



# Local Legend

## BISHOP FINDS RETIREMENT ENRICHING AND BUSY

■ BY BROOK STOCKBERGER

One day, out of the blue, Rico wandered into the bishop's backyard.

"He was a keeper," Bishop Emeritus Ricardo Ramírez said as he sat at his dining room table and patted his appreciative dog.

"We checked and there was no chip, no tags," Ramírez said.

The man who served as the first bishop of the Diocese of Las Cruces for more than 30 years thinks his four-legged buddy is part Chihuahua, part cocker spaniel, but he is not sure.

"He's a mix, a mutt like most of us," he said.

There was a point to be made: Your background does not matter, you still deserve love. And if you are in need, an outstretched hand is appreciated.

### 'APPRECIATE TIME'

Ramírez, 79, has been retired since January 2013. He became the first bishop of the new Las Cruces diocese in 1982.

He admits he was afraid retirement could be boring. He has found it to be anything but.

"My retirement has been very fruitful and enriching," Ramírez said. "I've been called on to do funerals a lot. It helps me to do a lot of thinking about my end, and prepare for it."

In fact a serious health scare in 2015 led to a pair of surgeries.

"I'm learning to appreciate time more," he said.

Ramírez said time was created by God along with the universe and humans have so little time on Earth when compared to the universe.

"Don't waste time," he said. "I still do; we

all do. But as a whole, use time well."

Ramírez has been known to check out football and baseball games. Originally from Bay City, Texas, he has a soft spot for the Astros and the Texans.

He likes to read, travel, plan events and entertain over the grill in his backyard.

### 'POWER FROM THE MARGINS'

Ramírez, who still performs Mass most weeks and travels to speak with groups and participate in retreats, found himself laid up due to his illness. During his convalescence he wrote a book.

Titled "Power from the Margins, The Emergence of Latinos in Church and Society," Ramírez said he expects the be published in the summer of 2016.

The project had been on his mind for quite some time, but the rigors of being a bishop always got in the way. His illness was the time he was given to finally put words to paper.

"Writing a book is hard," he said. "I admire writers. It's a skill you hone."

### STATE OF THE CHURCH

Ramírez is pleased with leadership of the Diocese of Las Cruces and the Catholic Church as a whole. Bishop Oscar Cantú replaced Ramírez at the helm of the diocese in 2013.

"I'm so happy with his style and pastoral manner," Ramírez said. "He is kind and patient. He brings a richness of talent to the diocese."

"Pope Francis is a breath of fresh air," Ramírez said. "He's gentle and kind and happy. But he can challenge (people). He can get angry, just as Jesus got angry."