipline" (Prv 13:24).

6. Your parents carry heavy burdens you don't always see. They work, worry, protect, plan, and pray, often silently. Many of their struggles are hidden because they don't want to weigh you down. Their quiet endurance is one of the ways they show love and faithfulness to your family.

"Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).

7. Your parents pray for you daily. Even when you don't know it, your name is spoken before God. Their prayers cover your future, your friendships, your faith, and your safety. Long before you face challenges, they are already asking God to strengthen you.

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful" (Jas 5:16).

8. Your parents aren't perfect, only God is. They make mistakes, but their hearts desire your good. Just as you need grace, they need forgiveness and understanding too. God uses imperfect parents to show his perfect love in everyday moments.

"[And] be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ" (Eph 4:32).

9. Your parents need your respect and gratitude. Honor builds peace in the home and strengthens your spiritual life. When you show respect, you reflect Christ's humility and obedience. Gratitude softens hearts, heals relationships, and invites God's blessing into your home.

"Children, obey your parents [in the Lord], for this is right" (Eph 6:1).

10. Your parents love you more than you realize. Human love is imperfect, but the love of a parent reflects God's heart. Their love shows up in the choices they make, the boundaries they set, and the prayers they pray. Even when emotions run high, their commitment to you remains steady and strong.

"As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him" (Ps 103:13).

The Christian family is one of God's most powerful ministries. When children understand their parents not merely as authority figures but as fellow pilgrims striving toward holiness, the home becomes a living Gospel. Preached not only in words, but in love.

In honoring parents, children learn how to honor God. And in faithful parenting, mothers and fathers leave a legacy far greater than anything the world can offer: a faith that endures from generation to generation. Be the "Family Warrior" that God created us to be. God bless.

Robin Miller is the founder and executive director of The Family Warrior, a men's ministry based in San Angelo. See www.thefamilywarrior.org.

Children are a blessing but so are parents. In an age of constant noise, shifting values, and growing confusion about authority, the Christian home remains a quiet but powerful witness to God's design. While much attention is given to how parents should raise faithful children, there is also sacred wisdom children are meant to carry about their parents.

In a world where many young hearts struggle to understand authority, sacrifice, and spiritual leadership, it's essential for Christian children to recognize the God-given gift of their parents. Scripture teaches not only obedience, but honor, compassion, and gratitude for the ones entrusted with raising them. These truths are not rooted in perfection, but in covenant, sacrifice, and grace.

Here are ten faith-filled truths every Christian child should know about their parents, offered not as rules, but as a lens through which to see God's love at work in the home.

1. Your parents are a gift from God. Parents are part of God's plan for your life. He chose them specifically for you. They are instruments God uses to shape your character and guide your steps. Even when you don't understand their decisions, God is working through them for your good.

"Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Ex 20:12).

2. Your parents sacrifice more than you see. Much of what parents give is unseen — energy, sleep, time, money, and emotional strength. They often put your needs above their own without ever mentioning it. Their quiet sacrifices are daily acts of love that reflect Christ's heart for his children.

"Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth" (1 Jn 3:18).

3. Your parents are learning and growing too. They don't have every answer, but they seek wisdom and strength from God. Just like you, they are on a journey of faith and maturity. God uses both their strengths and their struggles to teach your family how to trust him.

"But if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and he

Voces Catolicas

El futuro beato arzobispo Fulton J. Sheen: el gran evangelizador

Por Msgr. Roger J. Landry
OSV News

La historia de la Iglesia en Estados Unidos es una crónica de evangelización.

La mayoría de los estadounidenses que figuran en el salón de la fama eterno se distinguen por ser grandes misioneros: Jogues, Goupil, Lalonde, Serra, Cabrini, Duchesne, Neumann, Guerin, De Veuster, Cope, Drexel, Seelos, Rother, James Miller y los mártires de Georgia, que pronto serán beatificados.

Algunos abandonaron heroicamente sus hogares para evangelizar a los indígenas y a los inmigrantes, a los protestantes y a los católicos mal catequizados, a los esclavos y a los ex esclavos, a los leprosos y a las víctimas de la fiebre amarilla. Otros arriesgaron y dieron sus vidas como misioneros mártires en el extranjero.

En la mañana del 9 de febrero hemos recibido con alegría la noticia de que pronto se añadirá otro estadounidense a esta gran lista de formadores de discípulos, posiblemente el evangelizador más eficaz de todos ellos: el arzobispo Fulton J. Sheen, que será beatificado en una fecha aún por confirmar.

Sheen, el católico estadounidense más célebre de mediados del siglo XX, llegó a millones de católicos y no católicos cada semana con su pionero programa de radio "The Catholic Hour" y su programa de televisión "Life is Worth Living", ganador de un premio Emmy. Sus 66 libros y sus tres columnas semanales en la prensa también informaron las mentes, los corazones y las vidas de millones de personas.

Sheen no es solo una figura del pasado. Es inmensamente popular entre los jóvenes católicos de hoy, que ven sus videos en YouTube y EWTN, escuchan podcasts y clips de sus sermones, rezan su elocuente Vía Crucis, leen su clásico *Life of Christ (La vida de Cristo)* y su autobiografía *Treasure in Clay (Tesoro en arcilla)*.

Los seminaristas y los jóvenes sacerdotes alimentan su vocación leyendo sus libros sobre el sacerdocio, escuchando las grabaciones de sus famosos retiros y reflexionando sobre sus meditaciones sobre las siete últimas

palabras de Cristo en la cruz, quizás las mejores que se hayan pronunciado jamás.

La popularidad de Sheen no solo se debe a la elocuencia que le confiere un impacto imperecedero, como a sus contemporáneos Lewis, Chesterton y Knox. Se debe a que simboliza el tipo de pastor que tantos jóvenes católicos desean que sean sus obispos y sacerdotes: heraldos valientes y convincentes de la fe, que no temen utilizar los medios de comunicación modernos, además de los tradicionales, para proponer y defender la fe ante cualquier tipo de público.

Hoy en día es popular por las mismas razones que el obispo Robert Barron y el padre Mike Schmitz, y los jóvenes acaban descubriendo que Barron y Schmitz siguen intencionadamente los pasos pioneros de Sheen.

