Bishop Garcia appointed bishop of Monterey, California

By Catholic Spirit Staff

Pope Francis has appointed Austin Auxiliary Bishop Daniel E. Garcia as the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Monterey, California. The announcement was made Nov. 27.

Bishop Garcia succeeds the late Bishop Richard J. Garcia, who died July 11 of complications from Alzheimer’s disease. The Diocese of Monterey sits on the Pacific Coast just north of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. It has 46 parishes and 18 Catholic schools and a population of about 200,000 Catholics.

During a press conference in Monterey on Nov. 27, Bishop Garcia said he looks forward to getting to know the people of Monterey and working with them to build the kingdom of God.

“Let us work together and let us be men and women of faith who tirelessly share with others the joy of the Gospel,” he said.

The bishop also reflected on his time in the Diocese of Austin, where he born and where he has served as a priest for the last 30 years. He was born on Aug. 30, 1960, as the eldest of four children of Daniel Castilleja Garcia Jr. and the late Sarah Muñoz Garcia. He grew up in Cameron, which is east of Temple. Bishop Garcia was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Austin on May 28, 1988, by Bishop John E. McCarthy.

Bishop Garcia has served in a variety of roles in the Diocese of Austin. His first assignment was as associate pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Austin, followed by Cristo Rey Parish in Austin and St. Louis King of France Parish in Austin. He briefly served at St. Mary Magdalene Parish in Humble in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

In 1995, he was named founding pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Austin, leading the parish from its inception through multiple building projects. In 2014, Bishop Joe Vásquez appointed then-Father Garcia as Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia for the Diocese of Austin.

Bishop Garcia said he will miss the people of God in the Diocese of Austin.

“One of the sobering realities of this transition is the fact that I am leaving the diocese I was ordained to serve 30 years ago,” he said. “This will not be easy … I ask for your prayers as I prepare for these upcoming changes in my life.”

Bishop Vásquez said Bishop Garcia has been “good counsel and support” for him over the last four years.

“He has helped me tremendously and our friendship is one that I treasure,” Bishop Vásquez said.

“As a diocese, we will miss Bishop Garcia, but he has our prayers as he transitions to his life in Monterey. I ask that through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bishop Garcia may serve the people of the Diocese of Monterey with a shepherd’s care,” he said.

Bishop Garcia is one of several priests from the Austin Diocese to be named a bishop over the last eight years. Pope Benedict XVI appointed Bishop Wm. Michael Mulvey to lead the Diocese of Corpus Christi in 2010. In 2013, Pope Francis appointed Bishop Michael J. Sis to lead the Diocese of San Angelo. In 2016, Pope Francis appointed Bishop David Konderla to lead the Diocese of Tulsa. In 2017, Pope Francis appointed Bishop William Wack (a Holy Cross priest who served in Austin) to lead the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee.

Bishop Garcia earned an associate’s degree from Tyler Junior College in 1982. He earned a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from St. Mary’s Seminary at the University of St. Thomas in Houston in 1984 and earned a master’s degree from the same university in 1988. He earned a master’s of arts in Liturgical Studies in 2007 from St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

Bishop Garcia will be installed as the Bishop of Monterey on Jan. 29. Details for that event will be posted at www.austindiocese.org.
THE MISSION OF THE CATHOLIC SPIRIT

As the official newspaper for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Austin, the Catholic Spirit is dedicated to providing information, education and formation for the Catholic community of Central Texas. This mission calls for the newspaper:

• to provide readers with an understanding of our Catholic faith and traditions;
• to be a primary source of information on Catholic issues relevant to the community;
• to be a unifying element for faith communities, both rural and urban, throughout Central Texas;
• to show respect for and appreciation of all cultural groups and traditions;
• to emphasize topics affirming the Catholic community and life, while acknowledging the humanity of the community and examining, with courage, topics that challenge and encourage growth in the faith.

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A PERSONAL REFLECTION

The diocese is worthy of your generosity

By Scott Whitaker | Guest Columnist

I grew up in the small town of Bowie, just north-west of Fort Worth. Bowie has about 4,000 people, one Catholic parish with one priest who also serves three other parishes.

As I have reflected on my time at St. Jerome Parish in Bowie, I have realized my experience helped me cultivate and understand the core foundations of Christian stewardship. It took every family in our small, rural parish to keep the parish running and to make sure parishioners’ needs were met since a priest was not available every day.

All of us share the vocation of being a disciple of Jesus. Stewardship comes alive through our discipleship. Stewardship is the gift of time, talent and treasure, but fundamentally stewardship is an outgrowth of a true conversion to Christ. Growing up in that small town taught me what it means to be church and what it means to be a good steward.

The recent news on the abuse crisis in the Catholic Church is disturbing. What was once far away is now closer to home. I share in the concern and disgust for all the terrible actions of those in church leadership. Let us pray for the victims that they may know they are loved by God, and that they may find peace and healing.

As the diocesan director of Stewardship and Development, I have had many frank discussions with parishioners in this diocese about their donations. And I am grateful for those who are concerned.

I am often asked if gifts given to the diocese are protected from lawsuits. The gifts given to the Catholic Services Appeal and the Encountering Christ Capital Campaign are used only for the items outlined in the campaign case for support found in the brochures. I encourage anyone who has concerns to visit the diocesan website (www.austindiocese.org/faq) to learn more about what the Diocese of Austin is doing to protect the gifts that have been entrusted to us.

Additionally, many have let me know they plan to make their gifts to other charities instead of the diocese. Giving is a personal decision between the giver and God. I invite every family to take their personal stewardship to prayer to diligently discern how their generosity can be used to serve the church.

Just like that small parish in Bowie, it takes many people to make sure the mission of the church continues. I hope and pray that discernment leads all of our families to understand the programs and ministries supported by the Diocese of Austin are worthy of their support.

Have a blessed Advent as we prepare for the birth of our Savior. For more information regarding stewardship and development in our diocese, please contact me.

As we continue through the season of Advent and prepare for the coming of Christ, the Catholic Spirit staff wishes all of our readers a very blessed Christmas and a wonderful New Year.
Bishop Vásquez reflects on lawsuit filed at end of November

By Bishop Joe S. Vásquez | Bishop of Austin

A lawsuit was filed against me, the Diocese of Austin, and a former pastor of a parish by six female parishioners who desire to remain anonymous.

As I write this statement, the diocese has not yet formally responded to the initial petition. It is our practice to attempt to first resolve disputes informally through discussion or mediation.

To respect the plaintiffs involved in this case and to remain true to our custom to not litigate disputes in the press, I will not name the persons involved in the dispute, including the defendant-priest. Also, I will not respond to the specific allegations here, as the proper forum for the response is now before a court of law. I do wish, however, to offer a personal reflection.

The filing of this case has compelled me to look interiorly and to ask God for his compassionate guidance; not for my sake but for those who are most affected and hurt.

I believe this case reflects a situation that has caused feelings of sadness and frustration on several levels. First, the plaintiffs feel offended by the actions of a trusted priest and they allege the diocese did not respond promptly or appropriately when they voiced their concerns. They believe the Ethics and Integrity in Ministry policies need to be revised. Second, the parish at which the allegations took place has suffered greatly. Third, the good priests, particularly those currently serving in that parish and in this diocese, suffer as they hear about allegations against a brother priest. Finally, a situation that leads to a lawsuit such as this one hurts everyone in the local church as it raises doubt and impairs trust in our parish and diocesan leadership.

As the spiritual leader of this diocese, I am gravely saddened and troubled. I have offered to and hope to meet with the plaintiffs, and listen carefully to find a resolution to their concerns and, more importantly, to offer means for pastoral or spiritual care.

Regardless of the outcome of the lawsuit, I plan to identify those areas where we may implement meaningful changes to reduce the possibility of a similar situation from occurring. The best response to this lawsuit will not be our arguments made through lawyers. Instead, the best response is my and the diocese’s sincere reflection, our acknowledgement of the suffering on all sides, and our efforts toward improvement and healing.

This case is unique in many ways and there is much testimony to be received and given. There are many sides of this story that are to be told and heard. I place my trust in the fact that everyone involved is well-intentioned and is seeking the best for our faith and church. I am confident those good intentions will lead us to a resolution inspired by the Holy Spirit.

I thank you for your prayers for courage and strength for those who brought this lawsuit and for me as we move into this time of reflection and discussion.

Bishops initiate frank discussion on abuse crisis

By Catholic News Service

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said Nov. 14 he had opened the bishops’ fall general assembly “expressing some disappointment,” but “I end it with hope.”

“My hope is first of all grounded in Christ, who desires that the church be purified and that our efforts bear fruit,” he told his fellow bishops in Baltimore with remarks closing the public sessions of the Nov. 12-14 meeting.

“We leave this place committed to taking the strongest possible actions at the earliest possible moment,” Cardinal DiNardo said. “We will do so in communion with the universal church. Moving forward in concert with the church around the world will make the church in the United States stronger, and will make the global church stronger.”

The disappointment came when he announced at the start Nov. 12 the Vatican had requested the bishops delay voting on several proposals to address the sex abuse crisis and hold bishops more accountable for dealing wayward priests and other church workers accused of sex abuse.

The directive said the proposals needed to be reviewed for conformity to canon law and that action on them needed to wait until after the February Vatican meeting for presidents of bishops’ conferences worldwide to discuss the abuse crisis.

But throughout the assembly, the spotlight was on the widening abuse crisis in the U.S. church and action the U.S. bishops must take to address it. Much of the meeting time was devoted to frank presentations and discussions about abuse.

Bishop Joe Vásquez of Austin said he was grateful for the time the bishops spent in discussion about the abuse crisis.

“Our priority is the victims and helping those who have been harmed by abuse find healing and peace,” he said.

There were other items on the agenda, including a pastoral letter on racism that was introduced to the body of bishops as an action item Nov. 13 and voted on Nov. 14.

They overwhelmingly approved the document, “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love — A Pastoral Letter Against Racism.” It declares “racist acts are sinful because they violate justice.”

“They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love,” it adds.

Bishop Vásquez said the pastoral letter has very “practical ways to discuss racism and how we can respond to it.”

Also on the final day’s agenda the bishops gave unanimous support for the advancement of the canonization cause of Sister Thea Bowman on the diocesan level — the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, headed by Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz. It is the diocese where Sister Bowman grew up and where she ministered in her last years while taking care of her aging parents and subsequently fighting cancer herself.

The great-granddaughter of slaves, Sister Bowman was the only African-American member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. She transcended racism to leave a lasting mark on Catholic life in the U.S. in the late 20th century.

Other agenda items for the last day of the meeting included the approval of a budget for 2019. They also heard reports on September’s V Encuentro held in Texas, and October’s Synod of Bishops on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.”

Regarding the synod, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Connecticut, who was a synod delegate, said the event was a moment of great grace that needs attention of church leaders now to implement it on the diocesan level.

Among speakers who gave presentations on the abuse crisis and called for action was the chairman of the National Review Board, Francesco Cesareo, president of Assumption College in Massachusetts.

He called for broadening the scope of the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” to include bishops. He also urged publishing complete lists of credibly accused clergy in all dioceses; improving the audit process; and enhancing accountability for bishops regarding cases of abuse.

He urged the bishops to take action and continue to move solutions to abuse forward. If such action does not happen, “I fear for the future of our church,” Cesareo said Nov. 13.

The bishops also heard presentations on proposals for addressing the abuse crisis, so they could discuss them, even though the Vatican had requested they postpone voting on them.

The proposals include establishing standards of episcopal accountability; forming a special commission for review of complaints against bishops for violations of the accountability standards; and establishing a protocol regarding restrictions on bishops who were removed or who resigned over claims of sexual misconduct made against them or for grave negligence in office.

The bishops also heard from Heather Banis, a trauma psychologist who is victim assistance coordinator for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. She told them that helping victims and survivors of child sex abuse heal is a journey that involves showing them repeated trustworthiness (see story on Page 10).

It begins with listening, understanding, offering responses showing that they, the victim-survivors, are believed, she said.
Deacon serves retired priests with love, gratitude

By Ricardo Gandara | Correspondent

At the breakfast table, several retired priests take time to describe a man who plays son at a time that one describes as “as we ride into the sunset.”

“An ideal kind of man, a man of service who shares in our lives,” said Msgr. Victor Goertz.

“He truly has the joy of the Gospel,” said another.

