Masses, rally celebrate dignity of human life

By Kanobia Russell-Blackmon | Correspondent

People from across the Diocese of Austin and from throughout the state came together on Texas Catholic Pro-Life day to stand up, defend and pray for the dignity of human life. Masses of Thanksgiving for the Gift of Human Life were celebrated Jan. 27 at San José Parish and St. Louis Parish in Austin. Bishop Joe Vásquez was joined by Bishop Wm. Michael Mulvey of Corpus Christi for the Mass at San José Parish, while Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Garcia was joined by Bishop Michael J. Sis of San Angelo for the Mass at St. Louis Parish. Music for the liturgies was provided by the Holy Family Catholic School Choir and the St. Louis Children’s Choir, respectively.

Bishop Joe Vásquez and Bishop Wm. Michael Mulvey of Corpus Christi, flanked by the Knights of Columbus, led the March for Life in downtown Austin on Jan. 27. (Photo by Nathan Zamora)

In his homily, Bishop Vásquez stressed that these Eucharistic celebrations were dedicated to promoting the sanctity of human life. As Catholics, “our mission is to promote a culture of life that creates a civilization of love and compassion towards all,” he said.

Forty-five years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in Roe v. Wade. Bishop Vásquez said this landmark decision has contributed to the loss of millions of children, with the lives of many parents and families being forever changed. The decision has also eroded respect for human life, leading to a growing acceptance of death, he said.

Pro-Life Day is about standing up not only against abortion, but also euthanasia, assisted suicide, and the death penalty — all consequences of a culture of death that Catholics must vigorously oppose, Bishop Vásquez said. Drawing on sacred Scripture, he explained the importance of life, as “God calls each of us into existence out of love, so precious is our life to God.”

Speaking to a church filled with young people from throughout Texas, Bishop Vásquez reminded everyone that “all humans have an invaluable worth and dignity due to them being a daughter or son of God at the very moment of conception.” This truth presents us the clarion call as Catholics to be “advocates for the weak and the fragile,” respecting all life from conception to natural death.

This was the first year two Masses were celebrated on Texas Catholic Pro-Life Day. Due to the huge response last year, the Office of Pro-Life Activities decided that two locations were needed. Luisa de Poo, the diocesan associate director for Pro-Life Activities, said both Masses were well attended with “people come from Corpus Christi, Victoria, San Angelo, Brownsville, Abilene and San Antonio.”

Following the Masses, thousands gathered in downtown Austin for the Texas Rally for Life. The march started at 17th Street and Congress Avenue, ending at the south steps of the Texas State Capitol. Bishops Vásquez, Garcia, Mulvey and Sis led the march, along with members of the Knights of Columbus.

Participants carried signs defending human life and chanted, “We are a pro-life generation.” There were a large number of college students participating in the rally. Robert Urban, a student at Texas State University, explained he was there because “the sanctity of life is the most important fundamental aspect of humanity.”

Bishop Vásquez joined religious leaders, public officials, Joe Pojman, executive director of Texas Alliance for Life, and Texas Governor Greg Abbott for the rally on the State Capitol steps. For more information on Pro-Life Activities in the Austin Diocese, contact Luisa de Poo at (512) 949-2487 or visit www.austindiocese.org/pro-life.
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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STAFF
Publisher: Bishop Joe S. Vásquez
Editor: Shelley Metcalfe
Assistant Editor: Christian R. Gonzalez
Advertising: Shelley Metcalfe
Spanish translation: Gina Domínguez
Columnists: Dekarlos Blackmon, Brian Egan, Norman Farmer, Louis A. Gamino and Mary Lou Gibson
Correspondents: Ricardo Gandara, Eredelia J. Obregon, Carla L. Smith and Mary P. Walker

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OBITUARIES
May perpetual light shine upon them

By Catholic Spirit Staff

The Diocese of Austin mourns the loss of the following individuals. May they rest in peace.

Father Robert Becker
Father Robert R. Becker died on Jan. 25 at the age of 71. He was born on Nov. 9, 1946, in Dallas. He earned a bachelor’s degree in 1969 from St. Edward’s University in Austin, a master’s degree in education from the University of Texas in Austin in 1974, and a master’s degree in Divinity at the St. Meinrad School of Theology in Indiana in 1979. He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Austin on June 16, 1979.

Father Becker served as associate pastor at St. Louis Parish and Sacred Heart Parish in Austin, then as pastor at Sacred Heart Parish in Austin, St. Mary of the Visitatio Parish in Lockhart, and St. Helen Parish in Georgetown. He retired in July 2014.

He is survived by his siblings Rosemary Schell of Dallas, William Becker of Kyle, John Becker (Rosemary) of Munster, Fred Becker (Mary) of Kemp, Teresa Barto (Bernie) of Indiana, Clara Jernigan (David) of Alabama.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Jan. 29 at St. Anthony Marie de Claret Parish in Kyle. He was buried at St. Mary Cemetery in Lockhart.

Donations may be made to the Diocesan Pension Fund (Diocese of Austin, Priests’ Pension Fund, c/o Finance Office, 6225 Hwy. 290 E., Austin, TX 78723-1025).

Father Oliver Weerakkody
Father Don Oliver Weerakkody died on Jan. 25 in Sri Lanka at the age of 77. He was born on Aug. 4, 1940, in Tidella, Sri Lanka. He earned a bachelor’s degree in 1962 and a master’s degree in Divinity in 1966, both from National Seminary in Sri Lanka. He was ordained for the Archdiocese of Colombo in Sri Lanka on Dec. 21, 1965. He moved to Austin in 1990 and was incardinated into the Diocese of Austin in 1998. He served as a chaplain at Seton Medical Center in Austin and as associate pastor at St. Louis Parish in Austin. He retired on June 30, 2014, and returned to Sri Lanka shortly thereafter.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Jan. 28 in his native village, Tidella, in the Archdiocese of Colombo, Sri Lanka. A Memorial Mass was held at St. Louis Parish in Austin on Feb. 9.

Father Wade Russell
Father Wade Russell died on Feb. 17 at the age of 54. He was born on April 23, 1963, in Channelview to Thomas Ivan and Cecilia JoAnn Russell.

He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Austin on May 29, 2010. He served as associate pastor at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in College Station, as well as St. Thomas More and St. Theresa in Austin, and St. John the Evangelist in San Marcos. He then served as pastor of St. Ferdinand Parish in Blanco and Good Shepherd Mission in Johnson City.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Feb. 24 at St. Ferdinand Parish in Blanco. Father Russell was buried at St. Mary Cemetery in Wimberley. In lieu of flowers, donations to St. Ferdinand Parish for the RICH Youth Ministry have been requested.

Brother Patrick Sopher, CSC
Holy Cross Brother Patrick Sopher died Feb. 3 in Indiana. He joined the Holy Cross Congregation in 1962, and he made his perpetual vows on Aug. 16, 1968. In 1979, he was elected provincial superior of the South-West Province of the Brothers of Holy Cross. He played several key roles at St. Edward’s University in Austin. In 2002 he moved to St. Joseph Hall in Austin, where he began studies for a master’s degree in business administration. From 2004 to 2010 he served as a teacher and administrator at San Juan Diego Catholic High School in Austin. He then spent six years working in Rome with the Holy Cross Superior General. He moved back to Notre Dame in 2016 and retired in 2017. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Feb. 10, and he was buried at Assumption Cemetery in Austin.

OFFICIAL APPOINTMENTS
Bishop Joe Vásquez made the following appointments:
• Father Josef Muisiol, SDS, was reappointed as Judge and Adjutant Judicial Vicar for the diocesan Office of Canonical and Tribunal Services, effective Jan. 1.
• Deacon Guadalupe Aguilar was granted retirement status, effective Feb. 1.
• Deacon John De La Garza was granted retirement status, effective Feb. 1.
• Deacon Alvin Frerich was appointed to the Office of Diaconal Formation, effective Feb. 15.
• Deacon Jose Trujillo, who is assigned to St. Albert the Great Parish in Austin, is incardinated into the Austin Diocese, effective Jan. 24.

CATHOLIC SPIRIT
Reicher students march for life in Washington

By Enedelia J. Obregón | Senior Correspondent

A group of students from Reicher Catholic High School in Waco participated in the March for Life in Washington, as well as the National Students for Life of America Conference; now they plan to share what they learned with other students in Central Texas.

Fourteen Reicher Students for Life and three chaperones spent the fall semester participating in numerous pro-life events as well as fundraising for their trip. They partnered with St. Louis Parish in Waco and the Knights of Columbus and several sponsors to raise money.

The Reicher group is the first SFL-affiliated high school chapter in Central Texas. It was founded by Carson Macik, a senior, who searched the Internet for a group that could easily be established at his school.

“They have a great web page and lots of free resources,” Macik said of SFLA. “It had lots of fundraising ideas and it was streamlined. It was easy to start the group.”

Macik is now involved at the national level in the Thaddeus Stevens Fellowship, a mentorship and training program given to high school seniors each year. He was brought on stage at the SFLA conference before 1,500 students.

“The energy at the national level was not at all the stereotype of the pro-life movement,” Macik said. “There were a lot of viewpoints. There were feminists, liberals, Democrats, Republicans, Catholics, Jews, Muslims and all races. But all were united in the belief that abortion is wrong.”

Attending the national event showed them they are not alone in their fight for life, he said.

Millennials recognize that it is not enough to oppose abortion, Macik said, but that women in crisis pregnancies need help.

So the Reicher group has signed a pact with the school to support a group called Building a Better Future that will help any pregnant student at Reicher through pregnancy resource centers. Reicher also financially donates to CareNet, a network of local federally qualified health centers that offer services to families and their children.

The group also participated in the 40 Days for Life campaign and national pro-life chalk days. Last year they won a national campaign called #sockit2PP by collecting more than 3,000 pairs of baby socks.

Freshman Angel Ntenyi, 15, also attended the March for Life. She got involved because the unborn “don’t have a voice” and “we need to be the voice for them.”

She was a member of a pro-life campus ministry while in junior high, so the transition to SFL at Reicher was natural.

It was affirming for her to see the sheer number of people at the rally and conference there to fight abortion. Attending the conference also gave her confidence.

“I’m a shy person,” she said. Armed with pamphlets and information that are easy to understand, Ntenyi is sure she can convey to someone else why abortion is wrong.

There was one aspect of the pro-life movement that surprised her.

“Feminism and pro-life go together,” she said. “All I’d seen about feminism was pro-choice. But feminism is not pro-choice if it endangers the woman.”

Felicia Macik, a medical doctor and Carson Macik’s mother, was one of the chaperones on the trip.

Dr. Macik said her family has been pro-life but never activists.

“I knew about the ugly medical parts of (abortion), but I didn’t see myself as knowledgeable about the politics and philosophy of it,” she said.

Seeing so many young people in their teens and 20s was an eye-opener.

“The students were empowered and knowledgeable with a sense that they have the ability to make change,” she said. “It changed my life. Now I know what I can do.”

At first she admitted she was “just along for the ride … But when I was there I realized this was a civil rights movement and I was a part of it that day.”

Dr. Macik said she is “very proud” of her son and is amazed at how much she has learned from him.

“We are in awe of these kids,” she said. “They are so passionate. They’re all in. It’s been inspiring.”

Students from Reicher Catholic High School in Waco traveled to Washington for the annual March for Life in January. (Photo courtesy Carson Macik)

Catechumens welcomed to the church at Rite of Election

The 2018 Rite of Election of Catechumens and of the Call to Continuing Conversion of Candidates was celebrated Feb. 17 at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in College Station and Feb. 18 at St. John Vianney Parish in Round Rock. Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Garcia and Bishop Joe Vasquez welcomed more than 300 catechumens who will receive the sacraments of initiation in their parishes at the Easter vigil. (Photos by Nathan Zamora)
Youth gathering celebrates 60th year in the diocese

This year marked the 60th year of the young church encountering Christ through prayer, sacraments and engaging presentations at the Diocesan Catholic Youth Conference (DCYC), held Feb. 2-4 at the Waco Convention Center. More than 2,700 youth and their adult chaperones attended the conference. About 84 parishes were represented, and two dozen priests were on hand to offer the sacraments for the youth. The theme of “Fully Alive” brought the teachings of St. Irenaeus to life in a celebration of what it means to be fully alive in the Word of God.