Para comprender a Sheen y por qué la Iglesia lo está beatificando, debemos ir más allá de su fama y llegar a sus motivaciones.

Era, ante todo, un devoto discípulo de Jesús. No solo conocía a Jesús —algo que no se puede pasar por alto en sus numerosos libros y predicaciones—, sino que también lo conocía personalmente, alimentado por sus más de 60 años de horas eucarísticas diarias consecutivas. Sheen es el mayor apóstol de la hora santa eucarística en la historia de la Iglesia; sin duda, sus escritos y su ejemplo han contribuido al renacimiento de la adoración eucarística y a la proliferación de capillas de adoración perpetua en Estados Unidos.

Esto nos lleva al segundo punto: Sheen quería que todo el mundo conociera a ese mismo Jesús.

Eso es lo que impulsó sus estudios de filosofía y teología, para poder transmitir eficazmente la verdad que Cristo proclamó, algo que se desbordaba en su trabajo en las abarrotadas aulas de la Universidad Católica de América, en la radio y la televisión, en sus prodigiosos escritos y desde el púlpito y la tribuna.

Eso explica la prioridad y el tiempo que dedicó a ayudar a las personas a convertirse al catolicismo, impartiendo clases masivas en Nueva York y Washington D.C., dedicando tiempo a la instrucción individual de quienes se encontraban en circunstancias especiales, permitiendo a

otros escuchar las grabaciones de sus clases con sus secretarios y luego reuniéndose con ellos para que le hagan preguntas.

Esto explica su famosa labor, durante 16 años, como director nacional de la Sociedad para la Propagación de la Fe, una de las cuatro Obras Misionales Pontificias, durante la cual trató de formar a los católicos de EE.UU. en la espiritualidad y la identidad misioneras y de ayudar a recaudar fondos para difundir la fe y construir la Iglesia en todo el mundo.

A lo largo de su vida, Sheen donó más de 10 millones de dólares de sus ingresos mediáticos a las misiones, recaudó 200 millones de dólares para las misiones (el equivalente a casi 2.100 millones de dólares actuales) y dejó el 40% de su patrimonio y los derechos de autor de sus libros y todos sus audios para la labor continua de difusión de la fe.

Sería casi imposible enumerar las iglesias, escuelas, seminarios, conventos y monasterios que existen hoy en día gracias a su labor, por no hablar de la cantidad de diócesis sostenidas y programas financiados gracias a sus esfuerzos. Con la posible excepción del Papa Pío XI, ningún católico del siglo XX hizo más por las misiones que Sheen.

La Iglesia eleva a las personas a los altares no solo para invocarlas como intercesoras, sino para proponerlas como modelos. Aunque pocos emularán la erudición y la elocuencia de Sheen, todos podemos esforzarnos por imitar su amor por el Señor Jesús y su celo por ayudar a otros a conocerlo, amarlo y servirlo a su vez.

Por lo tanto, la mejor manera de prepararnos para la próxima beatificación de Sheen es seguir su ejemplo de oración ante Jesús Eucarístico y su celo por aprovechar cualquier oportunidad que se nos presente para ayudar a otros a conocer a Jesús, tanto aquí en Estados Unidos como en las misiones de todo el mundo que fueron su gran amor.

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Monseñor Roger J. Landry es el sucesor del arzobispo Sheen como director nacional de las Obras Misionales Pontificias en Estados Unidos.

USCCB convoca a participar de horas de Adoración Eucarística y realizar obras de misericordia para celebrar el 250 aniversario de Estados Unidos

Por OSV News

WASHINGTON — Mientras Estados Unidos se prepara para conmemorar el 250.º aniversario de la firma de la Declaración de Independencia el 4 de julio, la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB, por sus siglas en inglés) ha animado a los católicos a participar en iniciativas que incluyen 250 horas de adoración eucarística y 250 obras de misericordia.

Para celebrar la ocasión, "America 250", las iniciativas animan a rezar por la unidad y la sanación de los Estados Unidos, según una guía de recursos publicada por la USCCB. La conferencia ya había anunciado que los obispos estadounidenses consagrarían los Estados Unidos al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús en junio.

En su encíclica *Dilexit Nos*, el Papa Francisco "nos instruye a 'alimentar nuestra vida con la fuerza de la Eucaristía' en

la Sagrada Comunión y la Adoración Eucarística, para que podamos comprender más profundamente el amor de Cristo por todos y vivir nosotros mismos este amor", afirma la guía. "Nuestra contemplación del Sagrado Corazón nos lleva a profundizar en el misterio de nuestra salvación y en nuestro amor por Cristo, que se encuentra en los rostros de nuestras hermanas y hermanos, especialmente los más necesitados".

La guía indica que las parroquias pueden participar en las 250 horas de adoración ofreciendo una hora santa semanal o mensual hasta el aniversario nacional del 4 de julio. Señala que esto podría incluir continuar con las prácticas actuales o invitar a nuevas personas a unirse. Sugiere esfuerzos similares para llevar a cabo 250 obras de misericordia.

Incluye recursos para Horas Santas por la vida, la paz, el matrimonio, la libertad religiosa, las vocaciones, el fin del

racismo, así como una Hora Santa del Sagrado Corazón.

"Considere la posibilidad de organizar una hora santa o una serie de horas santas en su parroquia utilizando las plantillas proporcionadas. ... Es posible que tenga otras formas de invitar a los miembros de su comunidad a dedicar un tiempo a la oración por nuestro país con Jesús verdaderamente presente en el Santísimo Sacramento", dice la guía. "Para prepararse para la consagración de Estados Unidos al Sagrado Corazón, las parroquias también pueden incorporar la Letanía del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús en su Hora Santa".

Como ejemplos de obras de misericordia, la guía anima a las parroquias a encontrar formas de ayudar a las mujeres que se enfrentan a un embarazo no deseado; donar a bancos de alimentos y a armarios comunitarios, y a programas para mejorar de la comunidad; recaudar fondos para un proyecto de desarrollo en el extranjero;

apadrinar a una familia de refugiados; dar clases particulares a niños; o hacer voluntariado en hogares para personas sin hogar.