The priests, who reside at the St. John Paul II Residence for Priests in Georgetown, were talking about Deacon Mike Aaronson. As the Minister to Retired Priests, Deacon Aaronson is assigned to care for them and their fellow retired priests.

“Whatever need arises in our lives, he’s there. Day or night, he’s always available and willing to help,” one priest said.

“He knows more about our health and medical conditions than we do. He goes with us to all our doctor visits,” said another.

Msgr. Goertz, who is remembered for his time at Cristo Rey Parish in East Austin from 1955 to 1971 and later as chaplain at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton, recalled Deacon Aaronson’s dedication when he was taken to the emergency room of Amarillo will celebrate a Mass for the Gift of Human Life at 10 a.m. at St. Helen Parish in Georgetown. Msgr. Goertz, who is remembered for his time at Cristo Rey Parish in East Austin from 1955 to 1971 and later as chaplain at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton, recalled Deacon Aaronson’s dedication when he was taken to the emergency room of

Deacon Aaronson’s love for the elderly stems from times he took his own children to do volunteer work at a retirement home in Bertram.

“Old people like new socks, and we enjoyed putting new socks on them. I loved being around the elderly,” he said.

He describes his role as challenging and rewarding.

“I have the best job. I love hearing their rich stories, and these men are very grateful. I get a ‘thank you’ for everything that I do,” he said.

Celebrate Martin Luther King on Jan. 12

A commemoration of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will be held Jan. 12 at 11 a.m. at St. Louis Parish in Austin. Auxiliary Bishop Fernand J. Cheri of New Orleans will be the keynote speaker for this event, which will include music, worship and a reception. For more information, contact DeKarlos Blackmon, the coordinator for Black Ministry, at (512) 949-2471.

Annual celebration of Catholic schools

The 11th annual Celebrating Catholic Schools Awards Dinner and Reception will be held Jan. 19 beginning at 6 p.m. at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center in Austin. This annual semi-formal dinner honors the “unsung” heroes at each of the 22 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Austin and raises funds for Catholic school families who wouldn’t otherwise be able to afford a Catholic education for their child. Curtis Martin, the CEO of Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), will be the keynote speaker. For more information, visit www.csdarton.org or call Jill Holmas at (512) 949-2497 or jill-holmas@austindiocese.org.

Texas Catholic Pro-Life Day is Jan. 26

Mark your calendars for Texas Catholic Pro-Life Day 2019 on Jan. 26. Bishop Wm. Michael Mulvey of Corpus Christi will celebrate a Mass for the Gift of Human Life at 10 a.m. at San José Parish in Austin. Bishop Patrick Zurek of Amarillo will celebrate a Mass for the Gift of Human Life at 10 a.m. at St. Louis Parish in Austin. At noon, everyone is invited to gather at 17th Street and Congress Avenue for a Ministry Fair at 1 p.m. Then participants will march to the south steps of the State Capitol for the Rally for Life, which begins at 2 p.m.

For more information, contact the Luisa De Poo at (512) 949-2487.
Mass celebrates families formed through adoption

By Enedelia J. Obregón | Senior Correspondent

To celebrate National Adoption Awareness Month in November, Mass was offered to celebrate families created through adoption on Nov. 7 at St. Louis King of France Parish in Austin.

On the steps leading to the altar of the chapel were two large earthen vases, representing the ability of adoption to transform lives facing unusual circumstances into something beautiful and extraordinary.

Attendees placed different colored roses in the vases: red ones for birth families, hot pink ones for the adoptive families and pink ones for all the children adopted.

Prayers also were offered for couples struggling with infertility or pregnancy loss and those considering adoption.

The event was sponsored by Destined: Families Built by Love, a program of the Sarah’s Hope & Abraham’s Promise Ministry for couples struggling with infertility and/or pregnancy loss.

In his homily, Father James Misko, pastor of St. Louis Parish, said when couples adopt, they are “doing the work of God” by caring for his creation.

Because God created everything out of love, birth and adoptive families are co-creating, co-protecting and cooperating with God in creating families, he said.

Following the Mass, Mary Worley shared her personal testimony on being a birth mother at age 21 and placing her daughter for adoption.

It was during a Christ Renews His Parish retreat weekend 30 years later that she first talked about her daughter. “A lady came up afterward and told me she was thankful,” Worley said.

“She said, ‘I have two adopted children.’ I said thank you.”

“She said, ‘I don’t think you heard me about how thankful we are.’ … I felt a sword had pierced my heart and I fell to the floor in a fetal position,” Worley said. “All the rejection from my family, the bad choices I’d made all came out in that little chapel.”

It was then that she began to heal.

Worley knew her daughter, now in her 50s, had been adopted by two Catholic professors from Georgetown University. But it wasn’t until that moment that she recognized the Trinitarian aspect of the birth mother, the child and the adoptive parents.

“Even though I’ve never seen her, I know I did all the right things for her,” Worley said of her daughter. “It has made me so happy.”

Becky and Zeke Valdez and their three teenagers were among adoptive families at the Mass. She is a member of the Diocese of Austin Communications staff, and he is a bilingual education teacher at Round Rock Independent School District. They are parishioners of St. William Parish in Round Rock.

Zeke Valdez was working in youth ministry at St. William when he and Becky adopted their daughter. A young lady whom he had counseled throughout her crisis pregnancy chose them to be her daughter’s parents.

“We were at the hospital for her birth and then she came home with us,” Becky said.

Their daughter’s birth mother is a part of birthday and holiday celebrations.

“Our vision was that she not feel she lost a child but that she gained a family,” Becky said.

Their two sons are part of a sibling group of five who had been in foster care. The three other siblings were adopted by neighbors. The families also celebrate birthdays and holidays together.

“It’s a full house,” Becky said. “But it’s about them (the children) not us. We are so blessed. Out of all this brokenness God put our family together.”

Jen and Mark Crowley, parishioners at St. Thomas More Parish in Austin, are the parents of four adopted children ages 15 months, 23 months, four years and five years.

“We have open adoptions,” Crowley said. “We have photos of their birth moms. They see them. That’s the reality. That’s their story.”

The Mass evolved after a group of people touched by adoption had been meeting to pray the rosary once a month at St. Thomas More Parish. Crowley said they felt more was needed.

“There was no special support for adoption,” she said.

Last year, the first adoption Mass was celebrated.

One thing they did was write letters of affirmation to the birth mothers.

“They chose life for our babies,” she said. “They have unimaginable love. They were completely selfless.”

For more information on Destined, visit www.familiesbuiltbylove.com. On Facebook, search for “SHAPMinistry” or “DestinedMinistry”. 

Father James Misko, pastor of St. Louis Parish in Austin and celebrant of the Adoption Celebration Mass, blesses the Valdez family after the Mass. (Photo by Enedelia J. Obregón)
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Correspondent
By Mary P. Walker | Senior Correspondent

“People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.

People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.

The Synod of Bishops is a permanent institution that advises the pope on important issues facing the church. From Oct. 3-28, bishops and cardinals delegates from all over the world met to consider how the church can better lead youth, ages 16-29, to recognize their community could make valuable contributions to the topic.

Santiago was asked to participate in the pre-synodal planning meeting last March. Obviously impressed by her faith and preparatory work, synod organizers asked her to be an auditor, one of only 36 youth observers. As an auditor, she attended the synod meetings and participated in smaller discussion groups with the bishops.

In addition, Santiago was asked to be the first youth speaker, or witness, effectively kicking off the work of the synod. In her testimony, she expressed her gratitude for the focus of the synod. In her testimony, she expressed her gratitude for the focus of the synod. In her testimony, she expressed her gratitude for the focus of the synod.

Santiago praised the sincere desire of the bishops to connect with the youth. She hopes they will take home what they learned, including that young men and women want priests and bishops to walk side by side with their flock, journeying together, learning together and suffering together.

A recurring theme and the actual experience of the synod was that young men and women are not just recipients of pastoral care. Their energy and creativity can be directed toward the responsibility of building the church.

“Youth have much to offer the church, but they need to be accompanied to harvest those gifts,” Santiago said.

More information about the synod, the full text of Briana Santiago’s witness and synod documents are available at www.synod2018.va.
February conference seeks to sharpen men’s faith

By Ricardo Gandara | Correspondent

In the Diocese of Austin, the Central Texas Fellowship of Catholic Men has been working to encourage Catholic men to live out their faith for more than a decade.

“If iron sharpens iron, a man helps another man,” said David Jordan, 65, a parishioner at St. Anthony Parish in Bryan who founded the men’s group there.

Jordan said the men’s group allows members to grow and develop in faith in a comfortable setting that embraces trust and vulnerability.

“We sit and talk and what people say stays within the group. It puts men in a position to talk about anything, and the better we understand the context in which the Bible was written, the audience to whom it was addressed at that time and the eternal message that we as 21st century Christians can glean from the written Word inspired by the Holy Spirit,” Egan said.

The Gospel of John was chosen as the first topic for the Biblical Institute because it is unique among the four gospels. John has no Christmas story. Jesus is not baptized in John’s Gospel. Jesus performs no exorcisms and tells no parables. John is the only Gospel writer to have the foot washing as part of the Last Supper, and he lists only seven miracles, Egan said.

“There is no other meaning, reason, or purpose to our lives than to be a saint — to be in heaven with God for all eternity. It’s conferences like this that we’re reminded of what life is all about,” he said.

Dennis Daniel, executive director of the Central Texas Fellowship of Catholic Men, said many more will be discussed by Father Burton during the weekend retreat.

“We do that in a variety of ways by launching men’s fellowships in parishes where they can study with other men of faith,” Daniel said.

Currently, he said, about 900 men participate in 30 parish groups that highlight the spiritual development of men as they go about life in their parishes. These men serve with the Knights of Columbus, as hospitality ministers and groundkeepers and other community service projects. Parish men’s groups usually meet weekly.

Dustin Mantz, 32, attends meetings at St. Louis Parish in Waco every Friday at 6 a.m. prior to going to work.

“Our is a fraternal community of guys hanging out with guys. It’s a call to spend time with one another. It’s like getting together with your buddies … at church,” he said.

Jordan’s group in Bryan, which meets Saturday mornings, has flourished to impact families.

“I was looking for a way to help and motivate men to become better leaders of their parishes and families,” he said. Mantz said his group was easy to join. He was invited by a friend in the church parking lot.

“I invite men to get involved. What do you have to lose? What else are you doing at home? Binge watching on Netflix? You can get involved in something to grow your faith,” he said.

“No Man Left Behind,” the seventh annual Catholic Men’s Conference, will be held Feb. 23 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at St. William Parish in Round Rock. For information, e-mail info@centex-catholic.com or call (254) 855-1633.
New program is designed to guide priests in early years

By Mary P. Walker | Senior Correspondent

When a priest is ordained, his vocation begins a new phase. He moves from the structured, academic life of the seminary into a parish. In March 2017, Bishop Joe Vásquez asked the diocesan Priestly Life and Formation Committee to recommend how to better support new priests during this time of change.

While seminaries do an excellent job of helping men discern and answer God’s call, some things can only be learned in a parish setting. These skills include stewardship of parish finances; engaging and leading parish employees and volunteers; rectory life with an assigned pastor; transferring to a new parish where things are done differently; and paying attention to personal needs when the needs of others are so great.

“Priestly formation never ends. We want to accompany new priests to ease the transition from the seminary so that they are successful in parish ministry, personally fulfilled, and physically, mentally and spiritually healthy,” said Father Tom Reitmeyer, committee member.

The committee began by surveying diocesan priests who had been ordained less than five years, asking what information or experiences would be helpful. In addition, they examined how 10 other dioceses guided new priests. They learned that fellowship with other new priests, education in parish management and leadership, and the availability of trained mentor priests are important.

The survey results and the best practices of other dioceses led the committee to update the Early Ministry Program, a five year developmental journey for new priests. When the men are transitional deacons (typically the year before they are ordained a priest), they are introduced to the program and other resources. Each transitional deacon chooses a trained mentor priest to walk with and advise them in their early years.

During his first and second year in a parish, the new priest meets monthly with his mentor. The focus of these two years is for him to grow in his identity as a priest; build a collaborative relationship with the bishop, his pastor and parish staff; and identify areas where he needs to grow personally and spiritually.

Several times a year the new priests get together to share their experiences, joys and challenges.

“The program lets me reflect upon and consider what’s working and what’s not working in my personal, pastoral and spiritual life as a new priest,” said Father Joseph Daheim, associate pastor of St. Helen Parish in Georgetown, who was ordained in 2017.