“The mission of DCYC continues the rest of the year through a dedication to supporting the faith of young people in the ministry of pastors, youth ministers and families in each of the parishes across the diocese,” said Alison Tate, diocesan director of Youth, Young Adults and Campus Ministry. (Photos by Joshua William Guenther)
By Peggy Moraczewski | Correspondent

Last month Bishop Joe Vásquez kicked off the second diocesan capital campaign in history. He shared his vision for dealing with the challenges of the growing Central Texas population at the inaugural “Encountering Christ” capital and endowment campaign event held at Santa Cruz Parish in Buda.

Emphasizing how grateful “we are for what God has done in our diocese,” the bishop said, “...this local church continues to grow and there is more that can be done, and should be done, to serve the needs of our people. For us to have a strong diocese, we must create strong parishes where priests and faithful work together to create a community of faith.”

Father David Leibham, pastor of Santa Cruz Parish, welcomed the bishop and the priests, religious and parish leaders in attendance at the gathering. He spoke about the rapid growth experienced in Buda. “... along with all of those people moving here, are a lot of Catholic people, which is a great testimony to the vibrancy and youthfulness of the church throughout our whole diocese,” Father Leibham said.

Bishop Vásquez views the growth as a blessing and a challenge, pointing out there are churches that do not have enough seating for their expanding parish populations. Other parishes are in need of new facilities for catechesis and faith formation classes, and some rural parishes cannot afford to hire qualified youth ministers.

The “Encountering Christ” campaign will help address these challenges, he said. Steps to test the viability of a capital campaign were undertaken last year. A feasibility study produced responses from priests and laity heartening Bishop Vásquez to move forward with a campaign. The goal of $85 million will help fund needs throughout the diocese, targeting four primary categories: supporting clergy, supporting parishes, emerging disciples and embracing discipleship.

Bishop Vásquez noted the many blessings showered upon the diocese, especially the large number of new vocations to the priesthood and religious life. He gave much credit to Catholic campus ministry on four university campuses: the University of Texas, Baylor University, Texas State University and Texas A&M University.

Ordaining a new priest is his favorite responsibility as bishop in Central Texas, the bishop said. He feels privileged to have ordained more than 30 new priests and expressed his gratitude for those men who are studying for the priesthood and who will serve the diocese in the future.

Although he teased about how much seminarians like to eat, he was quite serious when it came to the $2 million annual cost to educate and form those who are studying to be diocesan priests.

After assessing the growth and needs throughout the diocese, CCS Fundraising was secured as a partner to conduct the “Encountering Christ” capital and endowment campaign.

Scott Whitaker, secretariat director for Stewardship and Development for the Diocese of Austin, said Bishop Vásquez had already, “...secured gifts of $13.1 million from three families in our diocese,” which is 15 percent of the $85 million goal.

Their generosity sets the stage for a very successful campaign, Whitaker said.

Each of the 123 parishes has been assigned the responsibility for raising a portion of the $85 million. Initially, 70 percent of the funds raised at each parish will go to the diocese, with the parish receiving 30 percent of what they collect toward their parish goal. Once a parish surpasses its goal, that dollar distribution flips, and the parish will receive 70 percent of all funds raised beyond their goal. The funds returned to the local parish may be used toward needs identified by the parish, for example, reducing debt, repainting the church, installing a new roof or hiring a new youth minister.

Whitaker said the success of the “Encountering Christ” campaign relies on faithful stewardship, which focuses on proportionate giving. “This means equal sacrifice, not equal gifts,” he said. “Each donor’s gift is for them to decide in their own way. We encourage people to pray about and discern what that sacrifice may look like to them and their family.”

Whitaker shared a memorable experience he and Bishop Vásquez had recently. The donor they were meeting with looked at them and said, “You know as happy as you are at receiving this gift, I want you to know that when my wife and I leave here today, we’ll be even happier about the joy of giving that gift away.” He hopes this is how every donor feels when making a sacrificial gift to the campaign.

The capital campaign is actively in progress and will be rolled out in waves to parishes across the diocese this year. Currently, nine parishes have stepped forward to participate in the “pilot wave” of the campaign. The goals of this phase are to demonstrate that the needs identified in the “pilot wave” of the campaign.

For more information, visit www.encounteringchristcampaign.com or call (512) 949-2400.
Upcoming retreats at Cedarbrake

The Cancer Survivors Retreat will be held March 10 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. This retreat will be a time for survivors to share their stories. Wanda Gibson, a spiritual director and cancer survivor, will lead this prayerful day of reflection. Whether one is celebrating one week or 20 years since a cancer experience, all are invited to come together to engage, heal, rest and rejoice. The cost is $40 and includes lunch.

Discovering Your True Self will be held March 21 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake in Belton. The retreat will be based on the book by Father Richard Rohr entitled “The Immortal Diamond.” The day will help participants to identify the false images in one’s life and to find one’s true self. Beverly Collin, assistant director of Cedarbrake, will present this day. The cost is $40 and includes lunch.

Healing through the Heart of Jesus will be held April 14 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake in Belton. The focus will be on one’s identity as God’s loved one and on the wounds that prevent people from living that identity. Father Charlie Garza, pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish in Dripping Springs, will be the presenter. The cost is $40 and includes lunch.

Seeking the Holy Art Journaling Retreat will be held April 27-29 at Cedarbrake. Art journaling is the use of simple art materials, Scripture and contemplative prayer to help us to respond to the holy within. Sister Marianne Hieb, RSM, DM in, a member of the Lourdes Wellness Spirituality Retreat Team, will lead this retreat. The cost is $220 for a private room and includes art supplies, or $180 for a shared room and includes art supplies.

For more information or to register for these calls Cedarbrake at (254) 780-2436 or visit www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake.

Adult Confirmation set for April 21

The diocesan celebration of Adult Confirmation will be held April 21 at 10 a.m. at San José Parish in Austin. Parish coordinators of adult confirmation may visit www.austindiocese.org/diocesan-adult-confirmation for more information about the celebration. All registrations must be received by April 6. For more information, contact liturgy@austindiocese.org or (512) 949-2429.

Job openings at St. Helen Parish in Georgetown

St. Helen Parish in Georgetown has the following job openings:

- Liturgy Coordinator
- Adult Faith Formation Minister
- Youth and Young Adult Minister
- Building and Grounds Assistant

We are looking for joyful and energetic people to join our staff. Our aim is to have staff who live out our parish mission to form Joyful Disciples who know, love and serve Jesus Christ. Please visit our website at www.sainthelens.org and apply by going to the news section and clicking on “Join our Team” at https://sainthelens.applicantpro.com/jobs/.

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Mission work leads to encounter for students

By Ricardo Gandara | Correspondent

The most beautiful, hopeful stories are hidden away, that is, until someone like Peter Fenelon and Micaela McConnell stop to listen and then retell them.

As missionaries of the Schoenstatt Movement of Austin — an international Catholic ministry of education and spiritual formation that seeks to reconnect faith with daily life through a deep love of Mary — the two college students discovered more than they signed up for during the Christmas break.

McConnell, 21, a student at the University of Texas, met a man at a transitional housing agency who left his career and experienced homelessness.

“He grew up in the perfect family. He got a marketing degree and job but was complacent and not happy. He took a risk from a stable life and began living in the streets. He changed his path way from living in a box to pursue what he really wanted to do,” she said. The man wants to make his way in the fashion industry.

“He’s designing clothes. His dream is to take the designs that are expressed through his living experience, and bring those designs to the fashion world. I found him amazing,” said McConnell, who is studying social work.

She was also humbled. “Any of us can end up on the streets. With this man, he reminded me of the humanity of people, and they have the same dreams and same goals,” she said.

McConnell was among 90 area college students who spent five days volunteering at several agencies such as immigrant centers, retirement homes, teen pregnancy resource centers and the Central Texas Food Bank. It was part of Austin CARITAS, an inner city mission organized by Schoenstatt University Movement of Austin. They also helped people clean out houses and paint rooms.

“The Schoenstatt Movement was founded on the belief that the surest way to deal with a relationship with God is through the Virgin Mary,” said Mauricio Silveyra, a recent UT graduate, who led the student group.

Father Patricio Rodriguez, the rector of Austin’s Mary, Our Lady of Schoenstatt (www.schoenstatt.us), said this type of service helps students in many ways.

“They realize it’s not social work but a mission where they’re going out to serve. It helps students become spiritually enriched by engaging with people,” he said.

Silveyra said the goal is to bring students closer to God through brotherhood and to spend time with other students doing the same.

“This year’s motto was the experience of home. The Blessed Mother conveys the feeling of home, and she protects us,” Silveyra said.

The mission work in Austin went beyond the volunteer work. The students started the day by celebrating Mass at St. Paul Parish and Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Austin, where the students were housed. When the students finished their work for the day, they returned to the parishes for fellowship, recreational activities and prayer.

“The topics were about home and God and the experiences they had that day,” Father Rodriguez said.

He believes these missions are essential to connecting with people.

“Some people just have no one to talk to,” he said.

Fenelon, 22, a student from Marquette University, made that connection when he went to an assisted living home.

“I met an elderly, lonely woman hidden away from the world. She was eager to share her story of her son who’d left the church. She entrusted me, and we prayed for her son,” he said. “I was humbled. I saw her as a heroic example of motherhood.”

The Schoenstatt Movement was founded by Father Joseph Kentenich in 1914 shortly after the outbreak of World War I, in an abandoned cemetery chapel dedicated to the Blessed Mother, Schoenstatt, in German, means “beautiful place.” Today, the movement exists in more than 110 countries.

“It teaches everyday sanctity,” Silveyra said.

There are replica chapels around the world carrying out the same message.

“It’s the message of holiness through everyday experiences of going to work and attending college,” Father Rodriguez said. “These kids will be engineers, and this gives them a different sense for their mission in life.”

Fenelon was inspired by Pope Francis.

“He called on us to build a culture of encounters,” he said.

This article is an inspiring example of the main theme for the diocesan Pastoral Plan, “Encounter that leads to Transformation.” The story also connects to an objective in the first goal which is to “engage and inspire young people to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ.” For information, visit www.austindioceseplan.org.
Celebrating Catholic Schools

Honoring those committed to Catholic education

The 10th annual Celebrating Catholic Schools Dinner and Awards Ceremony was held Jan. 27 in Austin. The event brought together hundreds of people to celebrate the gift of Catholic education in the Austin Diocese. Leah Darrow, a Catholic speaker and role model for young women, was the keynote speaker. During the evening Judy Knotts, in photo below with Bishop Joe Vasquez, was presented the CJ Dutch Kellerman Memorial Leadership Award for her commitment to Catholic schools in the Diocese of Austin (see story on Page 10). Pictured below and on the next page are honorees nominated by each school for their dedication to Catholic education.

For more information on Catholic schools, visit www.csdatx.org. (Photos by Lifetouch)
Photos of the following honorees were unavailable:

Lynn Meredith, Denise Offerdahl and Lynne Sargent
St. Gabriel’s Catholic School, Austin

George and Fran Nors
St. Mary’s Catholic School, West
Judy Knotts honored for ‘servant leadership’

By Carla L. Smith | Correspondent

Long-time supporter of Catholic schools, Judy Knotts recently received the CJ “Dutch” Kellerman Memorial Leadership Award from the Diocese of Austin for her tireless and heart-filled work in Catholic education. The award is presented annually to someone dedicated to Catholic education as a whole.

Knotts’ various roles made her a natural choice for the honor, said Misty Poe, Superintendent of Catholic schools for the diocese.