"Las siete obras de misericordia corporales nos llegan directamente de las Escrituras del Evangelio de Mateo", dice la guía. "Arraigadas en nuestra vida de fe, las acciones a las que Jesús nos llama, como dar de comer al hambriento, dar de beber al sediento, dar cobijo a la persona sin hogar, visitar al enfermo y al preso, enterar al difunto y dar limosna, son elementos centrales de nuestra identidad católica".

La guía cita la exhortación apostólica *Dilexi Te* del Papa León XIV, que a su vez se inspira en la *Dilexit Nos* del Papa Francisco: "Contemplar el amor de Cristo 'nos ayuda a prestar más atención al sufrimiento y a las carencias de los demás, nos hace fuertes para participar en su obra de liberación, como instrumentos para la difusión de su amor'".

Se espera que cinco mártires españoles sean beatificados en Savannah, Georgia, este 31 de octubre

Por María Wiering
OSV News

Según el sitio web del Dicasterio para las Causas de los Santos, la fecha para la beatificación de cinco franciscanos españoles conocidos como "los mártires de Georgia" se ha fijado para el 31 de octubre. El dicasterio indicó que el cardenal Frank Leo, de Toronto, será el celebrante de la Misa de beatificación.

El anuncio en la página web del dicasterio incluye una imagen de un cuadro de los mártires, en el que la figura central sostiene un abanico de palmas, símbolo asociado al martirio, el acto de morir por la fe.

En 1597, los franciscanos Pedro de Corpa, Blas Rodríguez de Cuacos, Mi-

guel de Añón, Antonio de Badajoz y Francisco de Veráscola estaban ejerciendo su ministerio en cinco misiones a lo largo de la costa de la actual Georgia cuando fueron asesinados por una banda de indígenas entre el 14 y el 17 de septiembre.

Sus asesinatos fueron provocados por el enojo de Juanillo, heredero de un cacazgo guale, contra el padre de Corpa luego que el sacerdote le dijera que, como cristiano bautizado, no podía seguir la costumbre de su cultura y tomar una segunda esposa. Juanillo y sus hombres mataron al sacerdote en una misión cerca de la actual ciudad de Eulonia, Georgia, antes de matar a cuatro de los otros cinco misioneros franciscanos que ejercían su ministerio en la zona.

El Papa Francisco reconoció la muerte de los frailes como martirio el 27 de enero de 2025, allanando el camino para su beatificación.

Los franciscanos iniciaron la causa de canonización de los mártires de Georgia en 1950, pero debido a los cambios en el proceso de canonización, la fase diocesana de la investigación no comenzó hasta 1984, bajo el obispo Raymond W. Lessard de Savannah.

Los responsables de la Diócesis de Savannah aún no han recibido la confirmación por escrito del dicasterio de la fecha del 31 de octubre. La diócesis dará a conocer los detalles de la beatificación cuando los tenga en su poder, según declaró Jill Parks, directora general de comunicaciones de la diócesis, a OSV

News el 17 de febrero.

Se espera que los eventos propuestos para acompañar la beatificación incluyan paradas de peregrinación en los sitios conocidos de las antiguas misiones franciscanas, dijo.

La fecha elegida coincide la víspera de la solemnidad de Todos los Santos.

La fecha también cae dentro del Año Jubilar de San Francisco, que conmemora el 800 aniversario de la muerte del fundador de los franciscanos.

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María Wiering es editora de OSV News.

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NOTA: Para mayor información sobre los Mártires de Georgia, visite <https://thegeorgiamartyrs.org/>

The 'winter flower' and her shower of Olympic blessings

By Laretta Brown
OSV News

St. Thérèse of Lisieux is widely known among Catholics as "the little flower," but she also called herself a "winter flower" in *The Story of a Soul* and wrote about her love for snow, thanking God for the gift of a miraculous snowfall on the day she was clothed as a novice in her Carmelite habit.

She wrote of snow, "when I was small, its whiteness filled me with delight, and one of the greatest pleasures I had was taking a walk under the light snowflakes."

"Where did this love of snow come from? Perhaps it was because I was a little winter flower, and the first adornment with which my eyes beheld nature clothed was its white mantle," she wrote. "I had always wished that on the day I received the Habit, nature would be adorned in white just like me."



OSV NEWS PHOTO | COPYRIGHT © ARCHIVES DU CARMEL DE LISIEUX

A miracle of snow for the 'little flower'

The weather was mild the day she took her habit, but when she entered the cloister,

Thérèse saw "the statue of 'the little Jesus' smiling at me from the midst of flowers and lights" and "immediately afterward, my glance was drawn to the snow, the monastery garden was white like me! What thoughtfulness on the part of Jesus! Anticipating the desires of His fiancée, He gave her snow. Snow! What mortal bridegroom, no matter how powerful he may be, could make snow fall from heaven to charm his beloved?"

"Many considered the snow on my Clothing Day as a little miracle and the whole town was astonished," she noted. "Some found I had a strange taste, loving snow!"

St. Thérèse also expressed a desire in her writings to "spend my Heaven doing good on Earth" and that seems to extend even to her "strange taste" for snow given that a devotion to her is a common thread among several Catholic Winter Olympians.

Bobsledder's strong St. Thérèse devotion throughout health challenges

One athlete in the Milan-Cortina Olympic games with a devotion to the little flower was Jadin O'Brien, a member of the bobsled team who finished seventh in the two-woman bobsled event and a three-time track and field national champion in the pentathlon for the University of Notre Dame.

O'Brien's devotion to St. Thérèse was a key part of overcoming a struggle with Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS), a rare condition that she faced in childhood.

As her family struggled to get a diagnosis and treatment for Jadin, her mother Leslie O'Brien told *The National Catholic Register* that she turned to St. Thérèse. "I started a novena and really dove into asking for her intercession," she said. "Then I started to get mad at her, because after my novena, I was like, 'Okay, I got no roses. Are you listening?'"

Jadin said St. Thérèse's example was helpful for her at the time. "St. Thérèse suffered with OCD as a child," she told the *Register*. "That was one of my symptoms with PANDAS. That's why my parents chose her to be my patron saint during that period."