Priests in the third, fourth and fifth years of ministry face additional challenges related to leadership. Often they are transferring to new parishes and need to once again establish their ministry in a new environment. Some are beginning their first assignment as a parish administrator or pastor. The Early Ministry Program offers education to improve their knowledge and skills and help with these transitions.

During this time, they will attend an annual two-day gathering that includes prayer, reflection and presentations on advanced topics in ministry and leadership. Seasoned priests and lay experts will guide them in learning more about accounting, human resource management, stewardship and development and collaboration with the diocese.

“In the seminary, we do not spend much time on how to govern a parish through the use of administrative, financial, and leadership skills, which typically come through on-the-job training. The Early Ministry Program allowed me to get a jump start on this as a new pastor and priest,” said Father Craig DeYoung, pastor of Our Lady of Wisdom University Parish in San Marcos, who was ordained in 2014.

Father Reitmeyer explained the program is not meant to make the priests experts in these areas. Rather it gives them a better understanding of other necessary facets of parish life, especially those often overseen by the lay staff and volunteers. While parishes exist for the spiritual good of the people of God, pastoral leadership requires many practical considerations. The goal of the Early Ministry Program is to educate and support future pastors as they grow in their spiritual, pastoral, sacramental and leadership responsibilities.
Psychologist addresses bishops on helping abuse victims

By Rhina Guidos | Catholic News Service

Heather Banis, victim assistance coordinator for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, told the bishops to dedicate time to meeting with and listening to “victim-survivors” face to face.

A betrayal trauma, effects of which are compounded by secrecy, denial and cover-up. She told bishops to begin the journey toward healing by believing those who come forward with allegations, acknowledging the victim-survivor, offering counseling and support right away. She also told them to remove accused priests from ministry right away, pending the outcome of an investigation. “Demonstrate trustworthiness again and again,” she said.

Much of what she said is already practiced by the church in the U.S. in cases of suspected abuse. She advised bishops to post the names of credibly or plausibly accused clergy. She also told bishops to be accessible to victim-survivors, to pray for them at every Mass, to talk about it during homilies, hold healing liturgies, to foster a culture of outreach and support, and provide sacred spaces and places.

Be victim-centric, she said. Yet each person will need something different, so being flexible and open to what the victim-survivor needs is crucial, she said.

She also told them to remember, “They were children and they were betrayed.” Healing doesn’t happen overnight. She said, or come with a settlement, or even with multiple sessions with a psychologist.

“It’s a journey,” she said. “We need to prepare ourselves for listening deeply for understanding.”

She told the bishops to dedicate time to meeting with and listening to “victim-survivors” face to face.

“We learn from hearing their sacred stories, and we honor them in those stories, but it’s very different when you (bishops) do it,” she said. “The power of that exchange can be remarkable.”

By listening, “you bring victim-survivors out of silence,” she said. A lot of what the church is practicing is working, she said.

“It is working. The numbers tell us that,” she said. “But it’s working because of vigilance. It’s working because we’re paying attention. We have to stay alert and vigilant.”

Bishops’ meeting has echoes, and differences, from 2002 gathering

By Carol Zimmermann | Catholic News Service

The gathering of U.S. bishops in Baltimore Nov. 12-14 on the heels of the clergy abuse scandal that hit the Catholic Church this past summer had echoes of the 2002 bishops’ meeting in Dallas, which took place just months after the church was also reeling from clergy sexual abuse crisis that made headlines in The Boston Globe.

But the two meetings reflected different times and also ended with different results.

Both meetings involved U.S. church leaders facing allegations of sexual misconduct and cover-up among their own ranks and the laity’s demands for action amid feelings of strong distrust of church hierarchy.

“They were starting from scratch” in 2002, said Jesuit Father Thomas Reese, a senior analyst at Religion News Service, about the bishops’ response then to sexual abuse charges in the church.

Standards the church still uses to protect children and deal with abusive priests were developed at that meeting, but the bishops at that time failed to address standards of episcopal accountability, which this year they discussed but didn’t vote on.

At the Dallas meeting, Father Reese, who was then the editor of America magazine, was a guest anchor at a CNN desk on site, which indicates the extent of news coverage for the June 13-15 meeting.

Both meetings were the bishops’ typical twice-yearly meetings as a body. The spring meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is usually in June at different locations each year and the fall meeting in recent years has always been in Baltimore.

Both the Dallas and the Baltimore gatherings were almost entirely devoted to the church crisis, along with time for prayer, and both years abuse victims addressed the bishops.

Typically, media coverage of bishops’ meetings is pretty sparse. Last year, about 40 reporters attended the fall meeting in Baltimore. This year, the number jumped to 160, but many of these reporters left during the first day when it was announced at the meeting’s opening that the bishops would not be voting on responses to sexual abuse as planned.

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, USCCB president, informed the bishops Nov. 12 as they opened their fall general assembly that the Vatican wanted the bishops to delay any vote until after a February meeting with the pope and presidents of the bishops’ conferences around the world that will focus on addressing clergy abuse.

The Congregation for Bishops, which made the request, also said the delay was needed to better evaluate the proposals in light of canon law.

In 2002, media coverage was at a record high for a bishops’ meeting with 750 accredited journalists.

It also was the first time a version of livestreaming was made available, then called a “live Web cast” which was taken from the Eternal Word Television Network cable feed of the bishops’ meeting. Now the USCCB always provides livestreaming of public sessions of bishops’ meetings on its website.

The 2002 meeting, pre-social media, did not have live tweets during the meetings from reporters, observers and bishops.

This year, the USCCB’s social media accounts — Facebook, Twitter and Instagram — did have posts about the Baltimore meeting had 42,100 responses and were seen by nearly 2 million people. The USCCB also ran two Facebook Live events with bishops answering questions about the meeting.

Both meetings — with their focus on abuse — drew protesters including victims of abuse or those calling the church to do more about the crisis.

The 2002 meeting included protesters from Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, or SNAP. Call to Action and Voice of the Faithful.

This year, members from SNAP and the research site BishopAccountability.org were outside the hotel where the bishops were meeting, holding signs in the cold. The groups’ leaders focus more on oversight and justice than controversial debates over the perceived roles celibacy and homosexuality have in the crisis.

But also, the right-wing advocacy group Church Militant, representing the latter views, held a rally adjacent to the hotel Nov. 13 at a pavilion used for concerts. About 300 attended, not the thousands projected. Signs such as “Regn Now” hung on the fence outside the pavilion, which could be seen by the bishops as they left the hotel ballroom where their meetings took place.

Because of predicted protests, this meeting had tighter security than most reporters remember from any other bishops’ meeting.

During presentations and comments from the floor, the Dallas meeting was not far from anyone’s mind.

“We have come a long way since 2002, but we still have some way to go,” said Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl, apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Washington, who faced pressure to resign after the Pennsylvania grand jury report detailing sexual abuse claims in six dioceses in that state painted a mixed picture of how he handled some of the cases when he was bishop in Pittsburgh.
Pope names organizing committee for abuse conference in February

By Carol Glatz | Catholic News Service

Pope Francis named U.S. Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago to be part of the organizing committee preparing for a meeting of the world’s bishops’ conferences and representatives of religious orders to address the abuse and protection of minors.

The Feb. 21-24 Vatican meeting is not only “about keeping children safe from harm worldwide,” said Greg Burke, head of the Vatican press office, in a written statement Nov. 23.

“You need to have a full understanding of the devastating impact that clerical sexual abuse has on victims,” he said, soon after the Vatican announced the members of the preparatory committee.

Together with Cardinal Cupich, the committee will include Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India; Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna of Malta; and Jesuit Father Hans Zollner, president of the Centre for the Protection of Minors at the Pontifical Gregorian University and a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, headed by Boston Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, and some survivors of abuse by members of the clergy also will be involved in the preparatory work for the meeting, the Vatican said.

“This is a critical moment for the universal church in addressing the sexual abuse crisis,” Cardinal O’Malley said, and the February meeting “will be an important moment for developing a clear path forward for dioceses around the world.”

“We must continue to embrace and practice a commitment to zero tolerance, work for greater transparency, including the release of names of clergy accused of abuse, and encourage all religious orders to adopt a similar policy and cooperate with civil and legal authorities,” the cardinal said.

Above all else, we must place the support and pastoral care of survivors first,” he said in a written statement Nov. 23.

“This is a lifelong journey” that requires a partnership between the laity and clergy in responding to the failures of episcopal leadership by holding bishops accountable for the crimes against children and vulnerable adults,” he said.

Cardinal O’Malley said the pontifical commission, as an advisory body to the pope, proposed the global meeting for the world’s bishop conference leaders. He said the commission has hosted meetings between survivors and groups of newly named bishops, and those meetings “have inspired our view that calling the bishops to Rome for a similar high-impact meeting would be very important in addressing the clergy abuse crisis globally.”

Cardinal Cupich told Crux Nov. 23 that while Pope Francis understands very well the degree of suffering in the U.S. because of abuse, the pope is calling a global meeting because “he understands this to be a global issue.”

“The pope is seeking both a comprehensive understanding of past failings, as well as global solutions moving forward,” the cardinal said Nov. 23.

Cardinal Cupich told Crux it will be critical that all church leaders take ownership for our failures fully in order to ensure they are not repeated.” This will require clearly defining responsibilities and establishing “responsiveness, transparency, and accountability, particularly for bishops,” he added.

He said the pope sees safeguarding as part of his call for a change of culture, “that is, a reform in how we approach ministry for, in addition to being a crime, sexual abuse of minors by clerics is about the corruption of our ministry.”

The February meeting “is the beginning of a worldwide reform that will need to be ongoing and will involve a process of initiatives on regional, national and diocesan levels,” he said.

Archbishop Scicluna said the meeting will include “a penitential liturgy” because “Pope Francis wants it.” He said abuse survivors “are going to be a part of that liturgy too, just as they will be consulted in advance of the meeting and be listened to during it.”

The meeting will mark “the beginning of a new approach that I hope will be global, because it concerns the whole church,” he said.
Bishops face angry questions over mishandling of abuse

By Dennis Sadowski | Catholic News Service

U.S. bishops admitted during a wide-ranging discussion during their fall general assembly that parishioners are angry and continually ask how a charismatic clergyman was able to rise through church ranks despite widespread knowledge of allegations that he sexually abused seminarians and boys.

The predicament in which the church finds itself stemming from the fallout surrounding Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick has left the bishops with few satisfactory answers for parishioners.

The bishops also are faced with having to reflect on how they can become better shepherds in a time of widespread doubt and distrust within the church, several bishops said during a 65-minute session Nov. 13 at the assembly in Baltimore.

Bishops said they have heard in writing and in listening sessions from upset parishioners about the renewed scandal surrounding months of reports of clergy sexual abuse and the failure to adequately respond to problem clergy. Words such as "outrage," "anger" and "abuse of power" permeated their comments.

One of them, Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio, urged his fellow prelates to "go the extra mile, take the extra step to communicate to people that we hear what they have to say."

Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron of Los Angeles said the circumstances surrounding Archbishop McCarrick "is a major concern for people."

Pope Francis accepted Archbishop McCarrick's resignation from the College of Cardinals in July following reports of sexual abuse allegations involving minors decades ago and seminarians more recently. He has denied the allegations.

Bishop Barron added he hopes the investigation sought by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, moves forward both in the U.S. and at the Vatican.

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, responded to several bishops who wondered about the status of the investigations. He said the Vatican's inquiry is underway and that officials in each of the dioceses and archdioceses where the former cardinal served — New York; Newark and Metuchen, New Jersey; and Washington — are slowly moving forward, but that they are being complicated by factors outside of the church.

The New Jersey attorney general is investigating the church's handling of abuse claims and is limiting how quickly church officials in Newark and Metuchen can access its files, Cardinal Tobin said.

"We are ready to go, but need the attorney general's go ahead," he said.

As the conversation opened, Cardinal DiNardo said a task force of three former USCCB presidents has been formed and they will provide regular communication with bishops and the wider church about responses to the abuse crisis. The announcement met with wide approval from the assembly.

Task force members are New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, Atlanta Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory and Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky. Cardinal DiNardo said he will chair the group.

There was some willingness among bishops to pass a resolution to act despite a Vatican letter asking that no action be taken on proposals to establish standards of episcopal accountability and to form a commission to handle complaints when the standards are violated.

Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois, offered a non-binding vote be taken to convey a sense of the bishops' intentions to tackle the abuse crisis and send a message to parishioners.

"We are not branch managers of the Vatican," he said. "Our people are crying out for some action."

Other comments offered suggestions for the need to recommit to transparency and accountability in ministry and the need to restore the trust of the laity across the church.

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight of Jefferson City, Missouri, urged the bishops "to remember the necessity of the laity in helping us get out of this mess."

He also called on the USCCB leadership to appeal to Pope Francis for help in seeking to restore trust and accountability.

At various points during the conversation, bishops reflected on the spiritual side of their lives, with some suggesting the way to restore trust and develop a better understanding of what it means to be a prelate involves a deeper relationship with Jesus.

Cardinal Roger W. Mahony, retired archbishop of Los Angeles, recalled the life of St. Charles Borromeo, who faced a church in crisis in the 16th century, who invited priests and bishops to be more collegial and to do so through prayer.

"It would seem to me that we as bishops need to form more and more prayerful relationships among ourselves ... and ongoing opportunities for our own relationship based totally on Jesus Christ," he said.

Archbishop Alexander K. Sample of Portland, Oregon, said he has taken a "hard look" at his life and how he carries out his ministry since the scandal arose in June. Jesus offers each person faced with troubling times. He said he has found comfort in the "saving power" of Jesus.

Future historians will study how the bishops responded to the abuse crisis, he said, suggesting that the bishops "recommit to the sacred that has been given to us by Jesus Christ."

Being grounded in the mission of Jesus that calls for serving the faithful as shepherds is vital in restoring trust, explained Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami.

We will regain trust by doing what we are supposed to be doing as pastors and shepherds," he said.

"We walk with them and we can regain their trust."

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight of Jefferson City, Missouri, urged the bishops "to remember the necessity of the laity in helping us get out of this mess."

He proposed that the USCCB employ the services of expert lay Catholics to study what he recalled Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis describing during a homily at Mass for the assembly Nov. 12 as "the root causes of the abuse of power by U.S. hierarchy."

Laypeople, he added, are willing to partner with the bishops to guide the church out of the crisis it faces.
IN OUR WORLD

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Remain in my love. ~Jn 15:9

Como el Padre me amó, así también los he amado yo:
permanecan en mi amor. ~Jn 15:9

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Pope prepares to visit Panama for World Youth Day

By Junno Arocho Esteves | Catholic News Service

When Pope Francis visits Panama for World Youth Day in January, he will meet with young people not able to attend the festivities: some in jail and with some living with HIV.

He also will dedicate the altar of Panama’s newly renovated 400-year-old cathedral, meet with bishops from Central America and have lunch with some of the young people attending the youth day gathering, according to the schedule released by the Vatican Nov. 20.

The pope’s visit to Panama Jan. 23-27 will be his 26th trip outside of Italy. During his visit, he will deliver seven speeches and celebrate two Masses as well as a penitential liturgy.

“The theme for World Youth Day 2019 is taken from the Gospel of St. Luke: ‘I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.’”

In a video message to young men and women around the world, Pope Francis called on them to provoke an uprising of change by serving others.

In helping those who are suffering, both young believers and nonbelievers can find “a strength that can change the world,” the pope said in a video message to youths for the upcoming World Youth Day in Panama.

“It is a revolution that can overturn the powerful forces at work in our world. It is the ‘revolution’ of service,” he said in the message released by the Vatican Nov. 21.

In his message, the pope said those words uttered by Mary during the Annunciation are “the positive reply of one who understands the secret of vocation: to go beyond oneself and place oneself at the service of others.”

Life, he said, can only find meaning when serving God and others. Like Mary, young people must engage “in conversation with God with an attitude of listening” so that they may discover their calling either in marriage, consecrated life or the priesthood.

“The important thing is to discover what God wants from us and to be brave enough to say ‘yes,’” the pope said. “When God has a proposition for us, like the one he had for Mary, it is not intended to extinguish our dreams, but to ignite our aspirations.”

Pope Francis encouraged young people to say ‘yes’ to God’s calling, which is “the first step toward being happy and toward making many people happy.”

“Dear young people,” the pope said, “take courage, enter within yourselves and ask God: ‘What do you want from me?’ Allow God to answer you. Then you will see how your life is transformed and filled with joy.”

The pope’s meeting with young people who will be unable to take part in the activities is a response to the Gospel’s call to clothe the naked, visit the sick and comfort the imprisoned, the organizing committee said in a Nov. 20 statement.

Archbishop Jose Domingo Ulloa Mendieta of Panama said Pope Francis’ meeting with young detainees will be “a very special event” in which “young people deprived of freedom will take part in a penitential liturgy with the Holy Father in an act of repentance, reconciliation and forgiveness,” the committee said.

After the closing Mass for World Youth Day, the pope will visit Casa Hogar el Buen Samaritano (Good Samaritan Home), a center dedicated to helping HIV and AIDS patients “regardless of their sex, religion, sexual orientation, geographical origin” and “who lack the resources to live and cope with their illness.”

The pope will also pray the Angelus there with young people from the Malambo hospice, which helps people addicted to drugs and alcohol, and from Hogar San Jose, a house for the poor run by the Missionaries of Charity and the Kkotongnæ religious congregation.
BISHOP’S INTERVIEW

This Advent may we mindfully prepare our hearts for Jesus

Bishop Joe S. Vásquez is the fifth bishop of the Austin Diocese, which is home to more than 530,000 Catholics.

Editor: Bishop Vásquez, the liturgical season of Advent is upon us. What is the difference between the Advent season and the Christmas season?

Bishop Vásquez: The liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas are closely related but are often confused. This year the first Sunday of Advent is Dec. 2. The Advent season is the time of preparation that leads up to the celebration of the Christmas season. Advent is about preparing and Christmas is the actual celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. The very word Advent means to arrive, so in this season we are waiting with hope and anticipation for the arrival of Jesus, Our Savior.

During the season of Advent, we are preparing with hope and expectation that Jesus will come again. This is a time when we prepare our hearts for the end of time as we say in our creed. We are preparing with hope and expectation that Jesus will come “to judge the living and the dead.”

Christmas is the liturgical season that celebrates the historical event of Jesus’ birth. Christmas reminds us of that special moment more than 2,000 years ago when God became a human being, and he took on flesh. Jesus joined his life to ours and he came to save us.

This is also a time to remember we must long to see the Lord in our everyday life. The Lord is encountering us in moments throughout each day. We must open our hearts to recognize the Lord’s presence in the now.

So Advent is not only about Christmas past, it’s also about Christ’s presence in the future and how the Lord is meeting us daily in the weeks before Christmas.

Editor: We are often busy and frazzled during the weeks leading up to Christmas. How can we truly prepare our hearts for Jesus?

Bishop Vásquez: You are so right! The stores were packed with Christmas decorations almost before Halloween had passed. We feel pressured by our culture and by the commercialization that takes place with the season. Unfortunately, many have made Christmas a business.

But for the Catholic Christian, Christmas is about joy, and we must not let the many activities and busyness of this time of year steal our joy. There are some very practical ways that we can do that. First of all, we can start by committing to a few more minutes of prayer each day. This may mean praying with the Scriptures, attending daily Mass or praying the rosary or the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

The season of Advent is very much a time for the family to do things together. There is a wonderful tradition of the Jesse tree which is a Scripture-based way to build joy and anticipation for the coming of Jesus. The Jesse tree helps us connect the custom of decorating Christmas trees to the events leading to Jesus’ birth.

Other things families can do is to set aside time to serve those who are less fortunate. Perhaps a small part of each child’s allowance could be donated to a worthy cause during this Advent season. Perhaps each family member could find a few things in their closet to donate to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Finally, we must remember the spiritual aspect of preparing our hearts for Christ. Advent is an excellent time to encounter Christ in the sacrament of reconciliation. This is the one thing that we did in my family during the Advent season. My mom and dad would take all six of us children to confession because it was necessary to be ready to celebrate Christmas. The best way to repair our souls, our hearts and our minds to receive the Lord is through the sacraments, particularly through the sacrament of reconciliation and the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Editor: There’s so much division in our country right now. What are some ways we can heal that as we go forward?

Bishop Vásquez: The best way to conquer the division is to reach out and talk with people. We must be willing to transcend our differences of opinion. We should never lose respect for a person, even if we don’t agree or share the same political thinking or even if we don’t share the same ideas about what the church should be doing about certain things.

Advent is a great opportunity for us to respectfully discuss our differences. We should not be trying to destroy each other’s opinions nor should we be trying to convert others to our way of thinking. We must be open to listening to one another’s thoughts and prayers respectfully knowing that each of us is made in the image and likeness of God.

Editor: What is your prayer for all of us as we begin the season of Advent?

Bishop Vásquez: During this Year of Reparation, we continue to pray for victims of sexual abuse by clerics. May our church be cleansed from the terrible scourge of abuse. My prayer for all of us during this Advent season is that we will be moved to open our minds and our hearts to prepare for that joyful coming of the Lord Jesus.

As I said before, whether it’s when he came in the past or whether it’s for the future when he will come again, we must be prepared. May our eyes, our minds and our hearts be open to recognize the Lord is near and coming to us in many ways daily. I pray that we may long for the day when the Lord will come to establish his kingdom forever. Amen.

Year of Reparation Nov. 1, 2018-Oct. 31, 2019

Bishop Joe Vásquez has established a Year of Reparation from Nov. 1 to Oct. 31, 2019. “In our Catholic tradition, to make reparation means to offer to God an act of compensation or to make amends of one’s own sins or the sins of others against Christ. The act is a way to repair Christ’s heart, which is wounded by sin,” the bishop said in a letter to the faithful dated Oct. 25, 2018.

During the Year of Reparation, the bishop has asked Catholics to return to traditional practices of prayer, fasting and service to be strengthened as a community of faith and as individual disciples to avoid sin and to grow in holiness.

Suggested some ways to observe the Year of Reparation:

• Participate in daily Mass.
• Pray daily for victims of abuse.
• Pray the rosary individually or as a group.
• Pray the Stations of the Cross.
• Pray the Angelus three times a day (at 6 a.m., noon, 6 p.m.).
• Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet.
• Spend time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.
• Volunteer observe meatless Fridays throughout the year.
• Fast one day a week (no snacking, small meals).
• Give alms to or serve those in need.
• Do acts of penance, mercy and service within the community.

For more information about the Year of Reparation in the Diocese of Austin, visit www.austindiocese.org/year-of-reparation.
Scripture readings help us to ‘prepare the way’ for Jesus

By Louis A. Gamino | Columnist

In our contemporary culture with its emphasis on holiday parties and merry-making, it’s easy to forget that Advent is actually a season to prepare for Christ’s coming. I look forward to hearing some of my all-time favorite Scripture passages during the four weeks of Advent liturgies, which I excerpt here. Why not tear out this page and put it on the refrigerator as a daily reminder of your Advent journey?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Week of Advent</th>
<th>Second Week of Advent</th>
<th>Third Week of Advent</th>
<th>Fourth Week of Advent</th>
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1,400 feet, the Arbuckles are no Rocky Mountains. One can zip right through them on the modern highway, hardly even slowing down.

What captures my attention in the Arbuckles is the engineering. Massive rock walls were left standing after the builders literally cut down the hills to create the passage. All that excess rock went to fill in the valleys and crevices and form a level roadbed. As the beneficiaries of all that preparation, it’s easy to feel like royalty speeding along over the leveled hills and valleys.

Of course, we are not really talking about geography here. Isaiah’s metaphor about razed mountains and smoothed valleys refers to our own interior landscape — our hearts, minds and wills. The metaphor can also refer to the topography of our family relationships and social communities. Preparing the way of the Lord requires us to do some personal engineering in order to give Christ the royal welcome he deserves.

What parts of our stony egos need to be cut down to size to acknowledge Christ, rather than self, as our highest authority? What rough edges or conflicts in our relationships need to be smoothed out and repaired? Conversely, what potholes or estrangements in our communities need to be “filled in” and reconciled before the King can walk into our lives on carpets of love?

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As we prepare for Christ’s coming at Christmas, does our world revolve around him? Are we prepared to make him the center of our universe, the dominant factor in our busy lives? Let’s hope we get this priority right. Our salvation depends on it.

The Role of a Deacon

Deacon duties trace back to the Upper Room

Editor’s note: This is the first in a series of columns to help explain the role of deacons in the church as the Diocese of Austin prepares to accept applications for the next diaconate class.