“Judy has shown great dedication and leadership to our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Austin and she has shown a Dutch-like spirit supporting students, being actively engaged, and showing exceptional leadership in Catholic education,” Poe said. “Her commitment and service to our Catholic school community has made a lasting impression.”

Knotts’ passion for Catholic schools goes far beyond Central Texas. Her first experience in a Catholic school setting was at the Convent of the Sacred Heart boarding school outside of Philadelphia and later at Newton College of the Sacred Heart in Boston. Both institutes ignited her love for Catholic education.

“I came to boarding school from a public school and had no idea of what I did not know about my faith or academics. Those two years were life changing,” she said. “The college experience was also a gift as I was able to pursue leadership positions that were nearly previously impossible for women.”

Knotts went on to earn a master’s degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern California and a doctorate from Virginia Tech. She also served as administrator at a variety of private schools and was a partner in “Education Unlimited,” a consulting group that supported independent schools in the Washington area.

Her love for Catholic education was reignited when she came to Austin in 2000 to head St. Gabriel’s Catholic School. It was her first position in a Catholic school, but she felt right at home; the love of her faith grew and the school flourished.

The move to Texas was a true leap of faith for Knotts who allowed the Holy Spirit to guide her.

While at St. Gabrielle’s, Knotts was chosen to serve on the National Advisory Board for the Principals’ Center at Harvard University. From 2001-2007, she and 21 other principals from all over the U.S. visited schools to determine what issues school leaders should address.

From 2002-2007, she also served as co-director of the Joan L. Curcio International Invitational Women’s Leadership Conference at Oxford University where she led university professors and school superintendents in connecting theory and practice.

“Serving on the Advisory Board was an honor and kept me abreast of educational trends, demands and successes in a broader milieu,” she said. “When I heard I was receiving the award from the Austin Diocese, I was shocked because I just felt I was doing my job as best I could.”

In 2008 Knotts retired, but Catholic education still called. She returned as Interim Head at St. Gabrielle’s in 2012 before venturing next door in the same role at St. Michael’s Catholic Academy in 2013. Along the way she published the book, “The Principals’ Chair, Who Sits There Matters, A Secret of School Success;” served as commissioner for the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department; and received the diocesan Lumen Gentium Award. That honor is given to someone who offers “time and talent that make a difference in the life of the faith community.”

Today Knotts is again retired but is still making a difference as an active parishioner at St. John Neumann Parish in Austin. She is passionate about serving the homeless, serves on several advisory boards, and is a guest columnist for the Faith Section of the Austin American-Statesman. And, although she didn’t personally know the namesake of her most recent award, his passion for leadership and education is something she hopes to emulate.

“I hope to carry on Mr. Kellerman’s legacy of leadership and support of Catholic education by continuing to be present for our schools in any way I can,” she said. “I hope to also foster a culture of leadership in our school communities as I believe leadership in any business, organization or school is the key to excellence.”

Poe is grateful for the Knotts’ leadership over the last 18 years.

“She is a servant leader and has not only taught the students who enter the doors each day, but also the teachers and parents, the true meaning of a servant leader,” she said.
The diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis is offering a variety of courses to serve the needs of Catholic school religious educators, parish catechists, youth ministers and anyone who wants to learn more about their faith. Courses feature instruction by experienced trainers. The courses include printed materials and books for students.

For more information and to register visit www.austindiocese.org or call our office at (512) 949-2492.
Lent is time to be aware of false prophets, cold hearts

By Carol Glatz | Catholic News Service

Catholics should use the season of Lent to look for signs and symptoms of being under the spell of false prophets and of living with cold, selfish and hateful hearts, Pope Francis said.

Together with “the often bitter medicine of the truth,” the church — as mother and teacher — offers people “the soothing remedy of prayer, almsgiving and fasting,” the pope said in his message for Lent, which began Feb. 14 for Latin-rite Catholics.

The pope also invited all non-Catholics who are disturbed by the increasing injustice, inertia and indifference in the world, to “join us then in raising our plea to God in fasting and in offering whatever you can to our brothers and sisters in need.”

The pope’s Lenten message, which was released at the Vatican Feb. 6, looked at Jesus’ apocalyptic discourse to the disciples on the Mount of Olives, warning them of the many signs and calamities that will signal the end of time and the coming of the son of man.

Titled, “Because of the increase of evil-doing, the love of many will grow cold” (Mt. 24:12), the papal message echoes Jesus’ caution against the external enemies of false prophets and deceit, and the internal dangers of selfishness, greed and a lack of love.

Today’s false prophets, the pope wrote, “can appear as ‘snake charmers,’ who manipulate human emotions in order to enslave others and lead them where they would have them go.”

So many of God’s children, he wrote, are “mesmerized by momentary pleasures, mistaking them for true happiness”; enchanted by money’s illusion, “which only makes them slaves to profit and petty interests”; and convinced they are autonomous and “sufficient unto themselves, and end up entrapped by loneliness!”

“False prophets can also be ‘charlatans,’ who offer easy and immediate solutions to suffering that soon prove utterly useless,” he wrote. People can be trapped by the allure of drugs, “disposable relationships,” easy, but dishonest gains as well as “virtual,” but ultimately meaningless relationships, he wrote.

“These swindlers, in peddling things that have no real value, rob people of all that is most precious: dignity, freedom and the ability to love,” the message said.

The pope asked people to examine their heart to see “if we are falling prey to the lies of these false prophets” and to learn to look at things more closely, “beneath the surface,” and recognize that what comes from God is life-giving and leaves “a good and lasting mark on our hearts.”

Christians also need to look for any signs that their love for God and others has started to dim or grow cold, the pope said.

Greed for money is a major red flag, he wrote, because it is the “root of all evil” and soon leads to a rejection of God and his peace.

“All this leads to violence against anyone we think is a threat to our own ‘certainties’: the unborn child, the elderly and infirm, the migrant, the foreigner among us, or our neighbor who does not live up to our expectations,” the pope wrote.

Whole communities, he said, also can show signs of a cold lack of love wherever there is selfish sloth, sterile pessimism, the temptation to become isolated, constant internal fighting and a “worldly mentality that makes us concerned only for appearances, and thus lessens our missionary zeal.”

The remedy for these ills can be strengthened during Lent with prayer, almsgiving and fasting, he wrote.

Praying more enables “our hearts to root out our secret lies and forms of self-deception, and then to find the consolation God offers,” he said in his message.

“Almsgiving sets us free from greed and helps us to regard our neighbor as a brother or sister,” it said.

Urging people to make charitable giving and assistance a genuine part of their everyday life, he asked that people look at every request for help as a request from God himself. Look at almsgiving as being part of God’s generous and providential plan, and helping his children in need.

Finally, “fasting weakens our tendency to violence; it disarms us and becomes an important opportunity for growth,” he said, while also letting people feel what it must be like for those who struggle to survive.

It also “expresses our own spiritual hunger and thirst for life in God. Fasting wakes us up. It makes us more attentive to God and our neighbor,” he wrote, and “revives our desire to obey God, who alone is capable of satisfying our hunger.”

The pope also reminded people to take part in the sacrament of reconciliation during the Lenten season.

Parish’s Lenten observance dedicated to shooting victims

Parishioners of Mary Help of Christians Church in Parkland, Fla., pray during an outdoor Stations of the Cross service Feb. 16 dedicated to the victims and survivors of the deadly mass shooting at nearby Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. At least 17 people were killed when 19-year-old former student Nikolas Cruz stormed the school with an AR-15 semi-automatic style weapon.

“We decided to hold Stations of the Cross on Fridays during Lent as is our tradition but this (past) Friday we decided to celebrate those stations in memory and in solidarity with those who died and all their families, and those at school who experienced this violence on Wednesday,” said Polish-born Father Ireneusz Ekiert, who became administrator of Mary Help of Christians Parish in December.

At least one member of the suburban parish northwest of Fort Lauderdale — 14-year-old freshman Gina Montalto, 14, who had attended Mary Help of Christians Elementary School — was among the deceased. Her funeral was Feb. 20.

“We have a couple of families with kids who were wounded and one that has died,” the priest told the Florida Catholic, newspaper of the Miami Archdiocese. “Unfortunately, this event is very painful, very heartbreaking, but people are coming together to pray. They were here on Ash Wednesday services in good numbers and yesterday we prayed the rosary all day every two hours for the victims and students.”

(CNS photo/Tom Tracy)
Join us on the 8th Annual
Good Friday Pilgrimage
Friday, March 30, 2018

12:30 pm: Gather at St. Mary’s Cathedral
1:00 pm: Send off Blessing by Bishop Joe Vásquez
          Depart on 9 mile pilgrimage to the Shrine
7:00 pm: Arrive for Good Friday Liturgy

Transportation to and from the pilgrimage is not provided.

For details visit us at
www.schoenstatt.us
or call 512-330-0602

Schoenstatt Movement of Austin
225 Addie Roy Rd. Austin, TX 78746
By Jessica L. Marsala | Catholic News Service

Married for 75 years, Joseph Farr and his wife, Ann, say that they believe they’ve found the secret to making a marriage last.

“What it takes to really make a marriage last is to not think everything should be blue and rosy. Hardships come and you have to stand together. That’s the secret,” Ann told the Southern Cross, newspaper of the Savannah Diocese. “Stand together and support each other no matter what the hardships and how hard it is, but if you have each other and support each other together, you can withstand it all.”

They were married Jan. 3, 1943, at Sacred Heart Parish in Savannah. Both were well under age 21 and barely alumni of Savannah High School — Ann completed the last three weeks of her senior year after her wedding. The couple doesn’t deny they have had, as Ann describes, an overdose of problems.

Between the two of them, they can account for more than 20 major surgeries and illnesses, the loss of their youngest daughter, Margaret, as well as a time away from each other in the early years of their marriage when Joe served as an aerial gunnery instructor in Europe during World War II.

Recounting that he heard about the birth of his first child, Joseph Jr., through his brother William’s affiliation with Gen. George Marshall, who was chief of staff of the U.S. Army at the time, Joe said that he even had to wait six months before he left the Army to see his newborn son for the first time.

“When my son was born and I found out she (Ann) was all right and he was all right, that was really something,” Joe said of what he considers one of the most memorable moments of their marriage.

The silver lining in all of the Farrs’ hardships, however, have been further chances to solidify their partnership, one in which they each took turns being the breadwinner — Joe after he left the Army and Ann after their three children were already grown and Joe’s health problems made it difficult for him to continue working.

“I don’t think you have to.”

To which Joe humorously replied, “No, never did learn to cook as well as him, vegetable beef soup. She added that she never did learn to cook as well as him, to which Joe humorously replied, “No, I don’t think you have.’

For the Farrs, mealtimes have also underscored their shared Catholic faith — which Joe, a former Baptist, adopted well into their marriage with the help of Father Tom Peyton, a former pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Savannah.

“Hard to have the most delicious meals ready for me,” Ann said, of coming home to entrees like her husband’s self-described “pretty damn good” vegetable beef soup. She added that she never did learn to cook as well as him.

“He was going to Mass with me one morning, and Father Peyton looked at him and said, ‘When are you coming in?’ And so that was the invitation he kind of needed, the emphasis that brought him into the church,” Ann said, noting that her husband attended Mass with her even before he became a Catholic.

Ann also believes her resilience, strengthened by faith, inspired her husband, who later said that one of the things that makes her “something special” and “just pure wonderful” — aside from how beautiful it is when she tucks him in at night — are her high principles.

“I think you have to lean on each other, and that’s the big thing,” Joe said of finding strength in their marriage. “You help each other.”

Catholic Spirit Retreat Center

5602 Hwy 317 N, Temple TX 76502 (254) 780-2436 www.cedarbrake.org

Cancer Survivors, March 10

The cancer survivors retreat will be held at Cedarbrake Retreat Center in Belton on March 10 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. This retreat will be a time for survivors to share their stories. Wanda Gilson, a spiritual director and cancer survivor, will lead this prayerful day of reflection. Whether you are celebrating one week or 20 years since your cancer experience, you are invited to join us in courageous company as we allow our mind, body and spirit to engage, heal, rest and rejoice. The cost is $40 and includes lunch.