Before finding an accurate diagnosis and treatment of her condition, the O'Brien family received signs from St. Thérèse including her grandfather at Mass having a sudden chill pass through him and a feeling that his granddaughter would be okay as he walked by a stained-glass window. "Later he went back to the church and realized the stained glass depicted St. Thérèse," she said.

O'Brien said that Thérèse's "'Little Way' and her unrelenting trust in God have brought me back to my center many times." Thérèse is also her confirmation saint.

She was grateful to make it to the games after she and her partner, Elana Meyers Taylor, experienced a serious bobsled crash in January at

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Catholic Voices

Leo's Lenten lessons

Pope Leo XIV's first Lenten message is a great gift for those looking for a roadmap to the season.

Reading the communication — his first such as pontiff — reminded me of the importance of taking on the real work necessary for deeper union with Christ for the life of the world.

It was a reminder, too, of the annual challenge of the season to take up the Church's invitation "to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life."

Lent isn't supposed to be effortless. And it's supposed to have a positive effect. Obscuring these realities can be easy today. When taking on the penances of Lent, Pope Leo directs us to keep our eyes on the goal of conversion, of embracing the afforded "opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ."

In drafting his short, yet substantive, Lenten message, it would appear that Pope Leo understands the fractured focus and fragmented existence so many of us experience in today's culture.

We live in a world with so much noise, with so many competing voices and forces all vying for our attention and resources. With the resounding gongs and clanging symbols all around us, it's easy to become counted among them ourselves.

Nearing the end of what's been a long winter for many, including those of us in our home, I started thinking about how the need for listening advocated by Pope Leo in his Lenten message comes, providentially, after a season of being cooped up at home for a long wintry stretch.

As a homeschooling family, sometimes too much of each other can present challenges in practicing virtue. As soon as I read Pope Leo's message for Lent, I knew I had to share some of it with our children. Any family should consider doing the same.

I was drawn to Leo's interest in fostering listening. How often does the simple absence of listening to one another lead to struggles and divisions? Too often. Scrolling through social media or listening to the news drives home the point.

Closer to home, just after I read Leo's Lenten lessons, the toddler and his at-times overly motherly older sister were feuding over a still-popular Christmas toy — Lord, have mercy — before breakfast.



Michael R. Heinlein
OSV News

Papal Words

"The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone," Pope Leo observes.

I thought of this as the kids were descending into a battle of words and wills. Describing God as "one who seeks to involve us," I thought, why not involve the kids in trying to live Leo's Lenten call?

God "even today ... shares with us what is in his heart," Leo explains. What could be better than helping children this Lent begin to do the same? Leo draws to our attention "listening to the word in the liturgy" since it "teaches us to listen to the truth of reality."

He continues, "In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen as he does."

To take this on with kids this Lent seems like a worthy challenge, and one that will hopefully assist them in seeing the positive effects of undertaking greater virtue. As Pope Leo explains, Lent's call to conversion "refers not only to one's conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires."

These undertakings are necessary for any of us who endeavor to let Christ dwell in us more fully. Going about living so more fruitfully in our family this Lent undoubtedly won't be easy. But that's not what Lent is supposed to be.

Michael R. Heinlein is author of *Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I. and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators*.

Caring for creation this Lent

By Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski
OSV News

Lent is about changing the trajectory of our lives. We try to nudge our life toward God; toward love, kindness, and generosity. In Scripture, we repeatedly see tax collectors and sinners offered the chance to repent and change their ways. There's truth in the old saying: "It doesn't matter where you've been, only where you're going." The question is not: What did I accomplish yesterday? Rather: What is the Lord asking of me today?

We can consider trajectories in society as well. We want to set the conditions in society for people to do good and avoid evil. Today, there is a lot of pessimism about the future, but I want to lift up one hopeful trajectory: We are becoming more and more conscious of the environment.

For decades, our popes watched the growing scientific consensus and spoke about the moral response to the threat of climate disruption. Well over 30 years ago, St. John Paul II asserted the greenhouse effect was becoming a crisis. Sixteen years ago, Pope Benedict XVI decried cultural indifference to climate change. Ten years ago, Pope Francis authored a landmark encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, an urgent call to care for God's creation. And there is little doubt today of Pope Leo XIV's commitment to addressing the climate crisis.

We have the task of responding locally. Our own archdiocese's *Laudato Si'* Commission seeks to increase our care for creation.

One recent example of their work: You might notice more compostable plates and reusable utensils at fish fry gatherings this Lent. Indeed, individuals and organizations across our country are stepping up to protect the environment.

Another example: Every day, Americans are saving 30 gallons of water compared to the average American in 1980. Americans are making changes to ensure our children will have clean air, water, and a safe climate.

However, too often the conditions around us

do not help us do right by our children and by God's creation.

On Feb. 12, the Environmental Protection Agency made a major reversal which harms our ability to protect human health and the climate. In 2009, the agency affirmed the scientific consensus: Greenhouse gases are overheating the planet and exacerbating air pollution.

Since 2009, the worsening floods, hurricanes, heat waves, and wildfires have made this abundantly clear. This scientific finding of the threat of climate change was the basis for many policies protecting human life and health the past 16 years. For the EPA to now revoke its scientific finding is incomprehensible.

As the EPA was signaling this action in the fall, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops sharply criticized the move in uncharacteristically blunt language in a letter to the agency: "the EPA completely ignores the unambiguous plain language and congressional intent of the Clean Air Act, science evidence, and adverse health impacts of climate change."

Pollution and greenhouse gases present an undeniable threat to our home. We were already on a precarious trajectory to prevent more extreme weather and loss of life from pollution. We need more action, not less, to address these important issues and their unacceptable impact on the vulnerable.

Like the popes and bishops speaking up to protect God's creation, our Catholic faith calls all of us to bring our values to public life, too. You can join churches and millions of Americans in conserving resources, advocating for change, and supporting initiatives to give our children a cleaner, healthier world.

The trajectory of future generations depends on us. This Lent, wouldn't it be beautiful to put intention toward God's creation in our prayer, our fasting, and our almsgiving?

Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski leads the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Missouri.

Catholic Voices

AI literacy: A digital examen for the soul

With the rise of artificial intelligence, society finds itself in a landscape that is both bursting with possibility and a bit overwhelming at the same time.

For those of us tasked with forming the young in the faith — Catholic parents, educators and ministers — the challenge is no longer just about monitoring screen time or even knowing what apps they use; it is about forming the soul in a world where the line between what is human-created and AI-generated is increasingly blurred.

The Church has long advocated applying critical thinking skills when it comes to analyzing messages that come from media and digital technologies. AI literacy, however, requires something deeper: discernment. It means bringing the Holy Spirit into the conversations we have with ourselves and our children about how we choose to use this amazing gift that human intelligence has provided, namely artificial intelligence.

Much information about AI literacy is out there in the cyber ether, but with the Church and Pope Leo XIV's emphasis on keeping the human person at the center of AI, it's important that people of faith take the time to examine their motivations for turning to AI.

Four questions can guide this digital examen.

1. What is going on? Awareness

In our fast-paced world, we often click and consume without giving our actions much thought. Becoming aware asks us to pause and notice what is going on in our heart, mind, and soul as we utilize AI tools.

When confronting our own motivations for using AI, we can ask: Why am I turning to AI for this specific task? Am I using this tool in a manner that respects people and their inherent dignity (including my own)? Am I being overly reliant on AI instead of using my own creativity?

2. What is really going on? Analysis

Analysis moves us deeper into our examen. We recall that AI systems are trained on massive amounts of data — data that carry all the beauty, but also all the biases and weaknesses of our fallen world.

Analysis helps us realize that "the computer said so" is never a reason for accepting what any AI system generates at face value, especially when it comes to morality. An AI system may have information, but it does not have wisdom.

As we use AI, we can ask: Does the algorithm promote stereotypes? Are there voices or perspectives that are missing? Does it prioritize profit over the common good? Is it giving harmful or wrong information?

3. What difference does it make? Reflection

Here, we bring the AI experience into conversation with the Gospel and the values of our faith by asking and contemplating: How does this AI tool affect my relationship with God, others, and myself? Does how I'm using AI enhance my God-given creativity and skills, or ignore them? Am I using AI in a virtuous, au-



Sister Hosea Rupprecht

OSV News

Media Mindfulness

thentic, and ethical manner?

Pope Francis often spoke of the "culture of encounter." Reflection helps us see that while a chatbot can provide an answer, it cannot provide an encounter. It cannot offer empathy, it cannot celebrate a sacrament, and it cannot sit with a friend in grief. We must reflect on whether AI is helping us become more human, or if it is making us more detached from those around us.

4. What difference can I make? Action

This final question asks us to articulate specific ideas about our own engagement with AI and AI-generated content. Action is about integrity. It's about choosing to use these powerful tools to build the kingdom of God rather than just to "make life easier."

For example, a parent might commit to learning more about whatever AI system is being used at their child's school so they can be a better guide at home.

For an educator, it might mean teaching students how to use AI ethically — to brainstorm and organize a paper or project, but never as a substitute for their own voice and thoughts.

For a minister, it might mean using AI to organize parish data while ensuring that the "pastoral heart" of the parish remains human-led.

The Church has a long history of adopting new media and communications technologies — from the printing press to social media — to spread the Gospel. However, AI is unique because it mimics human behavior and threatens human agency. If we do not model good use of AI and teach children to be critical thinkers when it comes to artificial intelligence, they risk losing the ability to distinguish between a data-driven response and thoughts and values gleaned from an authentic relationship with Christ.

By asking these questions when we engage with AI, we move from being reactive to being discerning and intentional. We empower ourselves, as well as the young people we are responsible for, to navigate the digital continent with a compass calibrated by faith, ensuring that even in a world of computers that sound like people, the human heart remains the primary seeker and finder of truth.

Sister Hosea Rupprecht, a Daughter of St. Paul, is the associate director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies.

Is our nation losing its soul?

U.S. bishops are speaking up about the treatment of immigrants and the deportation strategy and tactics of the current administration, and their messaging has grown increasingly urgent and concerned.

What they are seeing is not just a political clash that has pitted American against American. They are seeing something much more profound and troubling.

"The political crisis of our time is, at its root, a spiritual crisis," said Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore in his Feb. 9 pastoral letter "In Charity and Truth: Toward a Renewed Political Culture." "While the symptoms appear in our discourse, our institutions, and our communities, the deeper fracture lies within the human heart."

"As a proud American, I have always lived by the belief that we are a nation of guiding values, a nation of noble virtues, a nation established on the rule of law and respectful of human rights," said Detroit Archbishop Edward J. Weisenburger in a Feb. 1 column. Increasingly, he said, "I find myself asking if our nation is losing its very soul."

"We're in a moment when it seems like many have lost faith in America's promise and her founders' vision," Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez said in a Feb. 4 homily. "And it is sad that this is happening this year, when we are celebrating our nation's 250th anniversary. This should be a time for renewal, not a time of retreat."

The immediate crisis has been the mass deportation of undocumented immigrants, as well as the assault on Americans who are demonstrating their opposition to these deportation policies. Two American citizens have been killed and many more have been injured or arrested.

The U.S. bishops have been remarkably consistent for years on the immigration crisis. They do not deny that a country has a right to protect its borders. At the same time, the Gospel imperative is to help the refugee and to extend aid to those in need.

In Pope Leo XIV's recent apostolic exhortation *Dilexi Te*, he sums up this imperative by quoting Pope Francis: "Our (Catholic) response to the challenges posed by contemporary migration can be summed up in four verbs: welcome, protect, promote, and integrate."

For the bishops, our nation's enforcement of immigration laws can start with limiting deportations to those guilty of serious offenses. That was the stated goal of the deportation campaign, but it has clearly extended far beyond that



Greg Erlandson

OSV News

Amid the Fray

to include those who are not criminals, who have raised families and contributed to local communities for decades. Those threatened include the people who care for our children and our elderly. They work our fields and labor in construction, all the while dreaming of a better life for themselves and their children.