By Deacon Dan Lupo | Guest Columnist

One highlight from my pilgrimage to the Holy Land last June was visiting the Upper Room in Jerusalem. I stood in awe in that sacred place, meditating on all the divine events that transpired there that are key to our faith: the Last Supper/institution of Holy Eucharist ([Mt 26:26-29], Jesus sending the Apostles/ institution of Reconciliation [Jn 20:21-23], Pentecost/birthday of the Church [Acts 2:1-4].

Then, in a powerful gift of revelation, I was given to realize how the Upper Room is the source of my three diaconal duties (munera) of word, liturgy and charity.

Word. The Upper Room is where the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles at Pentecost and imbued them with the power to preach the Good News. In Acts we read, “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.” Indeed, St. Peter’s preaching was so powerful that 3,000 people were baptized afterward.

Deacons are called upon to proclaim the Gospel at Mass, to teach (as catechists, religious education teachers, sacrament preparation), and to preach the homily when assigned. That is why at his ordination, the deacon candidate is given the book of the Gospels, and hears the bishop say: “Receive the book of the Gospels, whose herald you now are: believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.” Deacons can trace their duty to proclaim/teach/preach to the Pentecost event in the Upper Room.

Liturgy. The Upper Room is where Jesus instituted the sacraments of the Eucharist (Last Supper), reconciliation (“whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven”), and confirmation (the Holy Spirit’s coming at Pentecost). Sacraments/liturgy is the second of the deacon’s three duties.

When serving at Mass, the deacon can lead the Kyrie in the Penitential Act; incense the Gospels, the clergy, and the congregation. He also proclaims the Gospel; preaches on occasion; proclaims the Universal Prayers; prepares the altar, especially the main chalice; invites all to exchange the sign of peace; and dismisses the congregation.

The deacon also can preside at the sacrament of baptism; he can preside at and witness the exchange of vows in the sacrament of matrimony; he can preside at a funeral vigil, funeral service, and graveside (or inurnment) service; and he can lead a communion service and Benediction. In all these ways, through these sacraments, the deacon extends Christ’s graces from his altar of sacrifice to the faithful in a parish.

Charity. When Jesus washed his disciples’ feet (John 13), he gave them a model to follow: “As I have done for you, you should also do.” The model was of humbling oneself in service, for the good of the other.

The Greek word “diakonia” means service, and while priests are ordained as Christ the Shepherd, to minister to a parish flock, deacons are ordained as Christ the Servant, to minister to those on the peripheries of society. A deacon (diakonos) brings the Good News to the homeless, the hospitalized, the incarcerated, the hospice patient, the fearful, the wary immigrant/stranger, and the materially and spiritually poor.

When Pope Francis washes the feet of “the least” during Holy Thursday services in Rome, he wears his deacon stole (a sash across the chest) in a powerful sign that he is following the model of Christ the Servant given at the Last Supper.

Following Christ in serving others is what all baptized Christians are called to do. Catholic deacons are called apart in that service, to manifest the church’s mission to serve the least of Jesus’ brothers and sisters. The Upper Room, where the church began [John 20:21], provides the divine source of much of the deacon’s charism of service.

Are you being called to the diaconate?

Men between the ages of 30 and 59 sensing God’s call to the permanent diaconate should discuss this with their pastors and obtain his permission to attend (with their wife, if married) one of the following sessions in preparation for the permanent diaconate:

- Dec. 16 at St. Mary Parish in Temple
- Jan. 20 at the Pastoral Center in Austin
- Feb. 17 at St. Mary Parish in Brenham
- March 17 at Eagle’s Wings Retreat Center in Burnet
- May 5 at the Pastoral Center in Austin

Each session (from 2 to 5 p.m.) will explore the diaconate, discernment methods, qualities and characteristics sought in a candidate, the formation journey, the wife’s participation in formation, and the application process. For more information, call (512) 949-2459; e-mail diaconateformation@austindiocese.org; or visit www.austindiocese.org/diaconateformation.

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SAINTS FOR OUR TIMES

St. John: the evangelist, the apostle, the beloved disciple

By Mary Lou Gibson | Columnist

Although they were probably two different people historically, Christian tradition says that John the Evangelist was John the Apostle. He was the youngest of the apostles and is also known as “the beloved disciple” and “the disciple Jesus loved.” When Jesus first met John, he and his brother, James, were Galilean fishermen. When Jesus called them to follow him, they did so leaving “the boat and their father” (Mt 4:22b).

John and James were among the first disciples following Peter and Andrew. According to Mark 3:17, Jesus gave John and James the nickname “sons of thunder” because of their impulsive and ardent temperament. Together with Peter, they became the closest disciples of Jesus.

Tessa Paul writes in “Saints” that the belief that John was a favorite disciple comes from the facts of his life: being with Jesus at the miracle of the loaves and fishes, witnessing the transfiguration with Peter and James, and staying by the side of Jesus during the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Paul Burns writes in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints” that John was the only apostle to stand at the foot of the cross, where Jesus gives him charge of Mary. He was also the first to reach the empty tomb in response to Mary Magdalene’s dramatic announcement, but then stands aside to let Peter enter first.

After Christ’s ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit, John took a leading role in the first Christian community. Rosemary Guiley writes in “The Encyclopedia of Saints” that by tradition, John began his apostolic work among the Jews in the province of Parthia. In about the year 51, he joined other disciples for the first Apostolic Council in Jerusalem. He also attended the Council of 62 after which he went to Ephesus.

The tradition that identifies John as the author of the fourth Gospel goes back to the second century. John is also regarded as the author of the book of Revelation and three letters.

Tom Cowan writes in “The Way of the Saints” that John’s version of the Gospel celebrates the power of love and the ways that love is the essence of Jesus’ message and the nature of God. John wrote: “God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.” John’s Gospel is the most mystical and poetic of the Gospels.

John is often called “John the Divine” because of his theological brilliance. In art, he is represented with an eagle, symbolizing the heavenly or soaring quality of his Gospel.

He is generally thought to have died at age 94 around the year 100 in Ephesus, the only apostle to die a natural death. His brother, James, was martyred in the persecution under Herod.

Guiley describes an event in the year 95 when John was arrested and brought to Rome. He was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil but emerged unharmed. Another legend says he escaped death when he drank from a chalice of wine poisoned by the high priest of Diana.

The Lateran Basilica in Rome is dedicated to John and to John the Baptist. He is the patron saint of Asia Minor and Turkey. His feast day is Dec. 27.

This is an image of St. John by Jean Bourdichon. (Image in the public domain)
expressed through 127 churches with the Gospel in the Diocese of Austin is the living God. This proclamation of home, the New Jerusalem, the city of leads us to our true and common the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the truth and love. baptism. We pray we grow in faith, local church grows in the grace of our that we must always pray that our was important to drive home the point a Church on the Move Functions,” it said.

Saginaw Lay Ministry Assembly in address I presented at the Diocese of November. During my address, “How a Church on the Move Functions,” it was important to drive home the point that we must always pray that our local church grows in the grace of our baptism. We pray we grow in faith, hope and love.

Together, we are called to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the truth about the world, and the truth that leads us to our true and common home, the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God. This proclamation of the Gospel in the Diocese of Austin is expressed through 127 churches with their religious education programs, 22 Catholic schools, Catholic Charities of Central Texas, clergy and religious, and a host of dedicated lay ministers.

When we explore how a church on the move functions, we must recognize the role of the laity who possess an indispensable role in the mission of the church. The church cannot be without a dedicated laity.

Every day, I am tasked with trying to bridge the ideological gaps between Christians devoted to social justice work and Christians engaged with the pro-life work. I am often intrigued by the dissonance projected sometimes by those in each camp. This dissonance is intriguing because each group’s work is intrinsically pro-life. When our church grows in faith, hope and love, we are better able to celebrate our diversity as a sign of the Holy Spirit. Without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, a church on the move must not allow itself to get so entrenched in any one “political” camp, that it rejects the inviolable dignity of others.

Each of us must challenge one another, and especially our young people, to be radically generous in offering their lives to Christ as priests, consecrated religious, or dedicated lay persons engaged in ministry for the proclamation of the Gospel in our world. We must continue to encourage young people to never settle for anything less than the spiritual and moral greatness of which they are capable.

If we are going to be a church on the move, we must be willing to make a path for young people to enjoy a more prayerful and active involvement in the life of our parishes, schools and lay ecclesial movements throughout this local church.

For those of us — whether clergy, religious or laity — who have caused others to become estranged from the church, the love of Christ impels us to reach out to our brothers and sisters, welcoming them back to the sacraments and the fullness of our relationship with Christ and the people of God. If we have, even inadvertently, failed to “welcome the stranger,” the love of Christ and the Gospel message impel us to model compassion, social service and advocacy on behalf of the poor, the addicted, the lonely, the immigrant, the widow, the homeless and the despairing.

A church on the move is a church that welcomes all God’s people with open arms and hearts full of love.

May our deepest satisfaction, strength and consolation rest in the certain reality that we are as Pope Francis says “protagonists in the work of evangelization and human promotion.” We are brothers and sisters in Christ who are called to function as a church on the move!

Meditating on St. Anthony in Prayer by Juan de Nalda

By Norman Farmer | Columnist

“Ideas create idols. Only wonder leads to wisdom,” said St. Gregory of Nyssa.

For Advent, the time of prayer that prepares us for Christmas, let us reflect upon a little-known painting (c.1475) by Juan de Nalda, an artist from Castile who studied in Avignon. If being “in prayer” means consciously bringing oneself into the presence of God, then that is precisely what Nalda contemplates in his depiction of St. Anthony of Padua in prayer.

The painting situates us at the very threshold of a supernatural event, inviting us to contemplate the conscious, active prayer of one of the greatest Franciscan saints, whom The Roman Missal (1962) identifies as “a profound theologian, a brilliant preacher, a formidable foe to heresy and a terror to heretics, through the supernatural forces which seemed always at his command.”

Thus we are invited to imagine and witness the mystical convergence of these supernatural forces within the intimate precincts of a setting that seems, but is not, a fancy room with a splendid tapestry, an exquisite tiled floor, and an expansive landscape visible through a window that features a fine classical column. To the contrary, Nalda takes us into the prayer-consciousness of the saint through very precise signs that identify the inner mysteries of his prayer with details that awaken wonder and sustain awe, the “fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom” (Prv 9:10), in a space which figures the mystical “inner room” where we are told to pray to “our Father in secret” (Mt 6:6).

St. Anthony appears in an attitude of prayer, his right hand over his heart, the Gospel in his left. His left foot, just visible beneath his brown, thrice-knotted Franciscan habit, shows him advancing toward a brilliant light, whose invisible source is itself a mystery. Might this luminous destination refer to the light of the first day, separated by God from darkness and called “good” (Gn 1:3)? Or to “the light of the world” (Mt 5:14-16), whom to follow means never again to walk in darkness (Jn 8:12)? Or to both? As our eyes inquire, our wonder grows at the way the saint’s shadow is absorbed into the curious opaque brown wall and open window behind him. Indeed, the lovely landscape beyond is beguiling, but oddly, the diurnal light from that scene cannot dispel the gloom that St. Anthony resolutely puts behind him!

At first his eyes seem to be closed. Yet, they are humbly cast downward and sideways onto the mystical apparition of the new-born Child: the “Only Begotten Son of God,” the “Light from Light,” the Second Person of the Trinity, who stands affirmatively upon the Gospel at the very point of connection between the Eternal Word and the written Word (Jn 1:1). Gazing gently into the Divine Light, the very presence of The Father (Jn 10:30) – The Son here lauds St. Anthony with a gesture that says, “Behold our faithful servant.”

Now the tapestry, with great red carnations stitched into a field of gold, takes us further into the mystery of the Incarnation, the divine union “of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.” So, also the richly tiled floor with its alternating red squares and black circles: God’s seal upon the earth, which resolves the material, geometrical conundrum of “squaring the circle” by harmonizing the celestial and the terrestrial within this vision of divine love. Yet, there is more.

For the mystery that binds heaven and earth, the divine gold and the red of the incarnate God is manifest in the living Word through the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord (Is 11:2; 1 Cor 12) – each a “carnation” on that tapestry. Notably, the seventh is identified by the infant Christ himself in his own incarnate persona. May we, then, in this Advent season, pray that through the intercessions of St. Anthony of Padua we too may journey toward the light and put behind us the dark wall with its window onto transient beauties.
Dec. 5: A high school discernment dinner will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. William Parish in Round Rock. This dinner is for young men in high school to learn about the priesthood for which we were created as men. Details: www.godiscalling.me.