Discovering Your True Self: March 21

Discovering Your True Self will be held March 21 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. The retreat will be based on the book by Fr. Richard Rohr entitled “The Immortal Diamond.” Deep within us is the true self; however, it has been hidden by who or what we think we should be. We will spend the day identifying the false images we hold on to as we ask the Lord to show us the beauty of our true selves. Bev Collin, assistant director of Cedarbrake, will present this day. The cost is $40 and includes lunch.

Healing Through The Heart of Jesus: April 14

Healing through the Heart of Jesus will be held April 14 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. The focus will be on our identity as God’s loved ones and on the wounds that prevent us from living that identity. Father Charlie Garza, pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish in Dripping Springs, will be the presenter. The cost is $40 and includes lunch.

Seeking The Holy: Art Journaling Retreat: April 27-29

Seeking the Holy Art Journaling Retreat will be held April 27-29 at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. Art journaling is the use of simple art materials, Scripture and contemplative prayer to help us respond to the holy within. Sister Marianne Hebb, RSM, DMin, a member of the Lourdes Wellness Spirituality Retreat Team, will lead this retreat. The cost is $820 for a private room; includes art supplies, $180 for a shared room; includes art supplies.

SUMMER SILENCE, formerly known as DESERT SOLITUDE, will be held June 8-13. More information to come.
Pope reassures foster kids that they are loved

By Carol Glatz | Catholic News Service

When people are unable to love or accept a child with problems or illness, many times it’s because they are too weak themselves to be able to bear someone else’s vulnerabilities, Pope Francis told a group of children and young people who are wards of the state.

“If I have a giant rock, I can’t put it on top of a cardboard box because the rock will crush the box,” he said, explaining how some adults “don’t have sufficient strength to bear fragility because they themselves are fragile.”

The pope met with the group, which included minors living in foster care or receiving other forms of support and help from the Romanian-based NGO, called “FDP: Protagonists in Education.” The Vatican released Feb. 19 a written transcript of the meeting, which was held at the Vatican Jan. 4.

The pope said he received the group’s questions beforehand so he could better prepare to answer them. One question in particular, he said, made him cry.

“The question, which the young man read aloud at the audience, was why his mother didn’t want or accept him. He said he was given up when he was 2 months old and when he turned 21 he got in touch with his birth mother and even stayed with her for two weeks; but he said it didn’t go well and he was forced to leave.

“My father is dead. Am I at fault if she doesn’t want me? Why doesn’t she accept me?” the unidentified man asked the pope.

“Your mother loves you, but she doesn’t know how to, she doesn’t know how to express it. She can’t because life is hard and unjust, and that love that is trapped inside her, she doesn’t know how to say it or how to caress you,” the pope said.

He urged the young man not to despair or become cynical, but to hold on to hope. “I promise to pray that one day she can show you that love.”

“These terrible situations have nothing to do with anyone’s fault, the pope said. “It’s a question of the immense fragility in adults, due to, in your case, much poverty, many social injustices that crush the smallest and the poorest.”

“Spiritual poverty,” too, is to blame, he said, because it leads to “hardened hearts, and it causes what seems impossible: a mother who abandons her own child. This is fruit of material and spiritual poverty, fruit of a mistaken, inhuman social system that hardens hearts, that leads to mistakes, makes it so we cannot find the right path.”

This question, the pope said, was much like another question from another young person who asked, “Why are there parents who love healthy children and not those who are sick or have problems?”

“When facing other people’s fragilities, such as illnesses, there are some adults who are weaker, who don’t have enough strength to bear fragility and this is because they themselves are fragile,” Pope Francis said.

Some parents are fragile or weak because they are human beings with their own limitations, sins and vulnerabilities, he said.

“And perhaps they were not lucky to be helped when they were young” to find a person who could take them by the hand and help them grow, become strong and overcome their weaknesses, he added.

“It’s difficult to get help from fragile parents and sometimes it’s us who has to help them” and not blame life for how it turned out, he said, but use one’s own strength so “the rock doesn’t crush the cardboard box.”

Another young person asked, “Why did we end up with this destiny” or lot in life?

While no one knows “the why” or reason that allows these situations or suffering to happen, the pope said, Christians do know “the why, in the sense of the ending God wants to give” to each person’s destiny — that is, healing and new life.

No one knows why things start out a certain way, he said, but there is no doubt where people should be headed: finding and experiencing Christ who always loves and heals; “that’s the why.”

Another young person said that when a friend of theirs at the orphanage had died, the priest told them the boy died a sinner and would not go to heaven.

The pope said no one can ever claim someone — even Judas — has not gone to heaven. “God wants to bring all of us to heaven, nobody excluded.”

God doesn’t just sit around waiting for things to happen, he said. He is the Good Shepherd who is always searching for the lost sheep and is never upset when he finds them, even if they are “dirty with sin” or have been abandoned their whole lives.

“He embraces them and kisses them,” puts them on his shoulders and brings them home, the pope said, adding that according to what he knows about Jesus, “I am sure this is what ... the Lord did with your friend.”

Pope Francis says Paul VI will be declared a saint this year

By Cindy Wooden | Catholic News Service

Pope Francis told pastors in the Diocese of Rome that Blessed Paul VI would be canonized this year.

The pope’s announcement came at the end of a question-and-answer session with the priests Feb. 15; the Vatican released the text of the exchange three days later.

Archbishop Angelo De Donatis, papal vicar for Rome, had told the priests that they would be receiving a book of “meditations” about priesthood from speeches from each pope, from Blessed Paul VI to Pope Francis.

That prompted Pope Francis to comment, “There are two (recent) bishops of Rome who already are saints,” Sts. John XXIII and John Paul II. “Paul VI will be a saint this year.”

The sainthood cause of Pope John Paul I is open, he noted, before adding, “Benedict (XVI) and I are on the waiting list; pray for us.”

The cardinals and bishops who are members of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes reportedly voted Feb. 6 to recognize as a miracle the healing of an unborn baby and helping her reach full term. The baby’s mother, who was told she had a very high risk of miscarrying the baby, had prayed for Blessed Paul’s intercession a few days after his beatification by Pope Francis in 2014.

The theological commission of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes had voted in December to recognize the intercession of Blessed Paul in the healing.

Although Pope Francis announced the upcoming canonization, he still has not formally signed the decree recognizing the miracle nor held a consistory — a meeting of cardinals — to set the date for the ceremony.

La Voce del Popolo, the newspaper of Blessed Paul’s home diocese, the Diocese of Brescia, Italy, had reported in December that it is likely Pope Francis will celebrate the canonization Mass in October, during the meeting of the world Synod of Bishops, an institution Pope Paul had revived.

Blessed Paul, who was born Giovanni Battista Montini, was pope from 1963 to 1978.
Bishop’s Interview

Calling for immigration reform in our country

Editor: Bishop, what is the Diocese of Austin doing to address immigration in Central Texas?

Bishop Vásquez: In the Diocese of Austin, we are working to address the very serious issue of immigration not only in Central Texas but also in our state and in our country. Immigration is a topic of ongoing conversation and intense debate in our country. The church must be a voice of compassion, reason and moral principle.

First as Christians, we are called to be compassionate. Our attitude should be that of Christ himself who said, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35). Christ’s words guide us in how we should treat the immigrants. God has imputed every human with dignity, and immigrants are no exception. They are created in God’s image and likeness; therefore, they deserve our respect and care.

The practice of welcoming the stranger is a common theme found in sacred Scripture. Along with widows and orphans, the stranger was considered vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation. The ancient prophets spoke to the people of Israel of the importance of welcoming the stranger and never take advantage of them. Hebrew Scriptures remind us countless times to provide care to the “alien” (meaning the refugee or stranger) among us. In the book of Exodus (22:21), we hear, “You shall not oppress or afflict a resident alien, for you were once aliens residing in the land of Egypt.” In the Book of Leviticus (19:34), we hear, “You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt.”

Many immigrants already belong to the Catholic Church when they arrive in our country. They should be welcomed and allowed to participate as fully as possible. Never should they be made to feel like second-class citizens, rather they are already full members of the church.

Church teaching recognizes the government’s right to regulate immigration and to weigh immigration’s impact on the economy and our national security (Faithful Citizenship, 2015). But, the church also insists that no country can deny this basic human right out of exaggerated fears or selfishness. Catholic teaching presumes that the more prosperous a country is, the more generous that country should be in welcoming foreigners.

Editor: Being that Dreamers are an illustration of how broken our federal immigration system is, what can the faithful do to share the journey with these young people?

Bishop Vásquez: The first thing we can do is to get to know the Dreamers. In the U.S. some 1.8 million migrants live here with undocumented status; they were brought here as children by their parents or guardians. For all intents and purposes, having been brought here at such a young age, and even though being born elsewhere, these individuals have no other homeland than the U.S. They were educated here. Their identity was nurtured here. They established themselves in communities all around the country. They are American in all but legal status.

These men and women who have known only this country as their own country do indeed deserve a chance to make a living here. My dream is that these Dreamers would be allowed a chance to be full members of this society and to be able to participate and continue to contribute to building this wonderful nation of ours making it stronger through immigrants. Even through their many hardships and challenges there is a deep gratefulness in these young people. They are grateful for the opportunity they have received in this country and to their church for standing in solidarity with them; and they are grateful to God.

Editor: Some have said that fixing DACA and the immigration system are not authentic pro-life issues. How would you respond to that criticism?

Bishop Vásquez: Immigration issues are indeed pro-life issues. Defending the lives of the unborn is always pre-eminent and a priority for the church; however, we must also remember that many of these immigrants’ lives are at stake as well. In many cases if they are not given access to some path to citizenship here in our country, they would suffer tremendously if they had to go back to their native homeland. Often they came to the U.S. because they were fleeing violent situations and were being persecuted.

Our immigration system is broken, which is evident in the large number of undocumented immigrants who live, work and raise families here without a path to legal status and eventual citizenship. This is an intolerable situation because those whom some call ”illegals” are themselves victims of this failed system because their lack of legal status makes them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Although illegal immigration must be rectified, we must guard against demonizing those attracted to this country with the hope of a better life for themselves and their children.

Walls alone will not provide any solution, at least not a solution worthy of our country. We need to put pressure on our officials to resolve this issue. The system is in dire need of a complete overhaul, and I pray that our government officials will seriously look at this and fix the situation.

— Bishop Joe Vásquez

Editor: Do the faithful have moral and humanitarian obligations to immigrants?

Bishop Vásquez: Yes, the faithful have a moral obligation to immigrants. Christ calls us to receive them, to treat them with respect, and to be mindful of their needs. Sadly in recent years there have been some terrible state laws passed against immigrants; they were punitive and did nothing to resolve any of our immigration issues. These laws have put into question whether any one assisting immigrants may be perceived as breaking the law. We have to respect and help immigrants because they are people not because they have the right documents. If they are sick, we take care of the sick; if they are hungry, we take of the hungry; if they are poor, we try to assist them in some way. As Christians we are obligated to respond to their needs.

There is a climate of fear that exists among immigrants, with many wondering when they wake up in the morning if they will make it home in the evening to their family, or be apprehended by immigration enforcement and left with the possibility of being deported and separated from their family. These individuals merely want to live their lives in peace, work hard, provide for their family, and contribute to their communities. As Catholics, we believe that assisting those in need is a fundamental Christian duty that is derived directly from the life and mercy of Christ, who himself was a refugee.

Editor: What is your prayer for those who are suffering because of our broken immigration system?