As Archbishop Gomez put it, "It serves no national interest to deport undocumented men and women who are contributing to the good of our society, it only leaves children without their parents. Surely, we can find another way to hold these men and women accountable for breaking our laws."

The real challenge, one that the bishops have consistently warned about for decades, is to address immigration reform, Archbishop Gomez wrote. "The root cause of the current crisis is the country's broken immigration system," he said. "Our leaders have done little in nearly 40 years to try to reform our immigration laws. Even today, with our cities in turmoil, no one in Washington is talking seriously about this."

The bishops have shown great courage in challenging this status quo of mass deportations. Recognizing the values of this country as a beacon of liberty, and recognizing the teachings of the Gospel regarding the human dignity of each person and our responsibility toward those in need, the bishops have seized a teaching moment.

The pushback they have received in some quarters suggests that those who most need to hear their message are members of their own flock.

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

DEL REAL

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Jesus love you. Let him in, tell him everything, let him be your friend."

These stories point to something greater than a social media campaign. They reveal a profound pastoral moment for the Church in the United States. Young Latino Catholics are stepping forward to share how God is inviting them to allow his grace to work not only through their actions, but deep within their hearts and wounds.

Through their witness and vulnerability they are contributing to the renewal of the Church, reminding us that the Holy Spirit continues to invite us to share our gifts, and our story is a beautiful gift we all carry, one that can bring hope, healing, and faith to others.

Through testimony, these young adults are forming one another. They are building a culture of encounter. Lent reminds us that conversion often begins with listening. The Church must listen not only to Scripture and tradition, but also to the voices of how others are living the Gospel in today's world.

As Diaz reflected, "God hasn't stopped pursuing the hearts of his people. He is still calling the young generation to his mission: To love one another. And we want to follow."

This Lent, their stories invite the entire Church to do the same. Follow these testimonies and be inspired throughout the season on Iskali's Instagram @iskali_ and on the Iskali YouTube channel.

Vicente Del Real is the founder and CEO of Iskali, a Catholic non-profit dedicated to forming and empowering young Latino leaders. He writes from Chicago, where he leads Iskali's mission of faith, service and community.

Cartoon Corner

BROWN

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the World Cup in Switzerland.

"When you think about the Olympics, your thoughts go to, 'That's the biggest stage in sports.' But viewing it through St. Thérèse's lens and as an avenue to glorify God and do a lot of good helps me to keep everything in perspective," O'Brien said.

St. Thérèse devotion reignited hockey player's faith

Another Catholic athlete in the 2026 Winter Games also went to Milan with a devotion to the little flower.

Britta Curl-Salemme, a newly-minted Olympic gold medalist with the U.S. women's hockey team, told OSV News before the games that St. Thérèse of Lisieux was the first saint she felt "really attached" to in a serious way. She credited her with reigniting her faith in college. She read *I Believe in Love*, a book based on the teach-

ings of St. Thérèse the summer after she graduated from high school. She said the book "just blew my mind" and St. Thérèse's "spirituality and the way that she thought about humility just totally opened my eyes to a new way of thinking and of praying." She has loved the wisdom in the little flower's writings ever since.

Devotion to the "winter flower" by Olympians, past and present

Perhaps St. Thérèse's most famous devotee from past Winter Olympic games is Tara Lipinski, a figure skater who won a gold medal in the 1998 Winter Games and, in a 2001 interview with the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, attributed her success, in part, to the intercession of St. Thérèse.

Like O'Brien's mother, Lipinski's mother Pat began a novena to St. Thérèse for her daughter and their family. In her case, it was after she was feeling fed up with the mental and emotional toll figure skating was taking on them. At the end of the novena, she was "amazed to see a

church with an image of St. Thérèse with roses cascading from her arms" and took it as "a sign that the saint whose prayers she had requested would carry her family through any hardships ahead."

Tara said that she liked the saint "because she didn't seem perfect, which makes you feel you have something in common with her."

"She was struggling to get into the convent kind of like I was struggling to be accepted, because I was too young," she added. Lipinski won her Olympic gold medal at just 15 years old.

"I think she's changed me as a person," she said at the time. "She crosses my mind often. I think, what would she do? Her Little Way applies to everything in life."

At the conclusion of the Milan-Cortina Olympic games in which St. Thérèse devotees played, it seems as though the "winter flower" holds a special connection with the winter athletes who turn to her intercession.

Lauretta Brown is culture editor for OSV News. Follow her on X @LaurettaBrown6.

LEBANON

Continued from Page 6

"The Christian presence in the Middle East must not die out," said Regina Lynch, ACN International's executive president. "A new spiral of violence could push already fragile communities beyond the point of survival."

Lynch said already precarious situations for Christians in Iraq, Syria, Gaza, and the West Bank, as well as Lebanon, have been further exacerbated by the war.

"They want peace and are innocent, yet they repeatedly become victims of conflict," Lynch said regarding Christians in southern Lebanon. "ACN teams on the ground report growing anxiety as thousands have already been displaced."

Archbishop Iskandar told OSV News that the Melkite Greek Catholic Archeparchy in Tyre opened its doors to Christian families seeking refuge because the Church "is a home open to every suffering person."

"Priests, volunteers, and members of the local community immediately organized whatever space and resources were available, striving to ensure that each arrival would feel welcomed as in his or her own home, and sustained by the prayer and charity of the ecclesial community," the archbishop said.

The act of "spontaneous solidarity," he added, showed the "true face of Lebanon" as "a people who stand beside the innocent who have suddenly found themselves exposed to fear and displacement."

The Melkite archbishop, without specifically naming Hezbollah, noted the Lebanese government's position that "the decision of war and peace rests exclusively in the hands of the state" and that any party acting otherwise places itself outside the law and the will of the Lebanese people, "who long for stability and peace."

Archbishop Iskandar told OSV News that the renewed conflict continues to inflict a heavy "psychological and spiritual burden" on the people of Lebanon who are "exhausted" from war and violence.