Dec. 8: St. Albert the Great Parish in Austin invites you to participate in this motivating experience of raising voices for our moral beliefs and for more information, visit www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake.

Dec. 9: Misa en Español (Mass in Spanish) at 1 p.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin.

Dec. 9: Fatima Trinitarian 20 Decade in Austin. Mass on Dec. 22 is at 5:30 p.m. at St. Peter the Apostle Parish and Mass at 7 p.m. at St. Anthony Parish in Kyle (except on national holidays).

Dec. 9: Fair Trade Market at St. Ignatius Parish Activity Center in Austin. For more information, visit www.austindiocese.org/sidewalk-ministry.

Dec. 11: Open house at San Juan Diego Catholic High School from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Presentation and tours will be given by students, administrators and parents. Register: admissions@sjdhcs.org.

Dec. 11: An Adult Discernment Dinner for men will be held at 7 p.m. at the Borromeo House in Austin. Details: www.godiscalling.me.

Dec. 12: Texas Catholic Advocacy Day training session from 9 to 11 a.m. at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Austin. This will be an informational session on Advocacy Day, which is March 26. Register: (512) 949-2486.

Dec. 14-22: Simbang Gabi, a Filipino tradition of Masses, will be celebrated at 7 p.m. at St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Austin. Mass on Dec. 22 is at 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 15: Prepare-Enrich Facilitator Training from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Austin. Details: (512) 949-2488 or rachelsutter@austindiocese.org.

Dec. 16: Inquiry session for those interested in the permanent diaconate from 2 to 5 p.m. at St. Mary Parish in Temple. Details: (512) 949-2459 or diaconateformation@austindiocese.org.

Dec. 18: Adoration and Mass for young professionals at 7:30 p.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. Details: www.facebook.com/ SchoenstattAustin.

Dec. 19: Assembly of Catholic Professionals featuring Bishop Michael J. Sis at 11:30 a.m. Details: www.austindiocese.org/apc.

Dec. 19: Byzantine Rite Advent Service at 7:30 p.m. at Holy Cross Parish in Austin.

Dec. 21: Advent Candlelight Rosary at 7:30 p.m. at the Mariah Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. Details: www.schoenstatt.us.

Dec. 24-25: Diocesan offices will be closed for Christmas.

Dec. 24-25: Christmas Eve Masses at 4:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. and Christmas Day Mass at 11 a.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin.

Jan. 1: Diocesan offices will be closed for New Year’s Day.

Jan. 5: Mass for Life at 8 a.m. at San Jose Parish in Austin. Details: www.austindiocese.org/sidewalk-ministry.

Jan. 5: St. Albert the Great Parish in Austin will celebrate the feast of the Epiphany with its annual Boar’s Head and Yule Log Pageant at 7 p.m. This medieval Christmas celebration will feature music, dance, period costumes and a live Nativity scene. Tickets: www. boarheadsaintaustin.com or call (512) 837-4179.

Jan. 9: A high school discernment dinner will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. William Parish in Round Rock. Details: www.godiscalling.me.

Jan. 10: A high school discernment dinner will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Temple. Details: www.austindiocese.org/apc.

Jan. 12: A commemoration of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will be held at 11 a.m. at St. Louis Parish in Austin. Auxiliary Bishop Fernando J. Cheri of New Orleans will be the keynote speaker for this event.

Jan. 19: Celebrating Catholic Schools at 6 p.m. at the AT&T Center in Austin. Details: www.csdats.org.

Jan. 26: Texas Catholic Pro-Life Day begins with Mass then a Rally for Life at the State Capitol. Details: www.austindiocese.org/texas-catholic-pro-life-day.

Dec. 7-8: St. Martin de Porres Parish in Dripping Springs will host a Two Day Equipping session. This training, presented by Bart Schuchts from the John Paul II Healing Center, is designed to equip and prepare participants to do the works Jesus did throughout his ministry on earth. More information: equipping.stmartindp@gmail.com. Register: www.jpilhealingcenter.org.

Dec. 7-9: The Silent Advent Retreat at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center is a weekend of silence and solitude combined with communal prayer and Mass. Spiritual direction will be available. Cost is $210 per person for a private room. Details: www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake or (254) 780-2436.

Dec. 8: Couples Time Out from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. Married couples are invited to take time out to grow spiritually together during this morning of prayer and reflection. This month’s theme is “The Marriage of Mary and Joseph.” Babysitting is available. Register: cto@schoenstatt.us.

Jan. 11: Food, Family and Faith, a day of spirituality, will be held Dec. 11 from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Eagle’s Wings Retreat Center in Burnet. The cost is $35 per person; a light breakfast and lunch are included. To register, visit www.empwr.org.

Dec. 12: Retros de Señoras en Español (Retreat for Women in Spanish) in Austin. Send entries for this section to catholic-spirit@austindiocese.org.
Official schedules

The official schedules for Bishop Joe Vásquez and Bishop Daniel Garcia are listed below. Dates and times are subject to change.

Bishop Joe S. Vásquez

Dec. 4-6: Justice for Immigrants Convening, Arlington, Virginia
Dec. 8: Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, 9 a.m.
Advent Dinner with Diocesan Staff, Austin, 6:15 p.m.
Dec. 9: Confirmation, University Catholic Center, Austin, 9 a.m.
Dec. 10: Advent Day of Prayer for Diocesan Staff, St. Elizabeth Parish, Pflugerville
Dec. 11: Meeting with Ascension Health Leadership, Pastoral Center, 9 a.m.
Midnight Mass for Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Austin
Dec. 13: Catholic Foundation Meeting, Pastoral Center, 11 a.m.
Advent Dinner with priests, St. Louis Parish, Austin, 5:30 p.m.
Dec. 14: Monthly Budget Meeting, Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m.
Diocesan Building Commission, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
Dec. 16: Seminarian Christmas Gathering, Austin, 5 p.m.
Dec. 18: Interviews with Diaconal Candidates
Dec. 19: Association of Catholic Professionals Luncheon, Hyatt Regency, 9:40 a.m.
Legatus Christmas Party, 5:30 p.m.
Dec. 20: Secretariat Directors, Pastoral Center, 9 a.m.
Dec. 21: Vocations Meeting, Pastoral Center, 11 a.m.
Dec. 22: Simbang Gabi Mass, St. Peter the Apostle Parish, Austin, 5:30 p.m.
Dec. 24: Midnight Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin
Jan. 2-8: U.S. Bishops’ Retreat, Chicago
Auxiliary Bishop Daniel E. Garcia

Dec. 4: Vocation Team Meeting, Cedarbrake
Dec. 6: Capital Campaign Pastors Advisory Committee, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
Dec. 7: Advent Reconciliation Service, St. Dominic Savio Catholic High School, 8:30 a.m.
Dec. 8: Advent Dinner with Diocesan Staff, Austin, 6:15 p.m.
Dec. 10: Advent Day of Prayer for Staff, St. Elizabeth Parish, Pflugerville
Dec. 13: Catholic Foundation Meeting, Pastoral Center, 11 a.m.
Advent Dinner with priests, St. Louis Parish, Austin, 5:30 p.m.
Dec. 14: Monthly Budget Meeting, Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m.

Burse

The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women has completed a burse for the Clerical Endowment Fund (CEF) in honor of Msgr. Don Sawyer, the pastor of Our Lady’s Maronite Parish in Austin.

The totals for the burse as of Oct. 31, are listed below by council.

Austin $799.00
Bastrop/Lockhart $380.00
Brenham/La Grange $264.00
Bryan/College Station $2,689.16
Georgetown/Round Rock $3,535.43
Killeen/Temple $406.00
Waco $2,286.00
Misc. $10.00
Previous Balance $2,447.88
Total $12,817.47

The Clerical Endowment Fund provides low-cost loans to parishes. Interest from the loans is used to educate diocesan seminarians. For information, contact Judy Edwards at (979) 846-0617.

For up-to-date information from the Diocese of Austin, visit us online

On the Internet at www.austindiocese.org
On Facebook search “Diocese of Austin”
On Twitter, go to @AustinDiocese

REGISTRATION: SEPT. 17 - DEC. 31
Contact your youth ministry representative
WWW.AUSTINDIOCESE.ORG/DCYC

COUNTY TO COUNTY
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DIOCESAN CATHOLIC YOUTH CONFERENCE

Texas Catholic Pro-Life Day 2019

Saturday, January 26
San José Parish in Austin and St. Louis Parish in Austin
Mass for the Gift of Human Life
San José Parish, 2435 Oak Crest Dr., Austin
10 a.m.
Bishop Michael Mulvey, Celebrant

Mass for the Gift of Human Life
St. Louis Parish, 7601 Burnet Rd., Austin
Bishop Patrick Zurek, Celebrant
10 a.m.

Texas Rally for Life

At 12 p.m. participants will gather at 17th St. and Congress Ave. for the Ministry Fair. At 1 p.m. begins the March for Life to the south steps of the Texas State Capitol, where the rally will begin at 2 p.m.

Sponsored, in part, by Office of Pro-Life Activities • Secretariat of Life, Charity and Justice
For more information, please contact Luisa DePoo at (512) 949-2487.

www.austindiocese.org
La Navidad es la temporada litúrgica que celebra el evento histórico del nacimiento de Jesús. La Navidad nos recuerda ese momento especial de hace más de 2,000 años en el que Dios se convirtió en humano, y se encarnó, Jesús unió su vida a la de nosotros y vino para salvarnos.

Este también es un tiempo para recordar que debemos buscar ver al Señor en nuestra vida diaria. El Señor nos encuentra en momentos a lo largo de cada día. Debemos abrir nuestros corazones para reconocer la presencia del Señor ahora.

Así que el Adviento no se trata solo de la Navidad pasada, sino de la presencia de Cristo en el futuro y de cómo el Señor sale a nuestro encuentro diariamente en las semanas anteriores a la Navidad.

Editora: Con frecuencia estamos ocupados y distraídos durante las semanas anteriores a Navidad. ¿Cómo podemos preparar verdaderamente nuestros corazones para Jesús?

Obispo Vásquez: ¡Tiene tanta razón! Las tiendas estaban llenas de decoraciones navideñas casi antes de que Halloween hubiera pasado. Nos sentimos presionados por nuestra cultura y por la comercialización que se lleva a cabo en la temporada. Desafortunadamente, muchos han hecho de la Navidad un negocio.

Pero para los Cristianos Católicos, la Navidad se trata de gozo, y no debemos de dejar que muchas actividades y ocupaciones de este tiempo se roben nuestro gozo. Existen muchas maneras muy prácticas en las que podemos hacer eso. Antes que nada, podemos comenzar por comprometer unos minutos más del día en oración diaria. Esto puede significar orar con las Escrituras, asistir a la Misa diaria o rezar el rosario o la Coronilla de la Divina Misericordia.

La temporada de Adviento es un tiempo para la familia haga cosas juntas. Existe una tradición maravillosa del Árbol de Jesé o de Isai que es una manera de construir gozo y anticipación por la venida de Jesús. El Árbol de Isai nos ayuda a conectar la costumbre de decorar árboles de Navidad a los eventos que llevan al nacimiento de Jesús.

Otra cosa que las familias pueden hacer es apartar tiempo para pasarlo con aquellos menos afortunados. Tal vez una pequeña parte del dinero que se les da a los niños para sus gastos, podría ser donada a una causa que valga la pena durante esta temporada de Adviento. Tal vez cada miembro familiar puede encontrar algunas cosas en su clóset para donar a la Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Finalmente, debemos recordar el aspecto espiritual de preparar nuestros corazones para Cristo. El Adviento es un tiempo excelente para encontrar a Cristo en el sacramento de reconciliación. Hacíamos esto en mi familia durante la temporada de Adviento. Mi mamá y papá nos llevaban a sus seis hijos a la confesión por que era necesario para estar listos para celebrar la Navidad. La mejor manera de reparar nuestras almas, nuestros corazones y nuestras mentes para recibir al Señor es a través de los sacramentos, particularmente a través del sacramento de la reconciliación y el sacramento de la Eucaristía.

Editora: Existe tanta división en nuestro país en este momento ¿Cuáles son algunas maneras en las que podemos sanar mientras vamos hacia adelante?