Bishop Vásquez: First, my prayer is that our government would take very seriously the need to reform immigration laws in this country. Secondly, I pray that we as Christians treat our immigrant brothers and sisters with respect the dignity they deserve. Dignity is a sacred gift that each of us has been given by God. Therefore, we are obligated to treat everyone with dignity and respect.
ON SCRIPTURE
Servant leaders speak up with courage, conviction

By Louis A. Gamino | Columnist

Have you ever told your boss what you really think? Speaking up face-to-face is much more intimidating than muttering under your breath or sounding off to the bathroom mirror. It’s daunting to confront an authority figure.

That kind of dramatic tension emerges in the biblical story of Naaman, the army commander who has leprosy (now called Hansen’s Disease), heard during daily Mass in the third week of Lent (2 Kg 5:1-19). The miracle of Naaman’s cure by the prophet Elisha comes about in part through the influence of servants who play minor yet pivotal roles by speaking the truth to their superiors.

At the beginning is an Israeli slave girl who served Naaman’s wife. This young girl had almost no status because she had been captured in a military raid and deported. She had all the reason in the world to be angry, resentful and sullen. She could have easily withheld the information she had about the holy man in Israel, spitefully punishing her captors with silence and gloating over Naaman’s misfortune when a cure was possible.

But the slave girl displayed none of those negative emotions. Instead, she intentionally spoke up and told her mistress, “If only my master would present himself to the prophet in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.” Why would she want to help the very ones who enslaved her? Even more amazing is that Naaman listened, took her idea to his king, and soon was on his way to Israel.

The slave girl modeled three important Christ-like characteristics. First, her faith in the prophet Elisha — essentially faith in God — was unquestioning and absolute. Second, she did not languish in self-pity when faced with personal disaster, i.e., abduction and enslavement. Instead, she adapted by loving her enemies and trying to help them. Third, she did not let her insignificant station in life prevent her from witnessing her faith. She spoke up. In the end, not only was Naaman cured of his leprosy but also he acknowledged, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.”

By Mary Lou Gibson | Columnist

He was a vain young man who dressed impeccably and took great pride in his appearance, which was not unusual for an educated man born into a prominent Italian family. But what was odd and caused quite a stir in his hometown of Ravenna in the mid 11th century was what he did later with his fine garments.

Guy, also known as Guido, had gone to the feast of Apollinaris that was celebrated in Ravenna and was suddenly filled with compunction for the vanity he took in his appearance and his garments. Editor Michael Walsh writes in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints” that Guy stripped off his fine clothes, gave them to some poor people and put on beggar’s rags. His parents were horrified and upset when this happened and even more so later when they learned that he went to Rome to seek a religious life.

He became a monk and placed himself under the guidance of a hermit, Martin, who lived on a little island in the river Po. Guy and Martin remained together for three years. Then Martin sent Guy to the Benedictine Abbey of Pomposa near Ferrara to learn monastic life in a large community.

Walsh explains that the monastery of Pomposa and that of St. Severus at Ravenna were under the direction of Martin, who decided the appointment of superiors.

Guy grew in sanctity and wisdom, and he became much sought after as a spiritual adviser. He became abbot first of St. Severus and then of Pomposa upon the nomination of Martin and confirmed by vote of the monks.

Guy’s reputation drew so many to join the community, including his father and brother, that another monastery had to be built. But his reputation for sanctity did not sit well with everyone. Henibert, the archbishop of Ravenna, developed a hatred for the holy abbot and planned a secret inspection of the abbey with the intent to destroy the monasteries. But Guy was made aware of the archbishop’s impending arrival in a vision and made appropriate preparations for his visit.

He fasted for three days joined in this mortification by the entire community of monks. When the archbishop arrived with his soldiers, he was met by Guy with such humility and respect that he was overwhelmed and asked the abbot’s pardon.

Sean Kelly and Rosemary Rogers write in “The Saint-a-Day Guide” that Guy’s knowledge and foresight of this visit were why he is sometimes acknowledged as the patron of the intelligence community.

Guy continued to give most of his attention to prayer and spiritual direction of the monks leaving the secular part of his office to others. At certain seasons of the year, Guy would withdraw to a cell a short distance from the abbey where he lived in extreme mortification, fasting and prayer especially during Lent.

He invited St. Peter Damian to give lectures on the sacred Scriptures at the Abbey of Pomposa for a few years because he loved the study of sacred subjects.

Toward the end of his life Guy retired into solitude and to live once again as a hermit. He left his cell when he was summoned to Piacenza to consult with Emperor Henry III. John Delaney writes in “The Dictionary of Saints” that Guy became ill at Borgo San Donnino near Parma on the way to Piacenza and died there on March 31, 1046.

According to Walsh, a contest between Pomposa and Parma took place for the custody of his body. The emperor settled the matter by having the relics taken to the church of St. John the Evangelist at Speyer, Germany.

St. Guy went from riches to rags to follow the call

By Mary Lou Gibson | Columnist

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He invited St. Peter Damian to give lectures on the sacred Scriptures at the Abbey of Pomposa for a few years because he loved the study of sacred subjects.

Toward the end of his life Guy retired into solitude and to live once again as a hermit. He left his cell when he was summoned to Piacenza to consult with Emperor Henry III. John Delaney writes in “The Dictionary of Saints” that Guy became ill at Borgo San Donnino near Parma on the way to Piacenza and died there on March 31, 1046.

According to Walsh, a contest between Pomposa and Parma took place for the custody of his body. The emperor settled the matter by having the relics taken to the church of St. John the Evangelist at Speyer, Germany.

Mary Lou Gibson is a freelance writer and a member of St. Austin Parish in Austin.
GOOD NEWS

SOCIAL JUSTICE

CCCTX works to build community for veterans

By Sara Ramirez | Columnist

Engage. Educate. Empower. These are the words that describe the work of Catholic Charities each and every day. Our job is not to provide a handout, but to ensure that every person who walks through our door has the opportunity to live up to their God-given potential and dignity. Catholic social teaching tells us that we are called to family, community and participation. Each of us is part of something greater than ourselves; we are innately social beings.

In “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” the U.S. bishops write, “Every person and association has a right and a duty to participate actively in shaping society and to promote the well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.” Yet how often do we feel isolated? How often do we experience stresses in our relationships, particularly within our own families? How often do we feel as if our voices aren’t heard in the public sphere?

In our communities, who has devoted their lives to our protection and well-being more than our veterans? Their service exemplifies our call to community and participation, yet when many of them return from active duty they experience a loss of the community and culture. They may have expert skills that serve the military, but they often have trouble transferring their expertise to civilian work. Their families often feel the strain of separation, and even a joyful reunification requires the reorganization of day-to-day routines.

Last September, Catholic Charities launched the St. Michael's Veteran Services program to connect veterans and their family members to the resources and care they need to overcome life’s challenges. In the first four months of the program, we have already served 142 veterans and family members with short-term financial assistance, budget counseling, education and employment support, transportation vouchers, referrals, case management and mental health counseling services.

Harold is a veteran living in Killeen with his adult daughter Lisa, who serves as his primary caretaker while holding down a full-time entry-level job. Harold lives with disabilities, some directly related to his military service. Harold and Lisa fell behind on their rent while Harold was in the hospital, and came to Catholic Charities for financial support to help them catch up on payments. Catholic Charities was able to help with rental assistance and a car payment so that they could stay in their home and Lisa could continue to get to work. We are working with Lisa to explore new educational opportunities that can help her to advance her career, and we have connected them to our counseling services to work through the stress that their situation has created. Perhaps even more importantly, we helped to facilitate connections to additional community resources they never knew were available to them, helping them to build a support network and become part of something larger than themselves.

St. Michael’s Veteran Services engages with veterans and their families, learning about their challenges, hopes and dreams. We educate veterans on resources, rights and opportunities. And we empower our clients to take it from there, to take ownership of their situations and to actively participate in their families and communities.

Our veterans have gone above and beyond in serving us. Catholic Charities of Central Texas stands ready to serve them.

To learn more about St. Michael’s Veteran Services, visit www.ccctx.org/st-michaels-veteran-services.

Sara Ramirez is the executive director of Catholic Charities of Central Texas. She can be reached at (512) 651-6100 or sara-ramirez@ccctx.org.
Building a prayer life takes a little practice

By Brian Egan | Guest Columnist

The late Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston wrote this beautiful prayer: “Slow me down Lord! Ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind. Steady my hurried pace with a vision of the eternal reach of time. Give me, amid the confusion of the day, the calmness of the everlasting hills. Slow me down, Lord, and inspire me to send my roots deep into the soil of life’s enduring values that I may grow toward the stars of my greater destiny.”

Tom Brokaw once told a high school graduating class, “It is not good if one can wire the whole world, yet short circuit one’s soul.” A certain tribe of Indians would often go on a long hikes and they made sure to stop every once in a while to “allow their souls to catch up.” I often think of these things as I ponder the wonderful, but challenging world of technology that can overwhelm us. For many of us, the world moves so quickly and there is often so much noise surrounding us that if we do not withdraw occasionally from these distractions, then our souls are indeed at risk of never catching up.

When we set aside time to pray, which St. Therese of Lisieux defines as “a surge of the heart; a simple look turned toward heaven,” we slow down our pace of life to sit with our Creator and ask the Holy Spirit to help us imitate Jesus Christ. Prayer allows one’s soul, one’s heart, to be more intimately united with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he said, “When you pray.” (Lk 11:2) The word “when” implies that all of us as his followers are called to pray.

Jesus said, “But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.” (Mt 6:6) The room, often called the inner room, is one’s heart. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “The heart is the dwelling-place where the heart and know it fully … it is the place to which I withdraw.” The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart, and know it fully … it is the place of encounter.” (CCC, 2563)

How do we begin to develop a faithful prayer life? In many ways it is similar to exercise. Start with a light workout; five minutes a day sitting in your favorite spot at home or stop by the parish if possible. Relax your body with a few deep breaths, sit comfortably and call on the Holy Spirit. Be aware that God is with you and desires to hear from you and speak to you.

Add minutes as you are able. The goal is a regular, daily dialogue with Jesus. If your schedule permits, dedicating the same place and same time every day will help make prayer time more effective. Consider praying with a passage from Scripture every day or meditating on one of the mysteries of the rosary.

Deepening our prayer life is one of many good objectives that came out of the Diocese of Austin Pastoral Plan. Specifically, objective three states a desire to “attract, engage and inspire people to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer by teaching people how to pray.” May this Lenten season be a time to slow down, commit to daily prayer and fall more deeply in love with Our Lord and Savior.

Recommended prayer resources

Books: The Bible; Catechism of the Catholic Church; Armchair Mystic by Rev. Mark Thibodeaux, SJ; Fire Within by Rev. Thomas Dubay, SM.

Apps: Laudate, includes many resources such as an interactive rosary, daily readings, and the Liturgy of the Hours; and iBreviary, includes full texts of the Liturgy of the Hours, readings of the day and additional prayers.


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Norman Farmer, Ph.D, is professor emeritus of English and Humanities at the University of Texas. He writes about the relation of sacred art to Catholic prayer life. He is a parishioner of St. Mary Cathedral in Austin.

**FAITH THROUGH ART**

**St. Paul and the Risen Christ on Damascus Road**

*By Norman Farmer | Columnist*

As we transition from Lent to Holy Week, reflections on the world-famous painting of St. Paul’s conversion by Michelangelo Mirsi Caravaggio (1600) at Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome may seem like “a bolt from the blue.” Yet, isn’t that precisely the way the Risen Christ himself breaks in upon Saul of Tarsus “in a great light from the sky,” (Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16), and then, after snatching him into “the third heaven” (2 Cor 12), charging him bluntly, “Why are you persecuting me?” What is more, isn’t Paul’s “calling” to preach the Resurrection of Our Lord both the road and the journey into Holy Week?