"They fear for their children and their future; they yearn for a simple and ordinary life: that a child may go to school without fear, that an elderly person may sleep peacefully in his home, that a father and mother may work for their daily bread in dignity," he said. "This is a fundamental right of every innocent person, beyond the noise of arms and political calculations."

Nevertheless, for the Melkite archbishop, his main concern is to remain close to the innocent, "to listen to their suffering, to pray with them, and to remind them that their dignity is safeguarded in the sight of God, and that Christian hope is not built upon balances of power but upon faith in the Lord of history, who wills peace for his people."

"I thank you again for your concern for the suffering and resilience of our people," Archbishop Iskander told OSV News. "And I humbly ask for your prayers, for the protection of the innocent, for the cessation of all violence, and for the gift of a just and lasting peace for our region and for Lebanon as a whole."

Junno Arocho Esteves is an international correspondent for OSV News. Follow him on X @jae_journalist.



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TECHNOLOGIES

Continued from Page 8

arrival," but said they "already contain valuable indications ... from which local churches and various ecclesial realities may draw inspiration from this very moment."

The General Secretariat of the Synod will publish 13 more study group final reports, according to its website, with the next batch expected March 10.

The study groups were established by Pope Francis following the first session of the Synod on Synodality in October 2023. Twelve groups were originally formed to examine issues raised at that assembly, including women's participation in the Church, the role of papal nuncios, and the liturgy in a synodal perspective.

The groups, composed of cardinals, bishops, priests, and lay experts from both inside and outside the Vatican, had originally been asked to submit their con-

clusions by June 2025. After the death of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo XIV last year, the new pope extended the deadline, requesting final reports be delivered "insofar as possible" by Dec. 31, 2025.

The proposals drawn from all of the final reports will be submitted to Pope Leo XIV, who will evaluate and may approve them, the secretariat said.

The 26-page final report from the study group on the Church's mission in the digital environment provided recommendations both at the diocesan level and for the bishops' conferences and Roman Curia to better serve the needs of people online.

The report reflected on feedback gathered from Catholics throughout the global synod process, citing clergy who said they felt "ill-equipped to navigate digital spaces."

The report called on appropriate Vatican bodies to study potential canonical adaptations to accommodate what it termed "supraterritorial digital realities," acknowledging that online ministry often goes beyond

traditional geographic diocesan boundaries. The group noted that "much more consultation and discernment remains to be done regarding jurisdictional issues."

Additional Vatican-level proposals included developing guidelines on digital risks such as polarization and manipulation, fostering international networks of those engaged in digital mission, and creating a Church-wide digital resource hub.

The group's recommendations emphasized that digital spaces represent genuine terrain for evangelization. Local churches, it said, should affirm digital culture as "a real space for mission, where true human relationships occur." The report also cautioned that "mainstream digital platforms are not neutral but have algorithms that may hinder the spread of positive messages."

The second report, a 24-page document, provided guidelines and recommendations for how seminarians are formed, including closer immersion in parish life, the inclusion of women in the process of formation, and greater lay involvement in decisions about priestly candidates.

Rather than issuing a wholesale revision of the 2016 *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, a document from the Congregation for the Clergy on priestly formation, which the synod secretariat said the group judged as "still valid in its fundamental principles," the study group produced a guiding document for its implementation in a "missionary synodal key."

Among its key guidelines, the report called for priestly formation to be immersed in the life of the Christian community, with the possibility of alternating traditional seminary residence with periods living in parish communities or other ecclesial environments, particularly during later stages of formation. The document specified this should not prolong the overall formation period.

The report called on seminaries to include "well-prepared and competent women as co-responsible at all levels of formation, also within the formation team, in order to benefit from their indispensable contribution to vocational discernment and to the accompaniment of candidates to the priesthood."

Responsibility for the formation of future priests, the document said, "cannot remain limited to the Bishop and those directly given the task of formation, but requires the contribution of the entire People of God." It called for bishops to promote listening and interaction among people of different vocations in drafting national formation plans, and said the People of God should be "truly listened to" before the conferral of Holy Orders.

The document includes 26 real-world best practice examples from seminaries around the world. Among those highlighted: a program in eight U.S. dioceses focused on healing wounds caused by the excessive use of technology and family breakdown, centered on an eight-day silent retreat and a small-group chastity program; and a Nigerian seminary that requires seminarians to perform all maintenance work and cleaning of their seminary building to "experience the dignity of human labor."

The report also outlined a three-year action plan under the supervision of the Dicastery for the Clergy, in which each episcopal conference could establish a working group to oversee implementation of synodal elements in its seminaries. Comprehensive reports would be submitted to the dicastery at the end of the three-year period, which would compile a summary report for the pope.

With the submission of their final reports, both study groups have concluded their mandates and are considered dissolved. The General Secretariat of the Synod and the competent Vatican dicasteries will now work to translate the findings into proposals to be submitted to the pope.

Courtney Mares is Vatican editor for OSV News. Follow her on X @catholiccourtney.



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SVdP

Continued from Page 1

lodging, medical support, roadside assistance, and assistance with food.

Hours of operation are Monday to Thursday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., and Friday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The address is 311 West Plum Street. The center director can be reached at 325-206-0296, or you may call the parish office at 325-387-2278. The center supports itself with bake sales and rummage sales and the sale of Christmas ornaments. Donations are always welcome.

Director Alvarez had a special message of appreciation for her volunteers: "I want to give thanks to all the members of Hearts of Charity and show my appreciation for everything they've consistently done to help keep this ministry active and serving our community. I don't do any of this alone."

Abilene

St. Vincent de Paul Society of Abilene, Texas, affiliated with Holy Family Catholic Church, is located at 1241 Walnut Street. It was founded Jan. 7, 1963. Store hours are Monday to Friday, noon to 4 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Jay Hobbs is Manager of the SVdP Thrift Store. He can be reached at 325-677-6871. SVdP Abilene is sponsored by an association of Catholic churches in the Abilene and surrounding area, operating a resale store that receives donations of clothing, shoes, household items, home furnishings, appliances, and anything of value that is still usable and isn't worn out.