Obispo Vásquez: La mejor manera de conquistar la división es encontrando y hablando con la gente. Debemos de estar dispuestos a trasladar nuestras diferencias de opinión. No debemos de perder respeto por una persona, aún si no estamos de acuerdo con ella o no compartimos el mismo pensamiento político o incluso si no compartimos las mismas ideas sobre lo que la iglesia debe de estar haciendo respecto a ciertas cosas.

El Adviento es una gran oportunidad para todos para discutir con respecto a nuestras diferencias. No debemos tratar de destruir la opinión de los otros, ni debemos de tratar de convertir a otros hacia nuestra manera de pensar. Debemos de estar abiertos a escuchar los pensamientos del otro y por lo que ora, sabiendo que cada uno de nosotros está hecho a imagen y semejanza de Dios.

Editora: ¿Cuál es su oración por todos nosotros mientras comenzamos la temporada de Adviento?

Obispo Vásquez: Durante este Año de Reparación, continuamos orando por las víctimas de abuso sexual por parte de miembros del clero. Por que nuestra iglesia se limpie del azote del abuso. Mi oración por todos nosotros durante este tiempo de Adviento es por que se abran nuestros corazones para prepararnos para la gozosa venida del Señor Jesús.

Como dije antes, ya sea para cuando vino en el pasado o para cuando venga en el futuro, debemos de estar preparados. Que nuestros ojos, nuestra mente y nuestros corazones sean abiertos para reconocer que el Señor está cerca y llegando a nosotros de muchas maneras diariamente. Por que anhelamos el día en el que el señor vendrá a establecer su reino para siempre.
Obispos encaran furiosas preguntas sobre el mal manejo de reportes de abuso

Por Dennis Sadowski | Catholic News Service

Los obispos de Estados Unidos admitieron en exhaustivos debates durante su asamblea general de octubre que laicos están furiosos y continuamente preguntan cómo un carismático clérigo pudo subir en la jerarquía de la iglesia, a pesar de que otros tenían conocimiento de acusaciones de que él abusaba sexualmente de menores y seminaristas.

La crisis que vive la iglesia, derivada de las consecuencias vinculadas al ex cardenal, ahora arzobispo retirado de Washington, Theodore E. McCarrick, he dejado a los obispos con pocas respuestas satisfactorias para los laicos.

Los obispos también encaran el reto de mostrar cómo pueden convertirse en mejores pastores en un momento de amplias dudas y desconfianza dentro de la Iglesia, según dijeron varios obispos durante una sesión de 65 minutos el 13 de noviembre, durante la asamblea en Baltimore.

Los obispos dijeron que se han dado cuenta, por escrito y en reuniones, de laicos disgustados por el renovado escándalo asociado tras mes de reportes de abuso sexual por parte del clero y la falta de una adecuada respuesta al problema. Sus comentarios estaban cargados de palabras como “atrociad”, “indignación” y “abuso de poder”.

Una de ellos, el Obispo George V. Murry de Youngstown, Ohio, pidió a sus hermanos obispos que hicieran “un esfuerzo extra, que dieran un paso adicional para comunicarle a la gente que nosotros escuchamos lo que ellos tienen que decir”.

El Obispo Auxiliar Robert E. Barron de Los Ángeles, comentó que las circunstancias entorno al Arzobispo McCarrick “son la principal preocupación para la gente”.

El Papa Francisco aceptó la renuncia del Arzobispo Emérito McCarrick, del Colegio de Cardenales en julio, después de reportes de acusaciones de abuso sexual hace décadas que involucran a menores y más recientemente a seminaristas. Él ha negado las acusaciones.

El Obispo Barron agregó que espera que la investigación solicitada por el cardenal Daniel N. DiNardo de Galveston-Houston, Presidente de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos, avance tanto en los Estados Unidos como en el Vaticano.

El Cardenal Joseph W. Tobin de Newark, New Jersey, respondió a varios obispos que preguntaron sobre el estado de las investigaciones. Dijo que la investigación del Vaticano está en curso y que representantes en cada diócesis y arquidiócesis donde el ex cardenal sirvió — New York, Newark y Metuchen, New Jersey y Washington — están avanzando lentamente, pero que se complican por factores externos a la Iglesia.

El fiscal general de New Jersey está investigando el manejo de la Iglesia de las denuncias de abuso y está limitando el rápido acceso de los representantes de la Iglesia en Newark y Metuchen a sus archivos, según dijo el Cardenal Tobin. “Estamos listos para avanzar, pero necesitamos la autorización del fiscal general,” agregó.

Al comenzar de la conversación, el Cardenal DiNardo dijo que se ha establecido un grupo especial de tres ex presidentes de la USCCB y ellos brindarán comunicados regulares a los obispos y a la Iglesia en general en cuanto haya respuestas a la crisis de abusos. El anuncio fue ampliamente aprobado por la asamblea.

Los miembros del equipo de trabajo son el Cardenal Timothy M. Dolan de Nueva York, el Arzobispo de Atlanta Wilton D. Gregory y el Arzobispo Joseph E. Kurtz de Louisville, Kentucky. El Cardenal DiNardo informó que presidirá el grupo.

De la conversación también surgió la disposición entre los obispos de pasar algún tipo de resolución para actuar, a pesar de una carta del Vaticano que pide que no se tome ninguna acción en las propuestas, las cuales incluyen establecer una normativa de responsabilidad episcopal y la formación de una comisión que manejaría las denuncias cuando las normas son incumplidas.

El Obispo Thomas J. Paprocki de Springfield, Illinois, propuso una votación sin compromiso para expresar el sentido de las intenciones de los obispos de querer solucionar la crisis de abusos y enviar un mensaje a los laicos.

“No somos gerentes de sucursales del Vaticano,” dijo. “Nuestra gente está llorando por algunas acciones.”

Otros comentarios ofrecieron sugerencias ante la necesidad de comprometerse otra vez con la transparencia y la responsabilidad en el ministerio y la necesidad de restablecer la confianza del laicado a través de la Iglesia.

“No está claro cómo los obispos se hacen responsables cuando hay una conducta impropia,” dijo el Arzobispo George J. Lucas de Omaha, Nebraska. “Creo que hay un procedimiento que ocurre alguna vez, pero no es oportuno y no está claro”.

También pidió al liderazgo de la USCCB que solicite ayuda al Papa Francisco a fin de restablecer la confianza y la responsabilidad. En varias ocasiones durante el debate, los obispos mostraron el aspecto espiritual de sus vidas, al sugerir que la manera de recuperar la confianza y desarrollar un mejor entendimiento de lo que significa ser un prelado, implica una profunda relación con Jesús.

El Cardenal Roger W. Mahony, Arzobispo retirado de Los Ángeles, recordó la vida de san Carlos Borromeo, quien enfrentó una Iglesia en crisis en el siglo XVI, quien invitó a sus sacerdotes y obispos a ser más compañeros y a hacerlo por medio de la oración.

“Me parece que nosotros, como obispos, tenemos que formar más y más vínculos mediante la oración, unirnos de la Iglesia y superar la crisis que encara”.

El Arzobispo Alexander K. Sample de Portland, Oregon, dijo que le ha dado una “intensa mirada” a su vida y a cómo él ha llevado adelante su ministerio, desde que surgió el escándalo en junio. Jesús se ofrece a cada persona que encara tiempos problemáticos. Contó que ha encontrado alivio en el “poder salvador” de Jesús.

Los futuros historiadores han de estudiar cómo los obispos respondieron ante la crisis de abuso, dijo, sugiriendo que los obispos se “vuelvan a comprometer con lo sagrado que nos ha sido dado por Jesucristo”.

Añadido a la misión de Jesús que insta a servir a la feligresía como pastores, es vital para recuperar la confianza, explicó el Arzobispo Thomas G. Wenski de Miami.

Recobremos la confianza haciendo lo que nos supone que debemos hacer como párrcos y pastores, agregó. “Caminemos con ellos y podremos ganar nuevamente nuestra confianza”.

El Obispo W. Shawn Mc Knee de Jefferson City, Missouri, le pidió a los obispos que “recuerden la necesidad de que el laicado nos ayude a salir de este caos”.

Propuso que la USCCB contrate los servicios de laicos Católicos expertos para estudiar lo que el Arzobispo Bernard A. Hebe de St. Paul y Minneapolis describió, durante una homilía en una Misa para la asamblea el 12 de noviembre, como “la causa esencial del abuso de poder por parte de la jerarquía de los Estados Unidos”.

El laicado, agregó, “quiere cooperate con los obispos para guiar a la Iglesia y superar la crisis que encara”.

Para información actualizada de la Diócesis de Austin, visitenos en línea


En Facebook busque y siga a la diócesis en “@DioceseofAustin” y “@bishopjoevasquez.”

En Instagram siga a la “diocesefoaustin” y a “bishopjoevasquez.”

En Twitter, siga a la @AustinDiocese.
Misa celebra a las familias formadas a través de la adopción

Por Enedelia J. Obregón | Corresponsal

Para celebrar el Mes de la Conciencización sobre la Adopción en Noviembre, se ofreció una Misa para celebrar a las familias creadas a través de la adopción, el 7 de noviembre en St. Louis King of France Parish en Austin.

En los escalones que llevan al altar de la capilla había dos jarrones de barro, representando la habilidad de la adopción de transformar vidas que se enfrentan a circunstancias inusuales, en algo bello y extraordinario.

Los asistentes pusieron rosas de diferentes colores en los jarrones: rojas por las familias biológicas, rosa suave por todos los niños(as) adoptados(as) y verde por las familias adoptivas y rosa suave por todos los niños(as) adoptados(as).

Se ofrecieron oraciones por las parejas sufriendo de infertilidad o que hayan sufrido la pérdida de un embarazo y por aquellos considerando la adopción o en el proceso de adoptar.

El evento fue patrocinado por Destined: Families Built by Love, un programa de Sarah’s Hope & Abraham Promise Ministry para parejas sufriendo de infertilidad y/o por la pérdida de un embrazo, así como para familias construidas a través de la adopción.

En su homilía, el Padre James Misko, pastor de St. Louis Parish, dijo que cuando las parejas adoptan, ellas están haciendo “el trabajo de Dios” al cuidar de su creación.

Por que Dios creó todo por amor, las familias biológicas y las adoptivas están co-creando, co-protegiendo y cooperando con Dios en la creación de familias, dijo.

Después de la Misa, Mary Worley compartió su testimonio personal de haber sido una madre biológica a los 21 años y haber dado a su hija en adopción.

Fue durante un retiro de Cristo Renueva su Parroquia, hace treinta años, que ella habló por primera vez sobre su hija.

“Una señora se me acercó después y me dijo que estaba agradecida,” dijo Worley. “Ella me dijo ‘tengo dos hijos adoptivos’. Le dije ‘gracias’.

“Ella dijo, ‘no creo que me hayas hecho mucho’, pero sí, estoy agradecida. ‘Gracias’.

“En mi vida me han dado muchas cosas, pero a ella le dijimos gracias”, dijo Worley. “Todo el rechazo y la resistencia que caía al suelo en una posición fetal.”

Fue entonces que comenzó a sanar.

Worley supo que su hija, ahora en sus cincuenta, había sido adoptada por dos profesores Católicos de Georgetown University. Pero no fue sino hasta ese momento, que ella reconoció el aspecto Trinitario de la madre biológica, el niño y los padres adoptivos.

“Aunque nunca la he visto, sé que hice lo correcto para ella,” dijo Worley al hablar de su hija. “Me ha hecho muy feliz”.

Becky y Zeke Valdez y sus tres adolescentes estuvieron entre los padres adoptivos en la Misa. Ella es miembro del personal de Comunicaciones de la Diócesis de Austin, y él es un maestro bilingüe en el Distrito Escolar Independiente de Round Rock. Ellos son parroquianos de St. William Parish en Round Rock.

Zeke Valdez estaba trabajando en el ministerio juvenil en St. William cuando él y Becky adoptaron a su hija. Una joven que él había acompañado durante su embarazo en crisis los escogió para ser los padres de su hija.

“Estuvimos en el hospital para su nacimiento y vino a casa con nosotros,” dijo Becky. La madre biológica de su hija es parte de celebraciones tales como cumpleaños y días festivos. “Nuestra visión fue que ella no sintiera que perdió una hija sino que ganó una familia,” dijo Becky.

Sus dos hijos son parte de un grupo de cinco hermanos que habían estado en el sistema Foster. Los otros tres hermanos fueron adoptados por vecinos. Las familias también celebran cumpleaños y días festivos juntas.