The liturgy, as always, prepares us precisely for these Pauline reflections. During the six weeks of Ordinary Time, we have pondered the Old Testament narrative of successive Kings, from Samuel to David and to Solomon, all of whom failed in the long run to please God, and how, at the last, Jeroboam simply reverted to the pagan worship of golden bulls. As St. Paul would later tell the Corinthians, they “sacrifice[d] to demons, not to God.” And today, this cautionary narrative does echo loudly for all who will listen, look about them, and reflect.

On Jan. 25 the liturgy abruptly broke into this tale of travelers who lost their way with the story of one traveler who finds his way when Christ stops him on Damascus Road and calls him to preach the death and Resurrection of Our Lord for the rest of his mortal life. This in-breaking of “a great light” onto Saul’s world of business-as-usual tells of a light greater still — and still to come: the Christ, the Resurrected Messiah, now palpably present to this newly minted apostle in the very midst of the here-and-now (Gal 2:19-21).

Sprawled on his back beneath his horse, the zealous Pharisee who volunteered to seize Christians under the authority of the Roman Empire is reduced to hapless impotence. The authoritative “man on horseback” is now in a heap on the ground amidst a confusing tangle of arms and legs, of weaponry and clothing, of splayed hands reaching desperately upward and — the raised hoof of the horse! Situated at the precise center of the painting that hoof urges us to ever higher levels of inspired imagination as we ponder the mystery of Paul’s calling: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 1:1).

Undisturbed, the animal gingerly steps over rather than on its downed rider, something that a horse, frightened and agitated, would not do. Instead, it appears mildly curious that its rider should be on the ground instead of on its back, meaning that his rider should be on the ground instead of on its back, meaning that Paul’s momentous drama unfolds in the realm of the spirit and oblivious to the natural sensibilities of beasts and men.

Who, but a sinner — however deficient in life’s finer graces but still yearning for grace — could so capture in an image the metaphysical “space” between the natural and the supernatural, the ineffable mystery in Paul’s self-effacing admission: “I know someone in Christ who, fourteen years ago (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows), was caught up to the third heaven. And I know that this person (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) was caught up into Paradise and heard ineffable things, which no one may utter” (2 Cor 12:2-4)?

**FAITH THROUGH ART**

**A Two Evening - Divine Mercy Presentation**

*St. William Catholic Church – Parish Hall – Round Rock*

Join us as we delve deeper into Jesus’ Divine Mercy through informative presentations from internationally acclaimed speaker, Francisco Gamez.

**English Sessions:** April 2 & 4 from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

**Spanish Sessions:** April 3 & 5 from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Topics: How to Find Real Value In Our Sufferings / The Love of Jesus as “Father”; How to Help Jesus Through Reparation / A Simple Formula to Give Meaning to Adversity & Daily Activities; Our Heart as Shelter for Jesus & Jesus’ Heart as Shelter for Us / A Personal Minute of Forgiveness; The Unexpected Request from Jesus about His Mercy

For additional information in Spanish, call Joe Clark at (512) 567-2219 or in English call Carol Troy at (512) 826-5910.

Donations will be accepted to defray speaker expense.
Calendar of events

Mark your calendars for these events that are coming up across the Diocese of Austin. Send entries for this section to catholic-spirit@austindiocese.org.

March 3: Mass for Life & Prayer Vigil at 8 a.m. at San Jose Parish in Austin, hosted by Sidewalk Ministry. Contact: Mary Helen Russell, (512) 949-2489.

March 4: Annual Homecoming Festival at 10:30 a.m. at SPJST Hall in Caldwell. Auction at 12:30 p.m. with games for all ages throughout the day. Barbecue brisket plates $10.

March 4: Fatima Trinitarian 20 Decade Rosary is prayed every Sunday at 5 p.m. at St. Anthony Parish in Kyle.

March 7: Open House at St. Louis Catholic School in Austin. All day event for families with pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. Details: (512) 614-6622.

March 7: Bible Study on Gospel of Luke, Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Cedar Park. Contact: bobgorski7@gmail.com.

March 7: High School Discernment Dinner at 7 p.m. at St. William Parish in Round Rock for high school age men to learn about the priesthood. Register with Zack Rodriguez at (512) 255-4476.

March 7: Austin Byzantine Catholic Mission - Lenten Class and Copleine at 7:30 p.m. at Holy Cross Parish in Austin.

March 8: Bible Study on Gospel of Luke, Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Cedar Park. Contact: bobgorski7@gmail.com.

March 8: Lenten Friday Fish Fries from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at San Jose Parish in Austin.

March 8: Lenten Friday Fish Fries from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at St. Stephen Parish in Salado.

March 15: Austin Byzantine Catholic Mission - Great Canon of Repentance at 7:30 at Holy Cross Parish in Austin.

March 17: Girls Day Camp with Mary of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin at 7:30 to 9 p.m. at St. Joseph Parish in Round Rock. Francis Coyle will delve into Jesus’ Divine Mercy. Details: Carol Troy at (512) 837-3658.

March 21: Austin Byzantine Catholic Mission - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts at 7:30 a.m. at St. Mary Cathedral in Austin.

March 25: Austin Byzantine Catholic Mission - Divine Liturgy at 5 p.m. at Holy Cross Parish in Austin.

March 26: Austin Byzantine Catholic Mission - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and Anointing at 7:30 p.m. at Holy Cross Parish in Austin.

March 27: Chrism Mass at 10:30 a.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Austin. During this Mass, the clergy of the diocese renew their vows and the sacramental oils are distributed to all parishes. Details: (512) 949-2429 or liturgy@ausdiocese.org.

March 29 - April 2: Diocesan offices are closed from noon on Holy Thursday through Easter Monday.

March 30: Austin Byzantine Catholic Mission - Vespers and Procession with the Shroud at 5:30 p.m. at Holy Cross Parish in Austin.

March 31: Austin Byzantine Catholic Mission - Vespers and Divine Liturgy for Pascha, with blessing of baskets at 4 p.m. at Holy Cross Parish in Austin.

April 1: Austin Byzantine Catholic Mission - Pascha, Vespers and potluck at 2 p.m.

April 2: Field of Flowers Day from 1 to 4 p.m. at Our Lady of the Rosary Cemetery in Georgetown. Details: www.olorcm.com.

April 2 & 4: English Divine Mercy Workshop at St. William Parish Hall in Round Rock from 6:30-9 p.m. Francis Coyle will delve into Jesus’ Divine Mercy. Details: Carol Troy at (512) 826-5910 or www.saintwilliams.org.

April 3 & 5: Spanish Divine Mercy Workshop at St. William Parish Hall in Round Rock from 6:30-8 p.m. Francis Coyle will delve into Jesus’ Divine Mercy. Details: Carol Troy at (512) 826-5910 or www.saintwilliams.org.

April 6-8: Heart of Mary Discernment Retreat for young women discerning the call to consecrated life. Details: (800) 470-2230 or visit www.helpourmarriage.org.

April 8: Divine Mercy Sunday celebration at St. Albert the Great Parish in Austin. Exposition of Blessed Sacrament at 3:30 p.m. Mass at 4:10 p.m. Veneration following the Mass.

April 9: “Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary” Masses. Faithful from throughout the Austin Diocese will renew their “Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary.” Masses at 6 p.m. at St. Mary Cathedral in Austin, at 6:30 p.m. (in Extraordinary Form) at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in College Station, at 5 p.m. at St. Joseph Parish in Killeen, and at 6:30 p.m. in immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Martindale. Details: www.texasJesusThroughMary.org.

April 14: Healing Through the Heart of Jesus Retreat from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. Father Charlie Garza will present. Cost $40, includes lunch. Details: www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake or (254) 780-2436.

Days of spirituality, reflection

March 9-11: Retreats weekend, “rediscovery” retreat for couples trying to save their marriage. Confidential information, contact: (800) 470-2230 or visit www.helpourmarriage.org.

March 10: Cancer Survivors’ Day, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. $40 per person, includes lunch. This retreat will be a time for survivors to share their stories. Wanda Gibson will be the presenter. Call Cedarbrake: (254) 780-2436 or visit www.cedarbrake.org.

March 10: Couples Time Out from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. Register: cto@schoenstatt.us.

March 17: Girls Day Camp with Mary from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt in Austin. Girls ages 9-14 are invited to grow closer to Jesus through Mary with crafts, prayer and fun. Register: rgardner@schoenstatt.us.

March 21: Discovering Your True Self, Detaching From Your False Self retreat from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. The cost is $40 and includes lunch. Details: www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake or (254) 780-2436.

March 30: Good Friday Pilgrimage from St. Mary Cathedral to the Shrine of Our Lady of Schoenstatt. Begins at 1 p.m. with arrival at shrine around 6:30 p.m. Details: www.schoenstatt.us.

April 2 & 4: English Divine Mercy Workshop at St. William Parish Hall in Round Rock from 6:30-9 p.m. Francis Coyle will delve into Jesus’ Divine Mercy. Details: Carol Troy at (512) 826-5910 or www.saintwilliams.org.

April 3 & 5: Spanish Divine Mercy Workshop at St. William Parish Hall in Round Rock from 6:30-8 p.m. Francis Coyle will delve into Jesus’ Divine Mercy. Details: Carol Troy at (512) 826-5910 or www.saintwilliams.org.

April 6-8: Heart of Mary Discernment Retreat for young women discerning the call to consecrated life. Details: www.godiscalling.me.

April 8: Divine Mercy Sunday celebration at St. Albert the Great Parish in Austin. Exposition of Blessed Sacrament at 3:30 p.m. Mass at 4:10 p.m. Veneration following the Mass.

April 9: “Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary” Masses. Faithful from throughout the Austin Diocese will renew their “Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary.” Masses at 6 p.m. at St. Mary Cathedral in Austin, at 6:30 p.m. (in Extraordinary Form) at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in College Station, at 5 p.m. at St. Joseph Parish in Killeen, and at 6:30 p.m. in immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Martindale. Details: www.texasJesusThroughMary.org.

April 14: Healing Through the Heart of Jesus Retreat from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. Father Charlie Garza will present. Cost $40, includes lunch. Details: www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake or (254) 780-2436.

Burse

The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women has completed bursees for the Clerical Endowment Fund (CEF) in honor of Schoenstatt Father Christian Christiansen, and in memory of Frank and Philemona Miller and JoAnn Carpenter. The totals for the burse as of Jan. 31, are listed below by council.

Austin: $533.00
Bastrop/Lockhart: $655.00
Brenham/La Grange: $467.00
Bryan/College Station: $1,175.00
Georgetown/Round Rock: $3,064.00
Killeen/Temple: $1,461.00
Lampasas/Marble Falls: $134.00
Waco: $1,622.00
Previous Balance: $4,567.76
Total: $13,868.76

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 (879) 846-0617.
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

March 1: Catholic Foundation, Pastoral Center, 11 a.m.
March 2: Diocesan Healthcare Forum, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
Confirmation, St. Louis, Waco, 6 p.m.
March 3: Middle School Youth Rally, St. John Viannney, Round Rock, 10 a.m.
Confirmation, St. Joseph, Dime Box, 5 p.m.
March 4: Confirmation, Holy Cross, Austin, 10 a.m.
Confirmation, St. Luke, Temple, 5 p.m.
March 5: Monthly Budget Meeting, Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m.
March 6: Capital Campaign Operational Meeting, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
National Merit Scholars Reception, Pastoral Center, Austin, 10:30 a.m.
Mass for Region X Youth Ministers, Cedarbrake Chapel, 4 p.m.
March 7: Association of Catholic Professionals Luncheon, Hyatt Regency, Austin, 11:30 a.m.
Confirmation, St. Theresa, Austin, 7 p.m.
March 8: Secretariat Directors, Pastoral Center, 9 a.m.
March 8-10: Roman Rota Course for Priests on New Matrimonial Catechumenate, TBD
March 10: Confirmation, St. Mary, Hearne, 5 p.m.
March 11-14: USCCB 6 Catholic Relief Services Committee Meetings, Washington/Baltimore
March 16: Capital Campaign Operational Meeting, Pastoral Center, 2 p.m.
March 17: Mass with Installation of Acolytes for 2019 Diocesan Candidates, Sacred Heart, Austin, 10 a.m.
Confirmation, Sacred Heart, Austin, 2 p.m.
March 18: Confirmation, Santa Rosa, Andice, 8 a.m.
Confirmation, Holy Vietnamese Martyrs, Austin, 11:45 a.m.
March 20: Presbytery Council, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
March 21: Diocesan School Advisory Board, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
Confirmation, Dolores, Austin, 6:30 p.m.
March 22: “Christ Brings Hope Award” Dinner, Hyatt Regency, Austin, 6 p.m.
March 23: Mass for Pastoral Juvenil, Pastoral Center, 9 a.m.
March 24: Confirmation, St. Mary, Wimberley, 10 a.m.
March 25: Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, noon
March 27: Chrism Mass, St. Vincent de Paul, Austin, 10:30 a.m.
March 28: Meeting with Seminarian, Pastoral Center, 9 a.m.
March 29: Mass of the Lord’s Supper, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, 7 p.m.
March 30: Blessing of Schoenstatt Pilgrims, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, 1 p.m.
March 31: Easter Vigil Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, 8:40 p.m.
April 1: Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, noon
April 2: Monthly Budget Meeting, Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m.
April 7: Confirmation, St. Paul, Smithville, 10 a.m.
April 9: Confirmation, St. John Vianney, Round Rock, 11 a.m.
April 10: Confirmation, St. Peter Temple, 6 p.m.
April 11: Confirmation, St. Catherine of Siena, Austin, 7 p.m.
April 12: Confirmation, Holy Trinity, Corn Hill, 10:30 a.m.