Money from the sale of these items is used to help families and individuals who are struggling to pay rent, utilities, prescription drugs, and other miscellaneous expenses. SVdP Abilene helps anyone regardless of color, race, creed, or religious affiliation. Anyone in need can call to schedule a home visit. Community outreach volunteers interview recipients to validate their need, and arrangements are made for payment directly to the utility, landlord, or any other entity owed.

There is a "Sack Sale" on the first Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of each month. Anyone can fill a shopping bag with clothing and other items for \$12 per bag, including tax. Once every six months, a family or individual is eligible to receive three free outfits including shoes and undergarments. All that is required is an ID. St. Vincent's is staffed by volunteers who work with kindness and care, along with three dedicated employees. More volunteers are critically needed. Please contact Jay Hobbs to give of your time this Lenten season.

San Angelo

Catholic Outreach Services of San Angelo (COS) began as Catholic Charities in 1978 when six Catholic parishes in the San Angelo area combined to centralize support for the needs of the disadvantaged in the surrounding community. Wanda Gully, now the current director, is a founding member who has supported the agency through its evolution.

Meals are served Monday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Food bags are distributed on the 1st and 3rd Mondays. Other provisions include bedding and sleeping bags, backpacks, and toiletries. YMCA shower passes and city bus passes are often available. COS will provide an address for mail, and ACP cell phone applications for the homeless. An appointment is needed for financial assistance for rent or hotel stays, Greyhound bus tickets or prescriptions. Case management for a variety of needs or referrals is available. A limited amount of funding to help flood victims is still available.

Hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call 325-617-7292 for more information. If you



COURTESY

The St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store at 304 E. 3rd Street in Big Lake.

haven't yet made your charitable Lenten commitment, consider volunteering with Catholic Outreach.

Odessa

The House of Mercy Food Pantry at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in Odessa, Texas, was established in 2019 in response to the growing number of families experiencing hardship at that time. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, many families were further impacted by job loss and workplace closures. The pastor at the time, Father Juan Fernando Bonilla, was inspired to encourage parishioners, particularly those less affected by the crisis, to come together in solidarity by organizing and donating food packages to provide temporary assistance to those in need. This initiative awakened a profound spirit of generosity within the parish community as reflected in the Gospel of St. Matthew, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35). Guided by this call to charity, the parish utilized every available means — radio, the internet, and word of mouth — to promote the House of Mercy and extend its outreach to the broader community.

Sister Estela Tovar, who oversees the House of Mercy Food Pantry, is available from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Friday. Appointments outside of these hours may be arranged by contacting her directly at 432-248-1057. Her email is celia60cd@gmail.com. The House of Mercy is located at 2301 W. University Blvd., Odessa, TX 79763.

Typically held on the last Friday of each month from 9 a.m. - 11 a.m., "Charity Friday" is the primary monthly outreach event and serves as the designated food distribution day. During this time, vehicles line up in the parking lot as volunteers load food directly into each car, providing an efficient drive-through service.

The House of Mercy operates without a dedicated source of income, relying upon the extraordinary generosity of our parish community to support the House of Mercy through their charitable contributions.

Catholic Charities Community Services Odessa was founded on July 1, 1982, by Msgr. James Bridges as a centralized ministry of the five Catholic parishes in Odessa to serve neighbors facing crisis. What began as a parish social ministry has grown into a comprehensive agency serving over 16,000 individuals annually through their Emergency Services Program, which in-

cludes food assistance, utility and rental assistance, clothing, household items, transportation assistance, and resource referrals.

The Family Thrift Store was established in 2000 and operates as both a ministry and a daily funding source for all programs. Fundraising events, individual donors, grants and foundations also support the agency. In partnership with agencies such as the American Red Cross, Crisis Center, Odessa Links, PermianCare, Ector County Courts, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, St. Joseph Ministry, CASA, and Hope for the Homeless, the Family Thrift Store provides clothing, shoes, winter gear, and household essentials to referred families at no cost. Immediate crisis assistance and long-term stability programs are available.

Community services include the HEB Adult Learning Center, which serves over 600 students annually across multiple counties and offers GED preparation, adult basic education, ESL, citizenship preparation, and financial literacy classes. These programs help families increase income, improve employment opportunities, and build long-term stability.

Located at 2500 Andrews Highway, Sara Campos Aguilar is the executive director and can be reached Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. You may call the agency and Learning Center at 432-332-1387, or the Family Thrift Store at 432-272-0680. Sara Campos Aguilar's email is executivedirector@ccodessa.com.

"Our greatest needs are additional desktop computers for the HEB Adult Learning Center to expand student capacity and two commercial grade freezers for our Escobedo Family Food Pantry to safely store perishable food and increase distribution capacity," said Director Aguilar.

Big Lake

The St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store of St. Margaret of Cortona Parish in Big Lake is located at 304 E. 3rd Street. The thrift store began during the tenure of Father Hilary Ihedioha. According to Director Sandra Huerta, Bette Duesing contacted the church home office at St. Margaret and offered to donate the old laundry building located at 304 E. 3rd Street. The building was converted to a thrift store and opened on May 1, 2013.

Since its opening, items and clothing are given to those in need when they move to Big Lake. The ladies, who volunteer twice a week, have donated their time and have been sending items such as clothing to those who are in need as far as Mexico, Africa, and Cuba. A young parishioner comes by and takes clothing to the homeless in San Antonio. Clothing has also been given to a woman who comes from Dallas, who then takes the donations to Mexico.

Stanton

St. Vincent de Paul of Stanton, affiliated with St. Joseph Parish, is located at 409 N. Convent Street. Jesse Navarez administers a fund, with the oversight of the pastor, Father Michael Rodriguez, primarily to assist the community with utility payments. Hours of operation are the same as parish office hours: Monday to Thursday, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m., and on Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Additional contact information is stanton@sanangelodiocese.org, and 432-756-3743.

Almsgiving is one of the three foundational pillars of Catholic Lent, alongside prayer and fasting, representing a call to share resources and charity with the poor as an act of justice and love. It involves voluntarily sacrificing money, goods, or time, often through charity donations or serving those in need. Please prayerfully consider how you might assist any of these charitable organizations during this time.



WEST TEXAS ANGELUS

A very small sampling of the goods available at the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store in Abilene.