Jen y Mark Crowley, parroquianos de St. Thomas More Parish en Austin, son padres de cuatro niños adoptados de 15 meses, 23 meses, cuatro años y cinco años de edad.


La Misa resultó después de que un grupo de gente tocada por la adopción se ha estado reuniendo para rezar el rosario una vez al mes en St. Thomas More Parish. Crowley dijo que sentía que se necesitaba hacer más. “No había apoyo especial para la adopción,” dijo.

El año pasado, la primera Misa para la adopción fue celebrada.


Para mayor información sobre Destined, visite www.familiesbuiltbylove.com. En Facebook busque “SHAPMinistry” o “Destined Ministry”.


El Obispo García ha servido en una variedad de roles en la Diócesis de Austin. Su primera asignación fue como pastor asociado de St. Catherine de Siena Parish en Austin, seguida de Cristo Rey Parish en Austin y St. Louis King of France Parish también en Austin. Sirvió brevemente en St. Mary Magdalene Parish en Humble en la Arquidiócesis de Galveston-Houston. En 1995, fue nombrado pastor fundador de St. Vincent de Paul Parish en Austin, liderando la parroquia desde sus inicios a través de múltiples proyectos de construcción. En 2014 el Obispo José Vasquez nombró al entonces Padre Danny García como Vicario General y Moderador de la Curia.

ESENCIAL

EL PAPEL DE UN DÍAÑO

Los deberes de un diácono se remontan al cenáculo

Nota de la Editora: Esta es la primera en una serie de columnas para ayudar a explicar el papel de los diáconos en la iglesia mientras que la Diócesis se prepara para aceptar aplicaciones para la próxima clase de diácono.

Por el Diácono Dan Lupo | Columnista Invitado

Algo destacado de mi peregrinaje a la Tierra Santa del pasado junio fue visitar el Cenáculo en Jerusalén. Estuve parado ahí, admirado en aquel lugar sagrado, meditando en todos los divinos eventos que tuvieron lugar ahí y que son clave de nuestra fe: la Última Cena/la institución de la Sagrada Eucaristía [Mt 26:26-29], Jesús enviando a los Apóstoles/la institución de la Reconci- lación [Jn 20:17-23], Pentecostés/el nacimiento de la Iglesia [Actos 2:1-4].

Entonces, en el don de una revela- lación poderosa, me di cuenta de que el Cenáculo es la fuente de los tres de- beres diaconales (muestra) de palabra, liturgia y caridad.

Palabra. El Cenáculo es donde el Espíritu Santo descendió sobre los Apóstoles en Pentecostés y los llenó con el poder de predicar la Buena Nueva. En Actos leemos, “Todos fueron llenos del Espíritu Santo y comenzaron a hablar en otras lenguas, según el Espíritu les daba habilidad para expresarse”. En verdad, la predicación de San Pedro fue tan poderosa, que 3,000 personas fueron bautizadas después de ella.

Los diáconos son llamados a proclamar el Evangelio en la Misa, a enseñar (como catequistas, religiosos, maestros de educación religiosa, en la preparación de los sacramentos), y a predicar la homilía cuando se les asigne. Es por ello que en su orde- nación, al candidato al diaconado se le da el libro de los Evangelios, y escucha al obispo decir: “Recibe el libro de los Evangelios, cuyo heraldo eres tú aho- ra: cree lo que lees, enseña lo que crees, y practica lo que enseñas.”

Los diáconos pueden trazar los orígenes de sus deberes de proclamar/enseñar/ orar, a los eventos de Pentecostés en el Cenáculo.

Liturgia. El Cenáculo es donde Jesús instituyó los sacramentos de la Eucaristía (La Última Cena), la Recompensación (”Aquellos a quienes les perdonen sus pecados, les quedará perdonados”), y la Confirmación (la venida del Espíritu Santo en Pentecostés). Los Sacramen- tos/Liturgia son el segundo de los tres deberes del diácono.

Cuando sirve en la Misa, el diácono debe liderar el Kyrie en el Acto Peniten- cial; cubrir de incienso a los Evangelios, cuyo heraldo eres tú ahora: cree lo que lees, enseña lo que crees, y practica lo que enseñas.” Los diáconos pueden trazar los orígenes de sus deberes de proclamar/enseñar/orar, a los eventos de Pentecostés en el Cenáculo.

Año de Reparación Nov. 1, 2018- Oct 31, 2019

El Obispo José Vásquez ha establecido un Año de Reparación comenzando Nov. 1 y hasta Oct. 31 de 2019.

“En nuestra tradición Católica hacer una reparación significa ofrecer a Dios un acto de compensación o hacer enmiendas por los pecados propios o ajeno de un crímenes. El acto es una manera de reparar el corazón de Cristo, el cual esta herido por el pecado,” dijo el Obispo en una carta a los fieles del 25 de Octubre de 2018.

During the Year of Reparation, the bishop has asked Catholics to return to tra- ditional practices of prayer, fasting and service to be strengthened as a com- munity of faith and as individual disciples to avoid sin and to grow in holiness. Durante el Año de Reparación, el obispo ha pedido a los Católicos regresar a las prácticas tradicionales de oración, ayuno y servicio para ser fortalecidos como una comunidad de fe y como individuos discípulos para evitar así, el pecado y crecer en la santidad.

El sugirió algunas maneras en las que observar el Año de Reparación:

- Participar en la Misa diaria.
- Orar diariamente por las víctimas de abuso.
- Rezar el rosario individualmente o como un grupo.
- Rezar el Vade rectum.
- Rezar una oración cada vez: a las 6 a.m., a las 3 p.m., a las 6 p.m.
- Rezar la vida de oración en el interrogatorio de la misa.
- Observar voluntariamente los viernes sin comer carne a lo largo del año.
- Ayunar una vez por semana (sin comer entre comidas y con pequeñas porciones de alimentos).
- Dar limosna a los necesitados o servirles.
- Hacer actos en penitencia, de misericordia o de servicio a la comunidad.

Para mayor información sobre el Año de Reparación en la Diócesis de Austin, visite www.austindiocese.org/year-of-reparation.

Hombres, atención: ¿Están siendo llamados al diáconado?

Hombres entre las edades de 30 y 59 años que se encuentren sin- tiendo el llamado de Dios a el diaconado permanente deben discuírlo con sus pastores y obtener su permiso para asistir (con su esposa, si son casados) a una de las siguientes sesiones informativas (ofrecidas en español e inglés):

- Dec. 16 en St. Mary Parish en Temple
- Ene. 20 en el Centro Pastoral en Austin
- Feb. 17 en St. Mary Parish en Brenham
- Marzo 17 en Eagle’s Wings Retreat Center en Burnet
- May 5 en el Centro Pastoral en Austin

Cada session (2-5 p.m.) explorará el diaconado, métodos de dis- cernimiento, cualidades y características buscadas en quienes aplican, el viaje de formación, la participación de la esposa en la formación, y el proceso de aplicación. Para mayor información, llame al (512) 949-2458; correo electrónico diaconateformation@austindiocese.org; o visite www.austindiocese.org/diaconalformation.

Liturgia. El Cenáculo es donde Jesús instituyó los sacramentos de la Eucaristía (La Última Cena), la Recompensación (”Aquellos a quienes les perdonen sus pecados, les quedará perdonados”), y la Confirmación (la venida del Espíritu Santo en Pentecostés). Los Sacramen- tos/Liturgia son el segundo de los tres deberes del diácono.

Seguir a Cristo sirviendo a los otros es lo que todos los Cristianos bau- titizados están llamados a hacer. Los diáconos Católicos son llamados aparte de ese servicio, para manifestar la mi- sión de la Iglesia de servir a los últimos de entre los hermanos y hermanas de Jesús. El Cenáculo, donde comienza la iglesia [Jn 20:23], provee de la fuente divina de mucho del carisma de servi- cio de un diácono.

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El Obispo Lupo puede ser contactado llamando al (512) 949-2411 o escribiendo a dan-lupo@ austindiocese.org.

El Diácono Dan Lupo es director asociado de Formación Diaconal para la Diócesis de Austin. También sirve en St. Thomas More Parish en Austin. El Diácono Lupo puede ser contactado llamando al (512) 949-2411 o escribiendo a dan-lupo@ austindiocese.org.
The KJT Society #117 presented a KJT Religious Education Grant of $150 to the religious education program at St. Philip Parish in China Spring. (Photo courtesy Amy Viertel)

A Pro-Life Women’s Mini-Conference was held Nov. 10 in Austin. For more information on the national conference that will be held next year, visit www.prolifewomen.com. (Photo courtesy Linda DeBrecht)

The St. Padre Pio Secular Franciscan Fraternity and Sacred Heart Secular Franciscan Fraternity celebrated the professions of several new candidates Oct. 27 to the fraternities at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Austin. (Photo courtesy Robert Pine)

Bishop Joe Vásquez celebrated All Saints Day Mass with the Cursillos at the Guadalupe Cursillo Center in Jarrell. (Photo courtesy George Escobedo)

A Senior Adult Banquet was held Oct. 27 at St. Theresa Parish in Austin. This year’s banquet featured a magic show. On Nov. 1, first graders from St. Theresa’s Catholic School dressed as their favorite saint for All Saints Day. (Photos courtesy Linda Gockel)

The KJT Society #117 presented a KJT Religious Education Grant of $150 to the religious education program at St. Philip Parish in China Spring. (Photo courtesy Amy Viertel)

First grade religious education students from St. Joseph in Rockdale presented the doctors of the church during Mass on Nov. 4 in honor of All Saints Day. (Photo courtesy Bonnie Holub)

A Senior Adult Banquet was held Oct. 27 at St. Theresa Parish in Austin. This year’s banquet featured a magic show. On Nov. 1, first graders from St. Theresa’s Catholic School dressed as their favorite saint for All Saints Day. (Photos courtesy Linda Gockel)

Father Jonathan Raia, diocesan vocation director, visited the seminarians currently studying at St. Joseph Seminary in Louisiana on Nov. 3. (Photo courtesy Thomas Lara)

St. Paul Chong Hasang Parish in Harker Heights broke ground on an addition to the parish’s Religious Formation Center on Nov. 3. (Photo courtesy Dannie Hefner)

Send photos by the 10th of the month to catholic-spirit@austindiocese.org. Publication is not guaranteed.
Holy Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Austin held its annual All Soul’s Day celebration at Cook Walden Capital Parks Cemetery in Pflugerville. Msgr. Joseph Van Nguyen and Fathers Le Minh Pham and Sang Duan blessed the graves while the choir sang. The children of Holy Vietnamese Martyrs Parish in Austin celebrated the saints on All Saints Day. (Photos courtesy Anna Truong and Hai Hoang)

St. Paul Parish in Smithville (left) and St. Joseph Parish in Mason participated in the 2018 Public Square Rosary Crusade on Oct. 13. (Photos courtesy Father Pius Mathew and Pat Culver)

The youth group from St. Joseph Parish in Mason helped clean Crosby Cemetery on Oct. 21 in preparation for a prayer service at the cemetery on Oct. 28. To celebrate All Souls Day, the teens prepared luminary bags with the names of loved ones who have died. (Photo courtesy Trish Rochat)

Logan Till has joined the Knights of Columbus Council at St. Mary Parish in Lockhart, making him a third generation Knight. He joins his father Randy and his grandfather Felix in the organization. Recently the Lockhart council purchased flags to be placed in each religious education classroom. (Photos courtesy Pete Donahoe)

Pam Strickland has been appointed president and CEO of the Catholic Family Fraternal of Texas (the KJZT). (Photo courtesy Mary Poche)

The Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery in North Dakota welcomed Krista Ferrell of Austin into the novitiate on Oct. 14. (Photo courtesy Jill Ackerman)

Visitation Parish in Westphalia participated in the 2018 Life Chain along Hwy. 77 in Lott. (Photo courtesy Bill Reid)

Students at Holy Family Catholic School in Austin led a food drive to benefit the Society of St. Vincent de Paul - Diocesan Council of Austin food pantry. They collected nearly 6,000 pounds of food in two weeks. (Photo courtesy Cristina Almanza)

St. Mary Parish in Brenham commissioned a group to do neighborhood evangelization Oct. 20-27. (Photo courtesy Marcela Perez-Maldonado)

Send photos by the 10th of the month to catholic-spirit@austindiocese.org. Publication is not guaranteed.