Auxiliary Bishop Daniel E. Garcia

March 1: Catholic Foundation, Pastoral Center, 11 a.m.
March 2: Diocesan Healthcare Forum, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
March 3: Confirmation, St. Anthony and San Salvador Mission, Bryan
March 4: Confirmation, St. Ann, Rosebud (with St. Michael, Burlington), 10:15 a.m.
March 5: Priestly Life and Formation Committee, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
March 7: Association of Catholic Professionals Luncheon, Hyatt Regency, Austin, 11:30 a.m.
March 8: Secretariat Directors, Pastoral Center, 9 a.m.
March 8-10: Roman Rota Course for Priests on New Matrimonial Catechumenate, TBD
March 10: Confirmation, St. Catherine of Siena, Austin, 7 p.m.
March 11: Confirmation, Holy Trinity, Corn Hill, 10:30 a.m.
March 12: Confirmation, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Temple, 6 p.m.
March 17: Confirmation, St. Eugene, McGregor, 2 p.m.
March 18: Confirmation, St. Peter Catholic Center, Waco, 11:30 p.m.
March 20: Presbytery Council, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
March 21: Diocesan School Advisory Board, Pastoral Center, 10 a.m.
March 22: “Christ Brings Hope Award” Dinner, Hyatt Regency, Austin, 6 p.m.
March 23: Confirmation, Sacred Heart, Austin, 7 p.m.
March 26: Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, 9:30 a.m.
March 27: Chrism Mass, St. Vincent de Paul, Austin, 10:30 a.m.
March 29: Mass of the Lord’s Supper, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, 7 p.m.
March 30: Celebration of Our Lord’s Passion, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, 2 p.m.
March 31: Easter Vigil Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, 8:40 p.m.
April 1: Mass, St. Mary Cathedral, Austin, noon
April 2: Monthly Budget Meeting, Pastoral Center, 8:30 a.m.
April 7: Confirmation, St. Paul, Smithville, 10 a.m.
Confirmation, St. Joseph, Rockdale, 5 p.m.
April 8: Confirmation, St. John Vianney, Round Rock, 11 a.m.
Confirmation, St. Mary, Brenham, 4 p.m.
April 9: Mass for Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary, St. Mary Cathedral, 6:30 p.m.

Pastoral support for victims of sexual abuse

The Diocese of Austin is committed to providing confidential and compassionate care to victims of sexual abuse, particularly if the abuse was committed by clergy or a church representative. If you have experienced abuse by someone representing the Catholic Church, please contact the diocesan coordinator of victim assistance and pastoral support at (512) 949-2400.

Apoyo pastoral a las víctimas de abuso sexual

La Diócesis de Austin se compromete a proporcionar ayuda confidencial y compasiva a las víctimas de abuso sexual, especialmente si el abuso fue cometido por el clero o un representante de la iglesia. Si usted ha sufrido abusos por parte de alguien que representa a la Iglesia Católica, por favor comuníquese con el coordinador diocesano del asistencia a víctimas y apoyo pastoral al (512) 949-2400.

How to report an incident of concern

The Diocese of Austin is committed to preventing harm from happening to any of our children or vulnerable adults. Go to www.austindiocese.org/reporting (or call the EIM Office at 512-949-2447) to learn what to do, and how to report, if you suspect sexual or physical abuse and/or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult; and what to do if the suspected abuse is by clergy, or an employee or volunteer of any diocesan parish, school or agency.

Cómo reportar un caso de abuso

La Diócesis de Austin está comprometida con la prevención del daño a cualquier niño(a) o adulto vulnerable. Vaya a www.austindiocese/reporting (o llame a la Oficina de EIM al 512-949-2447) para saber qué hacer, y cómo reportar, si usted sospecha abuso físico o sexual y/o negligencia hacia un niño o adulto vulnerable, y qué hacer si el abuso que se sospecha, fue llevado a cabo por un miembro del clero, o un empleado o voluntario de cualquier parroquia diocesana, escuela o agencia.
Llamando a la reforma migratoria en nuestro país

— Obispo José S. Vásquez

Con todos los efectos y propósitos, habiendo sido traídos aquí a una edad tan joven, y aunque nacieron en otro lugar, estos individuos no tienen otro hogar más que los Estados Unidos. Ellos fueron educados aquí. Su identidad se nutrió aquí. Se establecieron en comunidades de todo el país. Son estadounidenses en todo menos en el nombre.

Estos hombres y mujeres que solo conocen este país como su propio país merecen la oportunidad de ganarse la vida aquí. Mi sueño es que a estos jóvenes con la esperanza de una vida mejor para ellos y para sus hijos. Muros por sí solos no proporcionarán ninguna solución, al menos no una solución digna de nuestro país.”

Editora: ¿Cuál es su oración por aquellos que están sufriendo por nuestro sistema migratorio roto?

Obispo Vásquez: Primero, mi oración es que nuestro gobierno tome muy en serio la necesidad de reformar las leyes de inmigración en este país. En segundo lugar, pido que nosotros, como Cristianos, tratemos a nuestros hermanos y hermanas inmigrantes con respeto y con la dignidad que merecen. La dignidad es un regalo sagrado que cada uno de nosotros ha recibido de Dios. Por lo tanto, estamos obligados a tratar a todos con dignidad y respeto.
Misas y una marcha celebran la dignidad de la vida humana

Por Kanobia Russell-Blackmon | Corresponsal

Gente de lo largo de la Diócesis de Austin y de todo el estado se unieron durante el día Pro-Vida de los Católicos de Texas para ponerse de pie, defender y orar por la dignidad de la vida humana. Misas de Acción de Gracias por el Don de la Vida Humana fueron celebradas el 27 de enero en las Parroquias de San José y de St. Louis en Austin.

El obispo José Vásquez estuvo acompañado por el obispo Wm. Michael Mulvey de Corpus Christi durante la Misa en la Parroquia de San José, mientras que el Obispo Auxiliar Daniel Garcia se unió al Obispo Michael J. Sis de San Ángelo para la Misa en la Parroquia de St. Louis. La música para las liturgias estaban dedicadas a las Sagradas Escrituras, explicó la importancia de la vida, ya que “Dios nos llama a la existencia a cada uno por amor, tan preciosa es nuestra vida para Dios”. Hablando en una iglesia llena de jóvenes de todo Texas, el Obispo Vásquez les recordó a todos que “todos los seres humanos tienen un valor y una dignidad inestimables debido a que son hijas o hijos de Dios en el momento mismo de la concepción”. Esta verdad representa la llamada del clarín hecha a todos los Católicos a ser “defensores de los débiles y frágiles,” respetando toda la vida desde la concepción hasta la muerte natural.

Este fue el primer año en que se celebraron dos Misas durante el Día Pro-Vida de los Católicos de Texas. Debido a la enorme respuesta del año pasado, la Oficina de Actividades Pro-Vida decidió que se necesitaban dos ubicaciones. Luisa de Poo, directora diocesana de Actividades Pro-Vida, dijo que ambas Misas tuvieron una gran concurrencia y que “la gente viene desde Corpus Christi, Victoria, San Ángelo, Brownsville, Abilene y San Antonio”.

Después de las Misas, miles se reunieron en el centro de Austin para el Rally de Texas por la Vida. La marcha comenzó en la calle 17th y la Avenida Congress, terminando en los peldaños sur del Capitolio Estatal de Texas. El Obispo Vásquez, el Obispo Garcia, el Obispo Mulvey y el Obispo Sis encabezaron la marcha junto con los miembros de los Caballeros de Colón.

Los participantes llevaban carteles que defendían la vida humana y coreaban: “Somos una generación pro-vida”. Hubo una gran cantidad de estudiantes universitarios que participaron en el mitin. Robert Urban, un estudiante de la Universidad de Texas, explicó que estaba allí porque “la santidad de la vida es el aspecto fundamental más importante de la humanidad”. El Obispo Vásquez se unió a líderes religiosos, funcionarios públicos, Joe Pojman, director ejecutivo de Texas Alliance for Life, y el Gobernador de Texas Greg Abbott para la concentración en los pasos del Capitolio del Estado.

Para obtener más información sobre las actividades Pro-Vida en la Diócesis de Austin, comuníquese con Luisa de Poo llamando al (512) 949-2487 o visite www.austindiocese.org/pro-life.
El construir una vida de oración requiere un poco de práctica

Por Brian Egan | Columnista Invitado

El difunto Cardenal Richard Cushing de Boston escribió esta hermosa oración: “Cálmame Señor! Calma los latidos de mi corazón silenciando mi mente. Calma el ritmo de mi agitado paso con una visión de alcance eterno a la vez. Dame, entre la confusión del día, la calma de las montañas eternas. Cálmame, Señor, e inspírame a que mis raíces se hundan más profundamente en la tierra de los valores eternos de la vida para que yo también, pueda crecer hacia la tierra de los valores eternos de la vida que nuestra alma, nuestro corazón está más íntimamente unido con el creador y pedirle al Espíritu Santo que nos ayude a imitar a Jesucristo, que es nuestro corazón. El Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica dice: "El corazón es la morada donde yo vivo, donde vivo el cielo," disminuimos nuestro ritmo de vida para sentarnos con nuestro creador y pedirle al Espíritu Santo que nos enseña a orar con sus palabras y su modo de vida. La oración permite que nuestra alma, nuestro corazón esté más íntimamente unido con el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús.

Cuando los discípulos le pidieron a Jesús que les enseñara a orar, Él dijo: “Cuando oren” (Lc 11: 2). La palabra “cuando” implica que todos nosotros, como sus seguidores, estamos llamados a orar. Jesús dijo: “Pero cuando ores, ve a tu habitación, cierra la puerta y reza a tu Padre en secreto”. Y tu Padre que ve en lo secreto te compensará (“Mt 6, 6). La habitación, a menudo llamada habitación interna, es nuestro corazón. El Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica dice: "El corazón es el lugar donde yo vivo, donde vivo el corazón es el lugar" al cual me retiro. "El corazón es nuestro centro oculto, más allá de la comprensión de nuestra razón y de otros; solo el Espíritu de Dios puede comprender el corazón humano y conocerlo plenamente ... es el lugar del encuentro.” ( CCC, 2563)

¿Cúmo comenzamos a desarrollar una vida de oración fiel? En muchos sentidos, es similar al ejercicio. Comience con un entrenamiento leve; cinco minutos al día sentado en su lugar favorito en casa o pase por la parroquia si es posible. Relaje su cuerpo con algunas respiraciones profundas, siéntase cómodamente e invoque al Espíritu Santo. Tenga en cuenta que Dios está con usted y que desea escucharlo y hablarle. Agregue minutos como vaya pudiendo. El objetivo es un diálogo diario y regular con Jesús. Si su horario se lo permite, dedique el mismo lugar y la misma hora todos los días ayudará a que el tiempo de oración sea más efectivo. Considere orar con un pasaje de las Escrituras todos los días o meditar sobre uno de los misterios del rosario. Que este tiempo de Cuaresma sea un tiempo para bajar la velocidad, comprometerse a la oración diaria y enamorarse más profundamente de Nuestro Señor y Salvador. Profundizar nuestra vida de oración es uno de los muchos buenos objetivos que surgieron del Plan Pastoral de la Diócesis de Austin. Específicamente, el objetivo tres establece el deseo de «atraer, involucrar e inspirar a las personas a profundizar su relación con Jesucristo mediante la oración, enseñándoselo cómo orar». ¿No sería un gran objetivo durante esta temporada de Cuaresma para todos nosotros hacer un compromiso más fuerte con la oración?

Formación Para Adultos

OFICINA DE EVANGELIZACIÓN Y CATEQUESIS

La Oficina diocesana de Evangelización y Catequesis se encontrará ofreciendo una variedad de cursos para servir las necesidades de educadores religiosos de escuelas Católicas, catequistas parroquiales, ministros juveniles y cualquier persona que desee aprender más sobre su fe. Todos los cursos ofrecidos en Español se encuentran enlistados más abajo. Los cursos también incluyen materiales impresos y libros para estudiantes. Vea el calendario de cursos en www.austindiocese.org.

Para obtener mayor información y para registrarse, llame a la Oficina de Evangelización y Catequesis, al (512) 949-2492.

Las clases en el Centro Pastoral

Enseñanzas Básicas de la Iglesia Católica
Verano: 16 y 30 de junio, 14 y 28 de julio; 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Otoño: 6 y 27 de octubre, 10 de noviembre, 15 y 15 de diciembre
Principios de Formación de Adultos
21 y 28 de junio: 7-9 p.m.

Introducción a la Teología del Cuerpo
23 de junio: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Catequización por Justicia Social
7 y 14 de junio: 7-9 p.m.

Las clases en las Parroquias

Enseñanzas Básicas de la Iglesia Católica
Parroquia de St. Louis, Austin: Martes, el 9 de enero-1 de mayo; 7-9 p.m.

Rito de Iniciación Cristiana Para Adultos (RICA)
3 de marzo, Parroquia de St. John en Marble Falls; 9-11 a.m.
7 de abril, Parroquia de St. Louis en Waco; 1-3 p.m.
28 de abril, Parroquia de Santa Teresa en Bryan, 9-11 a.m.
Campaña Capital financiará muchas necesidades a lo largo de la diócesis

Por Peggy Moraczewski | Corresponsal

El mes pasado el Obispo José Vásquez inauguró la segunda campaña capital diocesana en la historia. Él compartió su visión para lidiar con los retos de la población creciente del Centro de Texas en el evento inaugural de la campaña capital y de recaudación de fondos “Encontrando a Cristo”, llevado a cabo en la Parroquia de Santa Cruz en Buda.

Enfatizando cuán agradecidos "estamos por lo que Dios ha hecho en nuestra diócesis," el obispo dijo, “…esta iglesia local continúa creciendo y hay más que puede hacerse, y debería hacerse, para servir las necesidades de nuestra gente. Para que tengamos una diócesis fuerte, debemos crear parroquias fuertes en las que los sacerdotes y fieles trabajen juntos para crear una comunidad de fe”.

El Padre David Leibham, pastor de la Parroquia de la Santa Cruz, dio la bienvenida al obispo y los sacerdotes, religiosos y líderes parroquiales que asistieron a la reunión. Él habló sobre el crecimiento rápido experimentado en Buda.

“...junto con toda esta gente mudándose aquí, hay mucha gente Católica, lo que es un gran testimonio de la vitalidad y juventud de la iglesia a lo largo de toda la diócesis,” dijo el Padre Leibham.

El Obispo Vásquez ve el crecimiento como una bendición y un reto, señalando que hay iglesias que no tienen espacio suficiente para servir a su población parroquial que se expande. Otras parroquias necesitan nuevas instalaciones para la Catequesis y clases para la formación en la fe, y algunas parroquias rurales no pueden solventar el contrato para menores de edad, volviendo a más de 30 nuevos sacerdotes y expresó su gratitud por aquellos que han donado a más de 30 nuevos sacerdotes.

Los pasos para probar la viabilidad de una campaña capital se llevaron a cabo el pasado. Un estudio de factibilidad produjo respuestas de sacerdotes y laicos que alentaron al obispo Vásquez a seguir adelante con una campaña. La meta de $85 millones ayudará a financiar necesidades en toda la diócesis, teniendo como objetivo cuatro categorías principales: apoyo al clero, apoyo a las parroquias, discípulos emergentes y dar la bienvenida al discípulo. El Obispo Vásquez notó las muchas bendiciones caídas sobre la diócesis, especialmente la gran cantidad de nuevas vocaciones al sacerdocio y a la vida religiosa. Dio mucho crédito al ministerio de Católico Universitario en cuatro campus universitarios: la University of Texas, la Baylor University, la Texas State University y la Texas A&M University. La ordenación de un nuevo sacerdote es su responsabilidad favorita como obispo en el centro de Texas, dijo el obispo. Se siente privilegiado de haber ordenado a más de 30 nuevos sacerdotes y expresó su gratitud por aquellos hombres que están estudiando para el sacerdocio y que servirán a la diócesis en el futuro. Aunque se burlaba de cuánto les gusta comer a los seminaristas, era bastante serio cuando se trataba del costo anual de $2 millones para educar y formar a aquellos que están estudiando para ser sacerdotes diocesanos. Después de evaluar el crecimiento y las necesidades en toda la diócesis, CCS Fundraising se contrató como socio para llevar a cabo la campaña capital y de recaudación de fondos “Encontrando a Cristo”. Scott Whitaker, director de la Secretaría de Corresponsabilidad y Desarrollo de la Diócesis de Austin, dijo que el Obispo Vásquez ya había “…obtenido regalos de $ 13.1 millones de tres familias en nuestra diócesis,” lo que es el 15 por ciento de la meta de $85 millones.

Su generosidad prepara el esenario para una campaña muy exitosa, dijo Whitaker. A cada una de las 123 parroquias se les ha asignado la responsabilidad de recaudar una parte de los $85 millones. Inicialmente, el 70 por ciento de los fondos recaudados en cada parroquia se destinarán a la diócesis, y la parroquia recibirá el 30 por ciento de lo recaudado para alcanzar el objetivo de su parroquia. Una vez que una parroquia sobrepase su meta, la distribución del dólar se invierte, y la parroquia recibirá el 70 por ciento de todos los fondos recaudados más allá de su meta. Los fondos devueltos a la parroquia local se pueden usar para las necesidades identificadas por la parroquia, por ejemplo, reducir la deuda, volver a pintar la iglesia, instalar un nuevo techo o contratar a un nuevo ministro juvenil. Whitaker dijo que el obispo está “Encontrando a Cristo” se basa en la corresponsabilidad, sea que se centra en dar proporcionalmente. “Esto significa igual sacrificio, no regalos iguales,” dijo. “El obsequio de cada donante es el que ellos decidan a su manera. Anima- mos a la gente a discernir en oración cómo será ese sacrificio para ellos y su familia”. Whitaker compartió una experiencia memorables que él y el Obispo Vásquez tuvieron recientemente. El donante con el que se encontraban los miró y les dijo: “Ustedes saben qué tan felices están ustedes por recibir esta donación, quiero que sepan que cuando mi esposa y yo nos vayamos de aquí hoy, estaremos aún más felices por la alegría de haber dado esa donación”. Él espera que así sea como se sienta cada donante al hacer una donación sacrificial a la campaña. La campaña capital está activamente en progreso y se extenderá en oleadas a las parroquias de toda la diócesis este año. Actualmente, nueve parroquias se han ofrecido para participar en la “ola piloto” de la campaña. Los objetivos de esta fase son demostrar que las necesidades identificadas en la campaña Encontrando a Cristo son apoyadas, que los objetivos financieros son alcanzables y que la campaña puede tener éxito en una muestra representativa de parroquias. La ola piloto concluirá este verano y será seguida por la Ola 1 de julio a diciembre, la Ola 2 de enero a junio y la Ola 3 de julio a diciembre de 2019. Para obtener más información, visite www.austindiocese.org o llame al (512) 949-2400.

El Obispo José Vásquez saluda a participantes en un evento el 1 de febrero en la Parroquia de Santa Cruz en Buda. En el evento, el obispo presentó la campaña capital diocesana “Encontrando a Cristo”. (Foto por Margaret Kappel)
The robotics team at Reicher Catholic High School in Waco recently received special recognition for its superior excellence in STEM education from State Representative Charles “Doc” Anderson. They have won several competitions and will compete at the state level in May. (Photos courtesy Suzanne Hack)

Father Pedro Castillo was officially commissioned as pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Rockdale on Jan. 6. His pastoral council was recently formed as well. (Photos courtesy Bonnie Holub)

Several priests were in attendance at the annual banquet for Our Lady of the Angels Maternity Shelter at St. Luke Parish in Temple on Jan. 26. (Photo courtesy Marlene Poehlmann)

St. John Vianney Parish in Round Rock recently celebrated the 100th birthday of Aurore Arrone and the 96th birthday of Ed Russek. Arrone was presented an Apostolic Blessing from Pope Francis to commemorate her 100 years of life. (Photo courtesy Mary Beth Skinnell)

St. Margaret Mary Parish in Cedar Park held its annual weekend retreat for women at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton. This year’s leader was Paulist Father Larry Rice. (Photo courtesy Margaret Huntley)

Young parishioners from Sacred Heart Parish in Austin, who also attend St. Mary Cathedral School and San Juan Diego Catholic High School in Austin, visited the University of Dallas Campus in Irving on Jan. 26. (Photo courtesy Suyen Sanchez)

The Knights of Columbus at St. Mary Parish in Wimberley sponsored a poster contest entitled “Keep Christ in Christmas” for religious education students. (Photos courtesy Cherie Glover)

Send photos by the 10th of the month to catholic-spirit@austindiocese.org. Publication is not guaranteed.
An orientation day for new directors of religious education was held Jan. 29 at the Pastoral Center in Austin. (Photo by Shelley Metcalf)

First Lady Cecilia Abbott visited San Juan Diego Catholic High School during Catholic Schools Week. (Photo courtesy of SJD student photographer)

The Knights of Columbus at St. Helen Parish in Georgetown placed crosses in the Children’s Memorial Garden honoring the children lost to abortion as well as the families grieving the loss of children. (Photo courtesy Jerry Grubbs)

Students from St. Joseph Catholic School in Killeen volunteered at Our Lady of the Angels Maternity Shelter in Temple. The student body also showed their love for priests by forming a heart. (Photos courtesy Katie Grooms)

The youth group from Holy Family Parish in Lexington hosted a Mardi Gras Youth Serve event with the theme “Building Godly Character.” They served dinner and provided live music for parishioners. (Photos courtesy Joan Sanders)

Father Ed Koharchik blessed a new prayer garden at Holy Family Catholic School in Austin. R.J. Teran, an alumnus of the school, constructed the garden as part of his Eagle Scout project. (Photos courtesy Cristina Almanza)

Bishop Daniel Garcia helped break ground on the St. Dymphna Center at St. Martin de Porres Parish in Dripping Springs on Jan. 20. (Photo courtesy Suzanne Pacheco)

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